

SOUTH AFRICA

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William M. Rountree	1965-1970	Ambassador, South Africa
David Michael Wilson	1966-1968	Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Cape Town
Bernard Francis Coleman	1967	Staff Assistant, Washington, DC
Mark E. Mohr	1969-1970	Desk Officer for South Africa, Washington, DC
Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.	1969-1971	Deputy Director, South African Affairs,

		Washington, DC
Richard J. Dols	1969-1971	International Relations Officer, Mbabane, Swaziland
	1973-1975	Desk Officer, South Africa Desk, Washington, DC
William Beverly Carter, Jr.	1969-1972	Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Washington, DC
Charles Lahuguera	1969-1973	Political Officer, UNESCO, Paris, France
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William B. Edmondson	1974-1976	Deputy Chief of Mission, Pretoria
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Owen Cylke	1975-1977	Director for East and Southern Africa, USAID, Washington, DC
Peter David Eicher	1976-1978	Political Officer, Pretoria/Cape Town
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E. Ashley Wills	1977-1979	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Durban
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Herman W. Nickel	1982-1986	Ambassador, South Africa
Charles Lahiguera	1983-1985	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mbabane, Swaziland

Timothy Michael Carney	1983-1986	Political Counselor, Pretoria
Robert J. Kott	1984-1985	South Africa Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Scott E. Smith	1984-1986	Development Officer, USAID, Mbabane, Swaziland
	1986	Deputy Mission Director, USAID, Harare, Zimbabwe
Bonnie Brown	1984-1987	Spouse of Consul General & Education Advisor for USIS, Johannesburg
E. Ashley Wills	1985-1987	Office of Southern African Affairs, Washington, DC
Richard C. Barkley	1985-1988	Deputy Chief Mission, Pretoria/Cape Town
C. William Kontos	1986-1987	Executive Director, South Africa Advisory Committee, Washington, DC
Stephen H. Rogers	1986-1990	Counselor for Economic Affairs, Pretoria
Francis T. McNamara	1987	Economist, Southern Africa, South Africa Desk, Washington, DC
James Marvin Montgomery	1987	Consul General, Johannesburg
Robert M. Smalley	1987-1989	Ambassador to Lesotho
Paul Good	1990-1992	Executive Officer, USIS, Pretoria
Patricia D. Hughes	1990-1996	Political Officer, Cape Town
William P. Pope	1991-1993	Deputy Political Counselor, Pretoria
Scott E. Smith	1992	Director, Southern Africa Drought Emergency Task Force, Washington, DC
Timothy Michael Carney	1994	Election Monitor, UN Mission to South Africa
Sejamothopo Motau	1994-2010	Member of Parliament, South Africa

JOHN F. CORRELL
Labor Attaché
City Unspecified, South Africa (1945-1948)

John F. Correll graduated from Kenyon College and became a teacher in Mansfield, Ohio. He began his career in the labor unions in the early 1930s when he became the educational director for the local union. He was brought into the State Department by his friend, Cleon Swayzee. Mr. Correl has served as labor attaché in South Africa, Spain, Cuba, and England. He was interviewed on March 9, 1990 by Morris Weisz.

Q: This would be at the end of the War.

CORRELL: This was 1945. And Swayzee made it possible for me to go to South Africa, where I had some very interesting experiences not entirely connected with World War II, since South Africa was pretty much divorced at that time from what was going on in Europe, where the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine were under way. So when I left South Africa, and I wish I could tell you about some of the interesting experiences I had there because that was the first time a Labor Attaché had ever been there, and I was the last Labor Attaché, because the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948.

Q: John, excuse me, I wouldn't want the record to be incomplete in that respect. You were the last Labor Attaché assigned there for many years. Later on people like McHale served as Labor Attaché there, but that was after a hiatus of many years.

CORRELL: Yes. They disguised it with a particular terminology I think at that time.

Q: Did you ever in your career in any of these posts have a function related to advising American business about operating on the labor aspects of their functions in the country?

CORRELL: Only in South Africa. There they had an American Chamber of Commerce, and many of the American businessmen down there had never heard of a Labor Attaché. But I had close friends in that group, and I spoke to them on the history of our labor movement. I spoke to them about the developments in the post-World War II era, the Taft-Hartley Bill, for instance. But never did I advise them as to investments or anything of that kind.

Q: They didn't raise any questions about how you set a salary level, and what you did in such matters?

CORRELL: No.

Q: *That's interesting, because my experience in India was directly the opposite. I was always being asked by businessmen who wanted to do business there, "What do I have to do? Where do I go? Where do I..."*

CORRELL: In labor?

Q: *Oh, yes. How do you determine wages and things like that? That's interesting.*

CORRELL: Well, the American businessman [in South Africa] was sophisticated and had been there quite a long time. New businesses were coming in, but they had very little trouble in that connection because the guidelines were pretty well set. I might say as an interesting aspect of my work in South Africa, I was the Labor Attaché and I was just learning *my* job, and there was a strike of the miners, a short strike, and of course that scares everybody in South Africa.

Q: *Gold miners?*

CORRELL: These were gold miners; the diamond miners never struck. But I must say that I learned two things. That I shouldn't be too curious about what's going on in the field. I went out to see what was happening and the police picked me up very quickly. I had been studying Afrikaans and talked my way out of that. They wanted to know what I was doing out there, and I'd better get back to my home base which I did. And then I got it a second time because the Chief of Mission said, "What in the world, Correll, are you doing out there? You're here to observe, not to participate."

When I was there [in South Africa], there was another interesting aspect of the assignment. Alan Paton became a close friend of mine. Alan went off to America, and I supplied him with a lot of background information. And while in America, he wrote that wonderful book, Cry, the Beloved Country. I met many of the young liberals in Parliament at that time including Helen Suzman.

Q: *Really? I met her in Australia. She came to visit Ed McHale while we were there.*

CORRELL: Yes, Ed became quite a good friend of hers, too. And Helen is now a famous lady throughout the world. This summer she has resigned.

Q: *Did you see her on "Nightline" being interviewed about Mandela the other night?*

CORRELL: Yes, I did. She was a teacher at the University of Witwatersrand.

PETER J. SKOUFIS
Administrative Officer
Pretoria (1952-1955)

Peter J. Skoufis was born in Maine in 1919. After attending the George Washington University Law School and serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, he entered the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to serving in South Africa, Mr. Skoufis' career included assignments to France, Italy, and the Netherlands. He was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1992.

Q: *You finished your FSI training in December, 1952 and went to Pretoria as administrative officer.*

SKOUFIS: That is correct. We flew to Pretoria after having spent the Christmas holidays at home. We flew to Rome to pack our belongings, which had been left there because our original travel orders assumed that we would be returning to post. By that time, we had acquired a refrigerator and that was our sole household furniture. We then flew to South Africa on a Pan American Constellation plane, stopping at a couple of airports on the way. It was a long flight in those days and we landed rather groggy. We were met by an Embassy representative and taken to our hotel.

Prior to my arrival, the administrative work for the Embassy and the constituent posts was handled by the administrative staff at the Consul General in Johannesburg. As EUR changed administrative officers, it also changed the system in South Africa. The main administrative office was moved to Pretoria which is only about 25 miles from Johannesburg. The latter was the largest American post in South Africa, so it became the "tail wagging the dog." Ambassador Gallman was not happy with his administrative staff being that far away, so during the absence of an administrative officer, he and the Bureau made the shift. My predecessor had been in Johannesburg and he was not replaced. So my first job when I got to Pretoria was to make sure that the transfer of responsibilities went smoothly and that all the administrative support functions in South Africa were integrated. Pretoria got a general services officer, a budget and fiscal officer and we ran the administrative function from there.

South Africa at the time had a summer and a winter capital. That was an added workload. It was also interesting because for example Pretoria had no consular section. It was so close to Johannesburg that all consular functions were handled from there. The Department, in its wisdom, had decided not to create a consular district which would be serviced by the Embassy in Pretoria. There really was no need because Johannesburg was servicing the whole area quite adequately. All the passport work for Americans living in South Africa was handled by Johannesburg. If someone walked into the Embassy for a consular service, we sent him to Johannesburg. If the American citizen didn't want to do that, he or she would have to wait for a consular officer to come to Pretoria, which actually happened quite frequently. Then the service could be rendered. It often had to do with notarization of a savings bond, which could not be cashed without the certification of a consular officer. But since the consular officers traveled back and forth so frequently, it was really not much of a hardship for American citizens to travel 25 miles or wait for a day or two for the consular officer to come to Pretoria.

We had no problems with the integration of the administrative activities. When I first arrived in

South Africa, I encountered my first Department financial crisis which would occur periodically. We had a change of administrations in Washington, with Eisenhower being the new President and John Foster Dulles the Secretary of State. Immediately, there was an economy wave. Certain programs were eliminated, staffs were reduced and we were supposed to do more with less. Before I had arrived, it had been the practice for the Ambassador, the Political and the Economic Sections would move to Cape Town for the session of the South African legislature. When the legislature was not in session, the staff would move back to Pretoria. We had an Ambassador's residence in both places. The maintenance of the Cape Town residence was the responsibility of our Consulate General there. I used to go to Cape Town at the beginning of the legislative session to make sure that all preparations had been made for the Ambassador and the accompanying staff. This included not only housing, but also the office work. We were fortunate that our Air Attaché had a plane at his disposal which we would use to fly to Cape Town and back. He needed the flying time and we needed the transportation. That is also the way we shuffled the mail pouch back and forth. The pouch would come to Pretoria from Washington, where we would sort the mail and transship those pieces that were addressed to the people in Cape Town. If there was something urgent for the Ambassador, we had the capability of wiring it to him by using the old-fashioned one-time pad system. Generally speaking, those situations were few and far between. Most of the time, the pouch system was adequate and the material was shipped on the Air Force attaché's plane.

I was never in Cape Town for a whole legislative session. As I said, I went at the beginning and sporadically thereafter. We didn't move any of the administrative staff. After the economy drive started, we ceased sending whole sections to Cape Town. Instead, if the legislature was to debate an economic matter, we would send someone from the economic section to Cape Town for that debate and then he or she would return to Pretoria. If the issue was political, the chief of the Political Section would go or a member of his staff. The Deputy Chief of Mission would always stay in Pretoria. There were times when we had skeleton staffs both in Pretoria and Cape Town. The system worked adequately.

We had 4 constituent posts: Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg plus the Embassy at Pretoria. It was a very interesting operation. It ran well, partly because we were at the end of the communications line from Washington. We got a pouch once a week on the Pan American flight. It was a big occasion; we would go to the airport to meet the flight. Then we would be busy for two or three days dealing with the material in the pouch; then we would reseal that pouch for its flight back to Washington. It was a good operation; we had a chance to play a lot of tennis and golf.

Q: When you went to Pretoria, you had not had any State Department administrative experience. What did you expect and what did you find?

SKOUFIS: I had some trepidations, of course. It was very exciting to go to a new post and being a section chief. First of all, I found a very cooperative staff. The administrative staff was a mixture of old-timers and new blood, such as myself, e.g. post war Foreign Service members. We established a very good relationship. We had an interesting mixture in the Embassy as a whole. The DCM - Mr. Robertson - was a political appointee, but the Ambassador was a career

officer. Robertson was Mrs. Shouse's (the Wolf Trap founder) son-in-law. It was somewhat unusual for the Department to have political appointees as DCMs, but I have served with two of them: one was the gentleman in Pretoria and the other was Phil Kaiser in London. Of course, Phil had been an Ambassador before he was assigned to London. Pretoria was also one of two posts I have served in which had no consular section; the other was The Hague which was in Rotterdam consular district. So I have some unique experiences in the Foreign Services.

Robertson was a very interesting guy. He had been appointed by a Democratic administration. When the Eisenhower administration took over, we assumed that his appointment would lapse. But ambassador Gallman was recalled to Washington to serve on the State Department selection boards, so Robertson became the Chargé. While serving in that job, he presented me with a very delicate dilemma. He decided that he would use the Ambassador's automobile. It was not a big car, but it was the only real passenger vehicle we had. Ambassador Gallman had left his wife and children in Pretoria with no transportation because she didn't drive and the Embassy had always supported her. We did have two station wagons in the motor pool. As you can see, Pretoria was a small operation. When Robertson became Chargé, he insisted on all the emoluments that went with the Ambassador's office. He wanted to be able to fly the flag when he drove from home to the office or to his appointments. That left poor Mrs. Gallman with no transportation. I went to see her to tell her of the situation. She was a little upset, but she was a veteran and so happy to be in South Africa with her husband and children - the Ambassador had been in London during World War II and more recently, Ambassador in Poland, so that he had been separated from his family on several occasions. So South Africa was a dream assignment for the Gallman family because they could all be together. They were very nice. But the relationship between the Ambassador and the DCM became strained quickly when Gallman learned while in the U.S. what was going on in Pretoria. Fortunately, Mrs. Gallman told her husband that we were taking good care of her. That helped my stock no end. I had learned one of the first principles of an administrative officer quickly: take care of the Ambassador and his family first. Also, two days after Ambassador Gallman returned, Robertson was on his way back to the States since the Republicans had decided not to keep him in the Service.

Q: Did you find any surprises in the management of the Administrative Section?

SKOUFIS: Not really. It was an easy task. It was very easy to do. One developed a real feel and understanding for the role of the Foreign Service locals. The South Africans were very competent. We had some black South Africans who ran the motor pool and served as messengers. They were all very competent and well educated. The administrative officer's role was very easy. The main problem was the new emphasis on security. We didn't have any Marine guards. In addition to my other duties, I was also the security officer (prior to my assignment, it was probably the auxiliary responsibility for one of the junior members of the Political or Economic Sections). We had to develop systems to keep the paper flow moving while keeping it away from the local personnel. Prior to my arrival, there had been less concern about what documents the locals had access to. The whole atmosphere was quite relaxed. Also when the administrative work was done primarily in Johannesburg, it was a fellow by the name of Neil Coney, who was the administrative officer and one of his locals was responsible for the handling of documents. Coney left shortly after my arrival.

This new emphasis was an interesting experience for me. The whole Embassy staff was in rented space - a certain number of offices in a public building. That certainly was a challenge to provide good security. I assume the interest in security in the early 1950s was due to Senator McCarthy's inquisitions. We all began to be very conscious about security. The pouch was another problem. We had a special arrangement with Pan American which flew a State Department courier to Pretoria once a week, as I have mentioned. In addition, every Pan American flight had a special pouch which was entrusted to the pilot according to the rules which had to be delivered to an American official at the airport in Pretoria. That American was either me or one of our two communicators or sometimes the duty officer depending on the plane's arrival time. I can remember very vividly sitting at the airport at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning patiently waiting for the plane. It was due to arrive shortly before midnight, but because we were at the end of the line and the plane laid over for two or three days to rest the crew, we just had to wait because the pilot had to deliver it personally to an American government official. It was quite a show when we did receive the pouch.

As a sidelight to my South African experience, I might just mention that Robertson was replaced by Wilson C. (Bill) Flake. He had been a Foreign Service Inspector and once he arrived, he really took over the management of the Embassy. He was my boss on a regular basis; the DCM really took over the management responsibilities and tighten the reins. We had a couple of Foreign Service people who had been in the Service for many years who had become quite casual about coming to work. They included as part of their working hours the evening entertainment in which they had to participate and therefore would not come to the office until 10 or 11 o'clock. The Embassy opened at 9 o'clock. So Bill Flake began to have staff meetings at 9 o'clock. That was very hard on the chief of the Political Section who found it very difficult to begin the working day so early in the morning.

We had no great difficulties in supervising the administrative work of the constituent posts. Travel in South Africa was easy; when we couldn't go with the Air Attaché, we used local air service. We would leave Pretoria, fly to Durban where we exchanged pouches at the airport or we might spend the day there if there was a particular problem; then could fly to Port Elizabeth, then to Cape Town and back to Johannesburg all on the same flight if you wished. The South African airline made the round trip in about 8 or 9 hours, so that we could distribute the mail all in one day. We would do that frequently because someone from the Consulate would meet us at the airport, where we would exchange pouches. We could spend an hour with the representative of each Consulate, who in some cases might have been the Consul General himself. That gave us an opportunity to discuss mutual problems. Sometime, if we needed to spend more time a post, we would ask the Air Attaché to give us a ride. He had intelligence work to do so that we didn't disrupt his work, but just tagged along. Port Elizabeth had a big GM plant in which automobiles were assembled. An American tire company also had a plant there. So we used to go to Port Elizabeth quite often. South Africa had right hand drive. It took me a long time to get the Department to understand that it was cheaper for us to buy a car in South Africa with right hand drive than to buy one in the U.S. with the steering wheel on the wrong side. When I first mentioned the difficulties of the car system, the Department volunteered to buy us right hand drive cars in Canada and ship them to us. But we calculated that it was just cheaper to buy them

in South Africa. Finally, after much correspondence, I received authorization to buy cars locally from GM. We would then fly to the factory and pick up our cars, either for the Embassy of the constituent posts. We would sometime take the new car and send our old one to the constituent post - we were just "breaking in" the new car. One time, we were due to receive a new car for the Ambassador - in those days, they were still mid-size sedans - from Canada. We sent one of our motor pool staff to Cape Town to pick it up from the docks. That was a long drive which required an overnight stop somewhere. Unfortunately, the driver rolled the car over; he was not hurt, but the car was totaled. So we had to wait another six months before another car was shipped. But in the meantime, I went to my friends in GM and got them to lend us a car while we waited for a new one. That made the Ambassador very happy.

Q: Do you recall what your impressions of State Department administration was by the time you completed your tour in South Africa?

SKOUFIS: I am hazy on that. My liaison with the Department was essentially through the Bureau of European Affairs. That Bureau was very supportive. With some effort, I managed to have FBO to include South Africa on its inspection tours of African posts. They had never visited South Africa after World War II, despite the fact that we had acquired some property with some surplus British local currency generated by lend-Lease and other assistance programs. FBO had never seen the properties; I don't know who bought them, but we had deeds of sale. Finally, Charlie Osborne came; he was the man in charge of the African region for FBO and he surveyed the properties. We were trying very hard to get a site for a new Embassy because we had reached capacity in the rented quarters that we were occupying. We had residences for the Ambassador, the DCM and for the Consul Generals in the constituent posts.

I think EUR gave us support because we were such a small operation compared to Paris, London or Rome and therefore didn't make many demands on it. I could generally get what I needed. My main discussions with Washington was about buildings which fell in the province of FBO. We needed to update some of the properties; the Ambassador wanted a tennis court, etc. We wrote Washington - in those days, you never called. I conducted some business with Herman Pollack, who was the deputy Executive Director of EUR. He was always very helpful.

JOHN J. HARTER
Vice Consul
Port Elizabeth (1954-1957)

John J. Harter was born in Texas in 1926. Harter served in the US Air Force during WWII before graduating from the University of Southern California and joining the Foreign Service. Overseas, Harter served in South Africa, Chile, Thailand and Switzerland. He also worked in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, for USIA and after retirement on Oral Histories. Harter was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: What was your first post and when did you arrive there?

HARTER: Well, I passed the Foreign Service exams in 1952, and I expected to begin my Foreign Service career in early 1953, but Secretary of State Dulles put a freeze on all Foreign Service assignments in January, and no new Foreign Service Officers were brought in for the rest of that year. When the logjam broke, I reported to the State Department on November 15, 1954. Three weeks later, on December 9th, I was on a plane to South Africa, assigned to a small consulate in Port Elizabeth.

Q: And Minnigerode was the consul there?

HARTER: Yes, and I was the vice consul. It was a two-person office. My predecessor had left a couple of weeks before I arrived, and the day I reported for duty, I was already booked to issue visas. It reminded me of the old New Yorker cartoon of someone going down a ski slope reading a book on how to ski. But it turned out to be a remarkably wonderful opportunity. Six months after I arrived, Gordon was due for home leave, and Chuck Higdon at the consulate general in Johannesburg was scheduled to be in charge, but Chuck was unexpectedly transferred to Vientiane, and I was left in charge as acting consul, even though that was my first assignment. Presumably it was just going to be for a couple or three weeks, while they figured out what they could do about it, but I ended up as acting consul for six months.

Q: Wasn't that a very small position for a man like Minnigerode who had been in the Foreign Service for 30 years?

HARTER: Well, it was considered a distinction to be in charge of an independent consulate at that time.

Q: What happened when Minnigerode returned from home leave?

HARTER: He returned after six months, but he was almost immediately transferred to Cape Town as consul general, and I was acting consul for another six months. Altogether, I was in charge of the post for approximately one year. It was a wonderful opportunity. I lived in a 35-room mansion by myself. That was my situation when I met my wife, who was then a South African newspaper reporter. She later claimed I lured her into the Foreign Service under false pretenses, because we never had comparable living quarters after we were married.

HARTER: Yes, and that was an irony. At FSI I met Bob Flenner, who heard I was going to South Africa. He was preparing for his assignment to Belem, Brazil, and he wondered why I was selected to go to South Africa. There was no logical explanation _ it was a random bureaucratic decision. Flenner had been a researcher in the Department's biographic unit, a section of INR [Note: The Bureau of Intelligence and Research ("INR") includes a complex of State Department offices that produce analyses of political and economic developments in other countries. The Bureau is also the Department's principal interface with the CIA.] that was shifted to the CIA in

the late 1950s - and he was well acquainted with South African politics. Logically, with that background, and the fact that he had a wife and a four year old child, he should have been assigned to South Africa, where living conditions were family-friendly, and I should have gone to tropical Brazil.

Q: How did you travel to South Africa?

HARTER: I flew first class - with a berth. It was a 44 hour flight to Johannesburg, with refueling stops in the Azores and Ghana. When Tom Wailes, our Ambassador, learned I was arriving as a new Foreign Service Officer, he invited me to stay two days in Pretoria to attend Embassy staff meetings and to meet Embassy officers. That was a valuable introduction to my new job, although I was in an absolute daze, this being my first exposure to life and work in the Foreign Service. In fact, it was my first experience outside the United States.

I thought Wailes was an outstanding Ambassador. Before his tour in South Africa, as the Department's top administrative officer he refused to answer Senator McCarthy's questions regarding FSOs the Senator suspected of being Communists. McCarthy was after his scalp, and Wailes resigned from the Foreign Service. Eisenhower then appointed him Ambassador to South Africa.

Q: You proceeded to Port Elizabeth after that brief period in Pretoria?

HARTER: Yes. I caught a South African Airways flight to Port Elizabeth on Sunday. The Consul, H. Gordon Minnegerode, and his wife, Nancy, met me at the airport, and they drove me straight to the Elizabeth Hotel. Gordon deposited me there and said, "I'll see you tomorrow morning at the office." That evening I went for a walk along Humewood Beach, which was near the hotel, and the beach seemed absolutely abandoned and desolate. I thought, "My God, how did I end up here on the darkest edge of Africa?" I vividly remember that evening: I felt as lonely as I ever did in my life. I had no idea what I was in for.

Q: What was Port Elizabeth like?

HARTER: I couldn't have received a better first assignment. To me, Port Elizabeth was charming! In retrospect, it was like an English outpost in a bygone era - an extension of Victorian culture. English-speaking South Africans were dominant in Port Elizabeth, and Gordon and Nancy blended nicely into that old neocolonial society. Some two-thirds of Port Elizabeth's white population were English-speaking South Africans, and up to one-third were Afrikaners [Note: Afrikaners are South Africans descended mainly from Dutch settlers. The Afrikaans language is similar to Dutch. Urban Afrikaners generally resent being called "Boers," an Afrikaans word that is roughly equivalent to peasant.]. Both groups generally had a primitive and simplistic view of Africans. Even the better educated whites, for the most part, regarded them as slightly removed from savagery. For example, I befriended some of the professors at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, about eighty miles from Port Elizabeth. It was a first-rate university, but I was appalled that its otherwise enlightened professors doubted that Africans could have intellectual ability. It was a thoroughly oppressive society, but few whites felt its weight. Several of my more

liberal South African friends - those who cringed at apartheid's cruelties and indignities - emigrated to the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Q: Was it difficult to find friends?

HARTER: Oh, no! To begin with, there was a so-called Consular Corps in Port Elizabeth that dated from the nineteenth century. Only the American Consulate employed career diplomats - the others were honorary consuls representing France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Members of the Consular Corps were routinely invited to the official functions in Port Elizabeth, and that provided an effective means of quickly meeting the city's leading citizens. I was young and single, and that opened additional social opportunities. I played saxophone and clarinet in a local dance band for the first few months after I arrived, and that introduced me to individuals rarely known to American consular personnel. I also had a brief acting career with an amateur theatrical group in Port Elizabeth, and that brought me into contact with an entirely different range of people.

Q: What was your main work in Port Elizabeth, and how did you learn to cope with your new duties?

HARTER: I had been told in Washington that I would learn all about consular functions in Port Elizabeth. However, when I arrived I encountered a huge backlog! My predecessor departed some three weeks before I arrived. Gordon had told the State Department he needed a seasoned officer familiar with consular functions to replace him. He issued no visas, he executed no notariats, and he hadn't even signed off on a towering stack of pending consular invoices that accumulated during those three weeks. My God! It was like the cartoon of a skier going down the slope while reading a book on how to ski. Anyway, I somehow managed to perform my official duties: I certified floods of consular invoices and I issued a few non-immigrant visas each week. Several American ships docked regularly in Port Elizabeth and their captains had to report to the Consulate, so I became acquainted with them and their local agents. A few invited me to join them for cocktails on their ships.

Q: You were, in effect, an overall assistant to the Consul?

HARTER: That was my original assignment. I was vice-consul from December, 1954 until May, 1955, when Gordon went on home leave. The Consulate General in Johannesburg had planned to send Chuck Higdon to Port Elizabeth as Acting Consul, but Chuck was suddenly and unexpectedly reassigned to Vientiane, and Ambassador Wailes decided to let me serve temporarily as Acting Consul. He apparently said, "Let's just keep an eye on him and see what happens." I was Acting Consul for six months, and shortly after Gordon returned from home leave, he replaced John Stone as Consul General in Cape Town. I was then Acting Consul for another six months - about a year altogether.

Q: Who was your supervisor while you were Acting Consul?

HARTER: It was an extraordinary situation for a Foreign Service Officer on his first assignment:

I didn't have a supervisor. Throughout that period I frequently spoke by telephone with someone or other from Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, or Washington, and someone visited me officially every two or three weeks. They gave me a pretty free hand. Years later I learned the downside of that: My accomplishments in Port Elizabeth were not well described or evaluated in my official personnel file.

Q: Did you have any unusual consular cases?

HARTER: At first everything seemed unusual to me. I was apprehensive whenever a new visa applicant came to the office, but I read the regulations, as time permitted, and it all worked out satisfactorily. I remember, for example, when Newt Rittenhouse died of a heart attack. He was the Managing Director for General Tire and Rubber and a friend of mine. I felt queasy when I identified his body in the casket before they sealed it to ship to the United States. I made the arrangements for that.

Q: Did many Americans live in your district?

HARTER: Yes, more than two hundred Americans lived in our district. Port Elizabeth was the Detroit and Akron of Africa: General Motors, Ford, Studebaker, Goodyear, Firestone, and General Tire and Rubber had factories in Port Elizabeth or nearby Uitenhage, and they all employed Americans. There was an active American Women's Club, and the Americans in Port Elizabeth comprised a close and socially active community. I became well acquainted with most of them. Of course, they required passport and citizenship services and notaries. I remember, for example, C. V. Hendon, the Goodyear Treasurer, who married a Scottish lady who had been a nurse for his first wife when she was dying of cancer. No one had told her she was eligible to become an American citizen even though she had never lived in the United States, and they were overjoyed when I informed them she could be naturalized while on home leave. She did so, and she was quite proud of her American citizenship after that.

Q: Did the consular district include Americans outside Port Elizabeth?

HARTER: Yes, a few. For example, I met a rather odd American in Kokstad, a rural village in the Transkei. Ted Tremblay, an old friend from SC, returned from South Africa shortly before I went there, and he arranged for me to meet his former boss, Marselis Parsons, who had been Consul General in Johannesburg. Parsons urged me to visit an American named Kelly who ran a small newspaper in Kokstad. Parsons said Kelly rarely saw Americans and welcomed any opportunity to interact with someone from the United States. Kokstad was in the middle of nowhere, about two hundred miles from Port Elizabeth, and I stopped there to see him on my way to Pretoria. He was an oddball with a touch of paranoia: He thought the South African police had targeted him as a spy. I often wondered what happened to him. By the way, I drove all over Southern Africa during the two years I was there: Through the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, along the coast from Durban to Cape Town, and even through Kruger Park and up to Lourenco Marques.

Q: Apartheid was the official government policy.

HARTER: Yes, and it was staunchly enforced by most South African whites. They totally excluded Africans from their schools and residential areas. A few African doctors and lawyers attempted to practice their professions, but they faced huge legal and other obstacles.

Q: When did apartheid begin?

HARTER: Apartheid was the proclaimed policy of Daniel Malan, who became Prime Minister after his Nationalist Party won the 1948 election. Malan's administration tried to renovate the country's entire legal and socio-economic structure - perhaps modern history's greatest failed experiment in social engineering.

Q: As we discussed earlier, the United States went through a rather difficult period after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, when demonstrations at Little Rock and New Orleans impeded the integration of previously segregated school systems. The Eisenhower Administration dragged its feet on civil rights, despite increasing pressures for change.

HARTER: South Africans across the political spectrum closely followed those developments in the United States.

Q: Did you do any political reporting?

HARTER: Oh, yes! Port Elizabeth was the headquarters of the African National Congress, which was Nelson Mandela's political base. However, no one at the Consulate in Port Elizabeth paid heed to the ANC before I arrived. The Embassy in Pretoria encouraged me to meet ANC leaders, and I did. The tradition had been for the Consul to send a biweekly letter to the South African Desk in Washington, with copies to the Embassy, and I kept my eyes open for meaningful events to describe and assess in those letters. For example, I'd meet one of the Africans and pump him for information and insights, and then relay and interpret what I'd been told. Over time I received several nice commendations for those reports.

Q: Did you become acquainted with any of the ANC leaders?

HARTER: Yes, especially Joe Matthews. He and a few other non-whites were sometimes my guests at the consular residence - before the Embassy first invited Africans to diplomatic functions. Joe was the son of Professor Z. K. Matthews, the principal at Fort Hare College for Africans in the Ciskei. I visited the campus there with the CIA Station Chief and the USIA Cultural Affairs Officer from Pretoria. Professor Matthews was a respected scholar and an efficient school administrator. His wife - Joe's mother - was absolutely charming. Joe was then an attorney in his 20s, and the police fingered him as a dangerous radical. I thought his perspective was balanced. I sometimes arranged for Joe to chat at the consular residence with U.S. visitors who expressed an interest in the ANC. He was an impressive young man, and I thought he might have a fine political future. In fact, he subsequently, in post-apartheid South Africa, became a prominent member of the Inkatha Freedom Party, and Nelson Mandela appointed him to a Deputy Minister position in his cabinet.

Q: What future did the individuals you knew anticipate for South Africa?

HARTER: Speculation about the future was a persistent theme of conversations at dinner parties and cocktail parties - and I attended many. During that two-day stopover in Pretoria before I went to Port Elizabeth, for example, I attended a dinner party at which I met a university professor and friend of Malan's named Dr. Tomlinson. When Malan came to power, he asked Tomlinson to head a commission to determine steps needed to implement apartheid. Tomlinson's commission wrestled with that question for five years before eventually producing its multi-volume report in 1953.

Q: You spoke with him about that?

HARTER: Yes, in December, 1954. I asked him about his report - although frankly I knew virtually nothing about South Africa at that time. Contrary to Malan's 1948 rhetoric, Tomlinson's commission concluded that the Africans could never be removed from the urban areas. To slow down their inflow into the cities, Tomlinson believed, heavy investment in irrigation systems, transportation, schools, and hospitals in the rural areas would be required. The cost would be humongous!

The South African Parliament debated Tomlinson's report at length, revealing mainly that a white South African government would never tax its supporters sufficiently to finance Tomlinson's prescription for slowing the inflow of Africans into the cities. The Parliament approved some one-twentieth of the minimum investment Tomlinson deemed necessary to accomplish that end. That being the case, the prevailing view at our Embassy was that violence was inevitable, probably within a few years.

Q: Did you find a different attitude among our officers in Cape Town and Pretoria, as compared with the picture you had in Port Elizabeth?

HARTER: Our officers in Cape Town and Pretoria didn't always agree with each other. John Stone, our Consul General in Cape Town, for example, had been there about five years when I arrived, and he had come to reflect the South African government point of view. His friends included cabinet ministers and other influential Afrikaners. Remember, Pretoria was the administrative capital of South Africa, but the South African Parliament met in Cape Town for several months each year, and the Cabinet and other key members of the government went to Cape Town while it was in session. John Stone was a dramatic example of "localitis," by the way, illustrating why even our best Foreign Service Officers should be transferred fairly frequently. Our political officers at the Embassy, on the other hand, felt John Stone's outlook was much too conservative. Their perceptions generally paralleled my own.

Q: How about the CIA?

HARTER: The Chief of Station was an extremely bright guy, and he agreed with John Stone. He had also been in South Africa for several years. He had no doubt the South African government

would remain in firm control because of its well-trained and disciplined military establishment and constabulary. He pointed out that few Africans lived in the urban areas, and those who did were mostly in the isolated communities called "locations," just outside the metropolitan areas, where the supply of water, electricity, and transportation could easily and quickly be suspended, making them vulnerable military targets. The Chief of Station was convinced the South African Government could maintain the status quo indefinitely.

Q: Did you interact directly with him?

HARTER: Well, yes. Let me tell you a story. One Saturday night I received a telephone call at the Consular residence from a fellow named Daniel Porter [Note: This was not his real name. Other names indicated in this incident are also not their real names.], saying he urgently wanted to see me. I had never met him before that, but I said, sure. He immediately came to the residence, and he told me his life was in danger. He wanted to fight "communism" anywhere the U.S. government might want to send him. He told me about the leaders of a local communist cell, and I took detailed notes. He asked me to go with him to his house, right then and there, to see a fresh bullet hole in the front door. I did, and he showed it to me. I thought he was a nut, but the next day I sent a confidential letter to the Chief of Station, fully recapitulating what Porter told me. I said I didn't know what to make of it, but I thought the Embassy ought to know about it.

Q: Did the Chief of Station respond?

HARTER: To my amazement, within a couple of days, he telephoned to say, "I'm catching the next plane to Port Elizabeth, and I want to talk with you as soon as I get there." I said fine, I would meet him at the airport and provide lodging for him at the Consular residence. He was closeted for three days with the top local officials of the South African police: Colonel Hammond, Major Van der Merve, and Lieutenant Preslaw [Also not their real names.]. Colonel Hammond organized an extravagant dinner for us at the Marine Hotel the last night the Chief of Station was in Port Elizabeth. Before he left, he told me he would send me a letter on special stationery marked "Division M," labeled TOP SECRET, to say: "Dear Mr. Harter: Thank you for informing us of Mr. Porter. We appreciate his offer, but, by his own admission, he is well known to the communists. He would therefore be of no value to us." The Chief of Station said he would sign it with a phony name, and, on receiving the letter, I should invite Porter to my office. In his presence, I should open the safe, pull the letter out, and ask him to read it, while admonishing him not to tell anyone about it. After he read the letter I should return it to the safe and lock it in his presence. After Porter left, I should take the letter out and burn it. I followed that scenario, just as the Chief of Station prescribed. Porter left my office, literally in tears.

A couple of weeks later, Colonel Hammond locked himself in his bathroom and shot himself. I had known him and his wife slightly before that, and I sent Mrs. Hammond condolences. After that she invited me to her apartment for dinner about once a month with her three beautiful, young daughters. I became quite fond of the older one, Jennifer. Also, soon after Colonel Hammond's suicide, Major Van der Merve and Lieutenant Preslaw were promoted and transferred to Pretoria to senior positions in the police department. Their successors in Port

Elizabeth went out of their way to befriend me.

That was the first time I became aware of the extensive and deep relationships between the CIA and the constabularies around the world.

Q: How did Ambassador Wailes analyze the political situation there? Did he assume apartheid couldn't go on forever?

HARTER: Well, I didn't speak a great deal about this with Ambassador Wailes or his successor, Hank Byroade. But, of course, I received and read the reports of the Embassy's Political Section, and I spoke often with our excellent political analysts in Pretoria: "Mac" Johnson - that was William McKinley Johnson, Jr., who headed the political section when I arrived - and Bill Wight, his successor, after Mac took over the South African Desk at the State Department. Tom Karis was the other political officer with an insightful grasp of South African politics, having been an INR specialist on South Africa before his assignment to Pretoria. Karis was a "Wristonee" who later returned to an academic career. Those three individuals provided continuing feedback on the political reports I sent from Port Elizabeth, and as I indicated, frequent visits to Port Elizabeth from officers at our Embassy and other South African posts kept me au courant. Their consensus was that apartheid could not be sustained indefinitely - that South Africa was a smouldering volcano that was bound to erupt sooner or later, probably within five years.

Q: I was in the Africa section of INR in the early 1960s, and the analysts there envisaged a night of long knives in South Africa. Did you think the white South Africans could be persuaded that peaceful evolution was possible?

HARTER: Most of them wouldn't countenance a relaxation of apartheid, but some liberal South Africans were perceptive. Moderates at the University of Stellenbosch, for example, pressed the government to be less oppressive. They favored more public services and educational opportunities for Africans, contending that Africans should occupy influential positions as they became better educated. I knew an Afrikaner named De Villiers, the editor of Die Oosterlig, the Afrikaans newspaper in Port Elizabeth. He seemed more realistic than most Afrikaners I knew. He later visited me in Washington. But nobody I knew in Port Elizabeth - among the Americans, the English-speaking South Africans, or the Afrikaners - could have imagined what actually happened in the 1990s.

Q: You were there when a few African states to the north became independent, with mixed results.

HARTER: Yes, and the white South Africans were quite apprehensive about the prospect of establishing diplomatic relations with the new African states. They were alarmed at the prospect of accommodating black Ambassadors from those countries in Pretoria.

Q: Did any American Navy ships visit Port Elizabeth while you were there?

HARTER: Yes, an American submarine docked in Port Elizabeth while Gordon Minnigerode was still there, and that was hailed as a major event. Nancy Minnigerode organized a few well-publicized social functions for the crew.

Q: Would you care to say anything else about Port Elizabeth?

HARTER: Well, I met my wife there. Mickie was a reporter for The Port Elizabeth Eastern Province Herald, the local English language daily newspaper. I met her shortly before I left. I knew many attractive young women in Port Elizabeth, but Mickie was spectacular.

Soon after we met, Hank Byroade visited Port Elizabeth, having recently replaced Ambassador Wailes. Byroade had been our Ambassador to Egypt, where he was apparently a good friend of Nasser, who was stunned when John Foster Dulles announced at a press conference that the United States would not finance the Aswan Dam. Byroade spoke openly in Port Elizabeth and elsewhere about Nasser's shock over this. Byroade maintained that if Dulles had informed him in advance of that announcement, he would have informed Nasser, who might have then reacted more calmly. Byroade said just after he read about the Dulles decision - in the same newspaper on the same day Nasser read about it - an irate Nasser called him to say: "Hank, you Goddamned bastard, you lied to me! I'll never again trust an American." Byroade said the day before that he had assured Nasser the United States would provide substantial financial support for the Aswan Dam. In any event, he was immediately transferred to South Africa. Tom Wailes went to Hungary, where, incidentally, he granted sanctuary to Cardinal Mindszenty when the Cardinal was threatened by the communist regime there.

My wife and I were married in Alexandria, Virginia on May 25, 1957, when Byroade happened to be in Washington. Mickie asked him to be Father of the Bride at our wedding, and he agreed. Byroade was the most charismatic Ambassador I knew during my Foreign Service career. He was a West Point graduate. He had an extraordinary military career before he shifted to the State Department. I believe he was our youngest Brigadier General.

Q: When did you leave Port Elizabeth?

HARTER: In February, 1957, about six weeks after John Tomlinson, the new Consul, arrived. The Department gave me the option of staying for another year as Vice Consul or transferring to a new but unspecified position at a different post. Having been in charge of the Consulate for about a year, I thought it was time to move on to something new. [Note: Tomlinson was "Wristonized" shortly before he was assigned to Port Elizabeth. He was later U.S. Consul General in Casablanca, and after that he was Consul General in Leopoldville when the Congo was suddenly and unexpectedly proclaimed a sovereign nation in 1960.]

EDWARD WARREN HOLMES
Economic and Labor Officer
Johannesburg (1954-1955)

**Political Officer
Pretoria (1955-1957)**

Ambassador Edward Warren Holmes was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1945 and a master's degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1946. Ambassador Holmes joined the Foreign Service in 1946, serving in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

HOLMES: So I came back into the Service, and then I went to Jo'burg.

Q: When you were going to South Africa, to Johannesburg, where you served from '54 to '57...

HOLMES: Jo'burg was '54 to '55, one year before I was transferred. That was an actual transfer; that's thirty-five miles, so it was an actual transfer to Pretoria.

Q: To Pretoria. So, South Africa.

HOLMES: South Africa, three years.

Q: Was this just a post, or had you asked for it?

HOLMES: It was just a post.

Q: You hadn't decided, gee, I've always wanted to be an Africanist.

HOLMES: Oh, no, not at that point.

Q: There weren't Africanists.

HOLMES: No, no, no. See, there wasn't much independence in Africa in those days. This was '55. No, it was just a post, an assignment. And I was so glad to get out of Washington.

Q: My God, yes.

HOLMES: I just grabbed at it, you might say. Besides, in those days, it was different. You were told where you were going, you didn't bid and say no.

Q: Well, you had the April Fool Report, didn't you?

HOLMES: Oh, yes.

Q: This was a post-preference report due the first of April of every year, sort of a wish list.

HOLMES: I didn't know anything about South Africa, no. The whole Middle East was closed to me.

This came up, and I don't know if I was asked; I was told I was going to go.

Q: What were you doing when you went to Johannesburg?

HOLMES: I was doing sort of Econ/Labor reporting. I'd had labor training at the University of Wisconsin, and I was assigned as sort of the labor reporting officer in the Economic Section. That involved my staying in touch with labor unions in the Johannesburg area.

Q: In those days, was apartheid fully in place?

HOLMES: Oh, yes, yes, it was fully in place.

Q: How did we deal with it? Obviously, a large segment of the labor that was being done in Johannesburg and around there that you reported on was black African.

HOLMES: No. No, no. Trade unions were split, of course. There were white unions and black unions. The black unions were virtually illegal; they only existed sub rosa in those days. So the white trade unions were very white and were very much part of the apartheid system, essentially.

Q: Well, you were reporting on the labor situation, not just the union situation, and a lot of the labor was...

HOLMES: A lot of the labor is black.

Q: Yes, but how did we play that at that time?

HOLMES: Well, as I say, the labor unions were very small, very, very weak. Strikes by black labor were illegal. So there were almost nonexistent. They did exist, but in a very minor way. So most of the trade-union reporting, which I did get involved in, was with white trade unions. So black labor existed, but it was only [a minimal part] of the total picture of the industrial situation, let's say.

Q: Was there concern at that time by the AFL/CIO, which was very important within our labor reporting there? Were they concerned about black... at that time?

HOLMES: Not very much. Not really. I think they may have said something along those lines, but in fact not very much. Their contacts were with the trade union federations; that means the white trade unions. There were several different, competing federations, as I recall, but they were all white. One was more liberal and was disposed toward helping black members. But it was such an awkward situation, because strikes by black citizens were simply illegal.

Q: But whites could strike?

HOLMES: Whites could strike, yes. But there weren't many strikes. There was a neat sort of arrangement between the unions and the employers' associations: basically, white labor was allied with white employers to keep the blacks down. The whites were scared to death of having blacks being able to perform skilled labor. They were prevented from performing skilled labor, that was... They could only perform unskilled labor. And the whites wanted to keep it this way, basically. So it was a funny trade-union situation. I'm speaking in very broad terms. There were exceptions, obviously.

Q: But, also, you were a representative of the United States from '54 to '57, which was just really before the civil-rights movement got going in the United States. We weren't as sensitized to this at the time.

HOLMES: Exactly. Right, we were not very gung ho in favor of black rights. We had good relations with the South African government. We deplored some of the excesses that took place, the beatings and the killings of blacks, which were common, the arrests in the night and all that sort of thing. But we gave lip service, I would say, to human rights in those days, more than real interest.

I was only one year in Jo'burg, by the way.

Q: And then you moved where?

HOLMES: Then the ambassador moved me to Pretoria, and I became the number-two political officer; there were two of us.

Q: The ambassador at that time was Edward Wailes, was it?

HOLMES: Yes, it was Ambassador Wailes.

Q: Could you give a little idea of what his approach was to the South Africans and...

HOLMES: Well, what do you mean? As you pointed out, this was before the days of much sensitivity to human rights. In a general way, we were interested in human rights, but political reporting was, as I recall, pretty much on the political parties; that is, white parties, the Nationalist government versus the United Party opposition. And it was cultivating contacts within the major political parties. There was a Liberal Party, headed by Allen Peyton, but it was a very small group of white intellectuals, let's say. I did meet Allen Peyton, we did have contacts with the Liberal Party, but it was not an electoral threat to anybody. It grew in time, and times have changed.

Q: What were our interests... South Africa...

HOLMES: Well, it was just basically to maintain good relations. We were importing uranium

from South Africa, and many other minerals. South Africa is extremely well endowed with precious minerals of all kinds, including platinum and uranium and other things that are very important to our industry, and we were importing lots of it. We had a space-tracking station in South Africa, and we had naval visitation rights in Simonstown, which was a major naval base outside Cape Town. So I think our approach to the situation was: Don't rock the boat. Keep good relations with this important country.

I don't mean that we totally ignored the black situation. I think, now and then, we issued statements that we wished they would do a little more for the blacks. And we did give scholarships, where we could, to black people. You know, an exchange program. We tried to make the exchange program affect all the racial elements: the Indians, the coloreds, the blacks, and the whites.

Q: Well, ... the independence... the African countries.

HOLMES: That's right. Back here, you mean. Right, our own civil-rights movement, which was just faintly beginning. So we reflected the American outlook. As I said, we tried, now and then, and we did give scholarships and leader grants, which I think, in the long run, have paid out, probably. Some of the leaders nowadays undoubtedly were among those early choices to get to the United States to get a college education or advanced degrees or whatever. So we didn't do nothing, but it was very moderate.

Q: Were you there when Henry Byroade became ambassador?

HOLMES: Yes, yes, I was.

Q: What was his form of operation?

HOLMES: He was quite different from Wailes. Wailes was a professional Foreign Service officer, a very adept, very smooth, very able man. Byroade was from a different background. He had been pulled out of Egypt because of his fight with Dulles over the Suez Canal situation, and this was, in a sense, exile for him, it was clear. But he plunged in and was very, very much of an activist guy who made lots of friends in various circles and so forth. Mind you, I was only there a fairly short time, about six months, when I was transferred.

**ARVA C. FLOYD
Consular Officer
Durban (1955-1959)**

Arva Floyd was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Emory University and the University of Edinburgh. After serving with the US Army in World War II and in the Occupying Forces in Austria after the war, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Djakarta, Indonesia in 1952. His foreign postings

include Indonesia, South Africa, Martinique and Brussels, where he dealt with matters concerning NATO, European Security and Disarmament. In his Washington assignments Mr. Floyd also dealt with these issues. From 1978 to 1980 Mr. Floyd was Foreign Policy Advisor to United States Coast Guard. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: So in '55 you left Indonesia. Whither?

FLOYD: South Africa.

Q: Still within that orbit.

FLOYD: Well, South Africa's a long way from Indonesia.

Q: You went to South Africa, where did you go?

FLOYD: I went to the consulate in Durban, in Natal. From '55, I think I spent three years there, maybe until early '59.

Q: What was the situation like in South Africa, particularly in Durban?

FLOYD: Well, superficially it was quite calm. There weren't riots or any surface manifestations of tension. Durban was basically a white city. There was a certain undercurrent of unease, but life went on and people had lots of parties, social life was very active. The economy and the country were prosperous. When people gathered or met with foreigners they would ask all the usual questions about where we were going and what's going to happen, and this, that and the other. But they weren't morbid, or even frightened about it.

Q: Was there a consul general there? Who was in charge?

FLOYD: Claude Hall.

Q: What was his background?

FLOYD: He was an old Foreign Service officer and had made a career at it. He'd been there quite a few years when I got there. He was a Baltimorean. He had been a scientist in his early training, and went out to South Africa on some sort of astronomical venture and when that didn't pan out well, rumor had it that he dropped the mirror of the telescope. Whether that actually happened or not, I don't know. In any event, he left that undertaking, and moved laterally into the Foreign Service.

Q: Our embassy was moved back and forth between Pretoria and Capetown. Who was our ambassador?

FLOYD: Tom Wailes for most of the time, followed by Henry Byroade.

Q: Did you feel part of an African service, or was there really an African service at that time?

FLOYD: Not when I arrived there, no, that began a bit later. As a matter of fact, when I left South Africa, which I think was in '59, I joined a group of 20 junior Foreign Service officers who were making a study tour through Africa. We were supposed to be the core of the Africa specialists, who everybody thought we'd need. John Kennedy was on the horizon already, I think at that time. In any event, there was a lot of talk that we were going to lose Africa just like we quote, lost Asia, unquote. So we had to be prepared. John Foster Dulles was secretary of state, and he recognized the need for this kind of specialization. So, this was the first effort to form a group of Africa specialists.

Q: While you were there, '55 to '58, things were beginning to change in the United States. Segregation. Little Rock must have happened around that time...

FLOYD: Brown v. Board of Education, I think...

Q: '55, wasn't it? And then the big thing was Central High in Little Rock, where Eisenhower finally had to send in the airborne. Was this a topic of much conversation?

FLOYD: Well, yes, an awful lot of conversation. But the fact you have to remember is that it was very difficult for us to have any real social interaction with Africans. They lived in their townships, which were segregated areas well outside the city. It wasn't forbidden, either by South African law or by our own policies, and once or twice we had black South Africans to our house for dinner; but, it was not an easy matter at all as they had to come some distance. Was there much talk about it? Yes. But, what I heard was talk between with the wives; I don't know what was being talked about in the townships.

Q: In your contact with whites in Durban, did you notice if there was a division between those of Dutch and English descent?

FLOYD: Oh, very much so. While I was there, the first-generation people of British descent, or people who had arrived there directly from the U.K., tended to be businesspeople. They, therefore, had the more practical approach to these issues. They were not ideological; nor had any kind of religious sense of the destiny of the race. They were not necessarily more liberal within the usual meaning of that word; but, they were certainly more flexible in their thinking patterns about it. They thought that it only made sense to employ as many black people as could be employed in manufacturing and business and so forth. They thought that the past laws were an abomination and labor people should be able to move freely. The local chambers of commerce and industry were always advocating that sort of thing. While the Afrikaners in Durban were invariably a minority, they were very, very rigid in their support of apartheid.

Q: Were we under any instructions to try to do something, or were we more passive observers at the time?

FLOYD: Well, we (the embassy and consulates) were trying to cultivate people of non-white racial groups to the extent that we could. We were encouraged to meet as many of these people as we could. In Durban, there was a large Indian minority, and they were much easier to socialize with. They were not subject to the same sort of rigid discrimination and segregation that blacks were. We socialized with them quite a lot, although they were not a major player.

We, the U.S., had a lot of things on our plate. Also, we could not, in all fairness, presume to reform South Africa; it was simply beyond our power to do so, and we had what we thought, I think correctly, much more important things to do at the time.

Q: Did you have much in the way of naval visits?

FLOYD: Yes, but these were basically social events. U.S. vessels which had been deployed to the Indian Ocean would make a port call, but it had no strategic or military significance.

Q: How about getting out and traveling around?

FLOYD: Yes, all of the embassy and consular people traveled a lot within South Africa. It's a beautiful country. Did you have anything in particular in mind?

Q: No, I was just wondering whether we were getting out and reporting on what was happening and that sort of thing.

FLOYD: Well, we did a lot of reporting on what was happening, but we didn't have the impression that Washington was terribly interested. They didn't want anything bad to happen; that was about it.

Q: What type of work were you doing there?

FLOYD: It was a two-man post with two Foreign Service people. Another person came in later. I did a good deal of commercial work and consular work, and also general reporting. I was encouraged by the embassy to do so, and they seemed to like my reports, so I kept writing them.

Q: What about on the commercial side? Were you up against a Commonwealth barrier? How were American firms treated?

FLOYD: No, I can't recite exactly what the tariff barriers may have been, but the bigger American companies, those that did a fair amount of business in South Africa, set up either their own assembly plants or their own distribution facilities and were doing quite well in South Africa, as were the British from the U.K. Relations among these businesspeople were always extremely good; there were no problems there at all. The automobile companies, Ford and General Motors, were set up in Port Elizabeth. There were also a couple of tire companies. A lot of the big American brand names were very deeply involved in South Africa, including the manufacturers of corn products and others.

Q: Were the Afrikaners a breed apart?

FLOYD: Yes, they were definitely a breed apart - certainly in Durban. They were a minority among the white group. The Afrikaners had no particular tradition of commerce and business. The Afrikaners basically went into government service and into professions, where they would serve Afrikaners basically. There was very little commercial tradition among them, and they were not very successful when they did so. The South African government tended to favor state-owned enterprises in things like petroleum where they could hire Afrikaners to work within those big state-owned firms. That was their way of countering the English-speaking predominance in the private sector.

Q: Were the Soviet Union and communist influence considered a problem at that point?

FLOYD: Well, there was a lot of concern about communist influence within the ANC (African National Congress), and communist, quote agitators, unquote, in Johannesburg – this sort of thing. But it was not the sort of thing that anybody worried about on a daily basis; people weren't transfixed by it. At the time, most of us in the Foreign Service assumed that there was an alliance of convenience between the local communist party and the ANC. The local communist party, interestingly enough, was largely white Afrikaner, other whites, coloreds, and some Indians. By coloreds I mean mixed race in the South African sense. The ANC were quite prepared to deal with them. I learned later, when I worked in the Intelligence and Research Bureau in the Department of State after leaving South Africa, that, by and large, the communists were not terribly successful in manipulating the African National Congress. The African National Congress would use the communists to further their own causes and followed tactics of their own devising. The notion that the stupid blacks were being dominated by clever communists was popular in the mythology of a lot of people, but did not reflect the reality as I learned it to be when I went into the issue in some depth.

Q: How were we seeing South Africa in the next few decades?

FLOYD: Do you mean what did we think about it?

Q: Yes. What did we think would happen? Obviously, here is a relatively small group of whites, some mixed, and a large African population. Ghana was decolonized and other nations were seeking their freedom. Africa was going to change.

FLOYD: Obviously, that was the issue on everybody's mind. Most people at the embassies and consulates thought there would be some kind of uprising much more quickly than in fact happened. As a result everyone thought it was up to us to start cultivating ties with black people, and side more openly in terms of our general diplomatic and political posture with the African side of the thing, than Washington was prepared to do.

Q: While you were there, did you get any major visits from anybody, or was South Africa pretty much off the congressional or official trip circuit?

FLOYD: Well, we got lots of visits, but no major ones that I can think of. Nelson Rockefeller came down but I'm not sure what he was doing. I think he was collecting skins, or something like that.

HENRY BYROADE
Ambassador
South Africa (1956-1959)

Ambassador Henry Byroade was born in Indiana in 1913. He graduated from U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1937. He served in the U.S. Army in Hawaii from 1937-1939 and received a master's degree from Cornell University in 1940. In addition to serving in South Africa, Ambassador Byroade served in Egypt, Afghanistan, Burma, the Philippines, and Pakistan. He was interviewed by Niel M. Johnson on September 19, 1988.

Q: *Then you went to South Africa.*

BYROADE: Yes.

Q: *They're all in the news nowadays.*

BYROADE: Every place I've ever served in is having real troubles, I guess.

Q: *Was apartheid a real problem when you were there, or did that emerge more later on?*

BYROADE: Yes, it was a problem. If you read the press there you were very well aware of the problem, because South Africans - the Afrikaners - in a way are their own worst enemies. They get up in Parliament every day and tell the whole world how terrible this is, and what they're doing. If you lived there, this is in '56-'58, you never saw the problem in the streets. It was a wonderful place to live. But it was a country where the American Ambassador could do very little. The Afrikaners were quite willing to talk about the problem; they'd talk about it all night long, any time you wanted to. But we had very little influence on what they did.

The American people look upon this like the American Black problem, and in a way it isn't. I would say the average American feels that the white man came along and took over the black man's country, and it's not true. The white men were there first. Their history is amazingly similar to ours - the same type of covered wagon, almost the same decade; they left Cape Town to resettle South Africa as we were going west. They came up finally with a policy of apartheid. Now in itself, the word has become, to the average person, a white man with a black-snake whip on the black man.

The word "apartheid" means separateness, and that's all it means. Now, had they really been able to do that, it might not have been so bad. When I was there, South Africans, for instance, were

spending more than any other African country on the education of the blacks. Nobody knows that. The problem came when the white man needed the black man's labor to build the economy and run the gold mines and all that. The economy got so meshed together that separateness didn't mean anything anymore. I think the policy of South Africa is wrong, but I'm not sure that if there were that many American people in that position, I'm not sure what our position would be.

Q: Did we advise any kind of gradual integration of them into the political system?

BYROADE: Always, we took that position. Occasionally, at say 2 o'clock in the morning, the Afrikaner would say, "All right, so it is a holding operation. If we do it our way, it may still be all right for our children, and maybe our grandchildren. If we do it your way - one-man, one-vote - we're out of here tomorrow.

Q: Were we advising something in between apartheid and one-man, one-vote?

BYROADE: Yes, of course we were. But they have not been willing to take our advice, and we end up doing a lot of things wrong. Sanctions sounds great, and it gets voted on in the US Congress, but actually it makes the life of the black man worse. And it isn't changing the policy one bit.

Q: What do you think would change the policy?

BYROADE: Time. I'm not sure outsiders can do a great deal about it.

Q: Well, I presume they do listen to public opinion in other countries, and I suppose some kind of pressure is necessary to make...

BYROADE: Well, they have made progress. Sometimes I think that Botha is going as fast as he can go, but it's not all that simple for a white political leader in South Africa because there's a far-right bloc of voters he's got to think about who want no compromise whatsoever on this. Sometimes, I think the Government is a little bit ahead of the white population; but it isn't working very well, I'll admit.

FRANK C. CARLUCCI III
Vice Consul
Johannesburg (1957-1959)

Born in Pennsylvania in 1930, Ambassador Frank C. Carlucci attended Princeton University and later Harvard University. He served for two years in the U.S. Navy and joined the Foreign Service in 1956. In addition to serving in South Africa, Ambassador Carlucci served in Zaire, Tanzania, and Brazil. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996 and 1997.

Q: Did you feel a sense of disappointment by going to Johannesburg which was sort of one of the few old African posts and not Guyana or Nigeria or one of the places that was beginning to...?

CARLUCCI: Well, I wasn't an African expert and I hoped to go to Latin America. But I really wasn't disappointed in going to South Africa. I thought it was an exciting place and a pretty place. I studied some of the history and became interested in it. I became personally interested in the evolution of apartheid and while I was a commercial officer in essentially an economic and consulate post-Johannesburg - I undertook on my own initiative to go to a number of ANC [African National Congress] meetings.

Q: Now was this a legitimate group at that point?

CARLUCCI: They were allowed to meet. There was surveillance on me when I went to the meetings. And after I had gone to a certain number of them, the South African Government complained to our ambassador, Ambassador Byroade, at the time about my activities. So although I wasn't doing anything illegal, they thought it was suspect activity.

Q: What was the situation as you saw it in 1957 in South Africa?

CARLUCCI: I saw it, happily erroneously, as a looming clash between the black population and the white population. When I left South Africa, I left with a certain sense of despair because it was very difficult to see how their problems could be worked out. I think the world owes a great word of thanks to the leadership in South Africa for the way in which they have so far solved an extraordinarily difficult problem.

Q: Now I was in Africa in INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] in 1960 and more or less I think our feeling was there was going to be a night of the long knives at some point.

CARLUCCI: That was my feeling.

Q: I don't want to let Johannesburg go. Let's talk a bit about it. What were you getting out of the ANC meetings? What was your impression of these?

CARLUCCI: I got a sense of what their politics were, how militant they were. Frankly, I felt they were less militant than they'd been described. I got to know some of the splinter groups. I was the first person, for example, to talk to Robert Sobukwe, who founded the Pan Africanist Congress. He later died. But I got acquainted with the movement, which, interestingly, nobody in Pretoria had been able to do. Our embassy was constrained from attending the meetings. The meetings were in Johannesburg. So I established a relationship, a personal relationship, with some of the political officers in Pretoria and reported to them. I wrote a number of political - what in those days were airgrams you may recall-political airgrams on these meetings on the ANC. They were well received in Washington and I think were basically responsible for my subsequent assignment to the Congo as a political officer.

Q: What was the attitude towards your going out and developing these ties? Let's start at the

consul general level.

CARLUCCI: The consul general, General Arthur Beach, didn't take a deep interest. But he never blocked what I wrote and had no problem with me doing it as long as I didn't get into any difficulty. The embassy at first, I think, was a bit skeptical but then tended to encourage me as long as I had time for my basic duties, my commercial duties, which I did. I remember I wrote the Basic Annual Industries Report for South Africa which was favorably received by the Department of Commerce.

We had a very able local employee in Johannesburg named Gideon Uys, who was able to contribute enormously. He and I worked together almost as equals on the Annual Industry Report. The report received high marks from Washington.

Q: Well, this is towards the end of Eisenhower administration and our own segregation was coming under increasing attack and we'd had schools becoming desegregated but certainly segregation was the rule of thumb in the American south. Were you getting any reflections from this either from your bosses or from the South Africans who were looking at what we were doing?

CARLUCCI: No. The guidance that I had was that apartheid was wrong, we didn't favor it. And we were certainly in those days much less activist in opposing that kind of poor human rights policy. But it was clear that we did not favor it. When I'd see lines that said Europeans only, I was frequently tempted to get into the other line and say I was not a European. I certainly found the segregation distasteful. And I must say I found a number of South Africans who felt the same way.

Q: How long had apartheid been sort of the rule there before you arrived in '57?

CARLUCCI: Oh, since right after World War II, following the Jan Smuts government.

Q: So it was well entrenched. Was there in Johannesburg the equivalent to an opposition? I'm thinking of Suzman and other people like that.

CARLUCCI: Oh, yes. Helen Suzman was active. And you had the United Party in opposition. While their rhetoric was a little bit more conciliatory toward the blacks, they did not favor integration by any means. Helen Suzman was a lonely voice. You had Alan Paton, who wrote Cry the Beloved Country, and a few other people speaking out. But they were very much in the minority.

Q: Were we assigning black officers, or did we have any black officers at that time to...?

CARLUCCI: When I was there, I don't recall any black officers. I don't know what the policy was.

SAMUEL D. BOYKIN
Consul General
Cape Town (1957-1961)

Samuel D. Boykin was born in 1905 in Alabama. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in 1926, he worked in the private sector for many years. In 1944, Mr. Boykin joined the State Department, serving in South Africa and Washington, DC. He was interviewed on May 7, 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

BOYKIN: I had a good friend in a position in the Department who I knew had something to do with assignments and I went to see him and said that I would like to go to South Africa. I said, "There is a very interesting situation down there and it is something I would like to do. I have never been assigned abroad before and would like to get into that." He said, "Well, we will see what we can do."

So he got me appointed as Consul General to Cape Town. I went down there and served from 1957 until 1961. It was one of the best assignments I ever had in my life. The life was marvelous. The problems were interesting. The reporting was great. The people were very friendly. It was just a wonderful assignment. I had a beautiful house, gardeners, everything that a person could possibly want in a position. It was a marvelous climate. Everything about it was grand.

Q: I wanted to go back to one phase of your Cape Town tour. You were there in 1957 before Kennedy came in. How did we view the situation at that time with apartheid, etc.?

BOYKIN: We had a policy of being against apartheid from the beginning. We had no influence other than what influence we could put on the government by persuasion at that time we were not thinking about boycotts, no one had even thought about boycotts, but we as a government were opposed to apartheid. We would pronounce it apart"ate"; apart"ate" was the Afrikaners pronunciation, not apart"tide". We would express ourselves vocally at every opportunity as being opposed to this. And trying to influence them to make changes in their operations. But they weren't listening to anything. They are wonderful people. They were friendly, nice, love Americans until you got talking about race. Then the fists were up. But I made it a point to know these top people as much as I could possibly get to know them, although I was only a consul general. The embassy was in Pretoria and the legislative branch met in Cape Town. So I would have the embassy during the legislative sessions. I got to know the top cabinet people and were friendly with them. I got along fine with everybody in South Africa. I would have blacks privately, not publicly. I would also have coloreds. I made a point to know them all. I also got to know the opposition well too. So I began to get a good feeling of this whole situation. I knew that something would have to eventually be done. And it has been done.

I was there first under Hank Byroade and then Phil Crowe and finally Joe Satterthwaite. They

were all good men. All capable. The prima dona, I would say, would be Phil Crowe. But he was a very capable fellow. He stood on protocol and loved to be admired. One had to just play up to him. But I liked him. I got along with him. He could be tough. I got along with all of them.

And I hated to leave the Cape Town because I knew so many people of all points of view.

So after the stint of finding jobs, I had to retire and they gave me a party up in the diplomatic reception room of the Department. There were lots of people, the family was there, there were pictures, and many said very nice things and then they bid me goodbye.

RICHARD ST. F. POST
Consul for Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland
Mbabane, Swaziland (1964-1966)

Principal Officer
Maseru, Lesotho (1966-1968)

Richard St. F. Post was born in Spokane, Washington. He graduated from Harvard University and entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Somalia, Hong Kong, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola, Canada, Portugal, Pakistan, and Washington, DC. Mr. Post was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: I think we can get to that later, because I do want to hear it in full detail, but what about Mbabane, in Swaziland. You were there from 1964 to 1966. Could you describe the situation there and what you were up to?

POST: This was at a time when the South Africans, who had coveted what were then the British High Commission Territories, Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland, were jacking up the heat on the British to turn them over. There was some sentiment among the British to do that. I think the dominant feeling was no, these people have trusted us and we have to hang in there. But there was a growing tendency among the British to give in to the South Africans. I was certainly given to understand that my being sent to Swaziland as Consul for Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland, was designed to facilitate, to put emphasis on our policy that these countries should remain free from South African influence and that they should eventually become independent.

Q: That was your main function, to show the flag?

POST: I was showing the flag but I was also reporting on political developments, particularly reporting on what the South Africans were doing in that part of the world. I was reliving those moments last week with the release of Nelson Mandela, because I arrived just after he had been convicted and sent to Robbin Island. When I got to Swaziland there were quite a number of black

South African refugees living there. One of the things that was going on for some time after I got there was every now and then an African, an ANC person or somebody like that, would be kidnapped by the South African authorities in Swaziland.

Q: This can often be a problem. I served four years in Greece where essentially the government, the Greek colonels, practically co-opted the CIA. Because if you are very nice to somebody, unfortunately, and you can take an anti-communist stand, it is very easy to get sucked in.

POST: I can sympathize with the CIA operatives. They would be people who were announced to the South African government. And they would have regular contacts with them as part of their function. What I was annoyed at was that they were in a position to put on file what the South Africans wanted on file, which were people they didn't like. I think that may have been true about South African personalities as well. Not only those in the Territories.

Q: Did you have any dealings yourself with the South Africans?

POST: I had to pass through the customs and police. I did most of my traveling back and forth by road. I put something like 50,000 miles a year on the ground. Mind you there are stretches of open road in South Africa, I was traveling most of the time at about 100mph as they do to this day in South Africa.

Yes, I had some dealings with South Africans, at the border points. There was a time when my visa for South Africa had expired and the South Africans did not renew my visa, by this time I was in Basutoland, not Swaziland, when independence came and I went to open our embassy in Lesotho. The South Africans, instead of giving me a visa, gave me, each time I wanted to make a trip, I would have to apply and get a Laissez Passer. I was really annoyed at this because it took some time to do. It made it difficult to make trips except for those that were planned well in advance, and further what really annoyed me was that, as Americans, we were supposed to get reciprocity on visa matters, I didn't see any South Africans forced to get Laissez Passers to get to the United States. I couldn't get the State Department to do much about that.

Q: How about the Embassy in Pretoria?

POST: They would try but they wouldn't get very far. I also had some dealings with the South Africans because I took up polo when I was in that part of the world and most of the people who played polo were Afrikaners in nearby areas. Polo is a pretty rough game and they were some pretty rough players, but there wasn't anything as rough on the field as it was afterwards at the bar, when they would work me over about US policy on South Africa.

Q: Were there any issues that came between the United States and those countries, for example, the UN votes?

POST: After independence, they were represented in the UN so we would have to go in with the usual laundry list of issues and how the United States was going to vote and give them a copy, so that we would hope that we would vote the same way. Then that led to an interesting exchange between me and the man who was the principal fellow in the Lesotho foreign ministry, in charge of UN affairs and many other things as well.

I forget what the issue was. It was some issue on which we were going to vote one way and we wanted [Lesotho] to vote that way. It was clear that South Africa was going to vote a different way. He said that, "I agree with you, I agree with you, your logic and all the rest. It is a little difficult for us to vote against South Africa, particularly if they know it in advance. Because then they can come and lean on our Prime Minister, who was Chief Jonathan at the time, who was alleged to have received a certain amount of support from the South African government to get his election through. Anyhow he said, "How can I instruct our representative in New York, without the South Africans knowing about it? We don't have any codes or anything like that." I was aware of the fact that there is a significant literature in Sesotho language. Outside Ethiopia, there may be more native literature published in Sesotho than in any other language in Africa. Any African language.

Q: *So you were saying that there was considerable literature in Sesotho.*

POST: The point was that I had been, at that point it was a one-man post. I eventually got a secretary, making it a two-person post and eventually I got an assistant, so then it was a three-person post, but we were operating on one-time pads, where you would have these three-letter combinations. You had a text, which is the same as the text held at the other end of the line, and then you have 3 letter combinations that you feed into the code. Anyhow I suggested to him that he get a Sesotho book and keep a copy himself and give one to his ambassador in New York and then they could make up their own code by referring to a page in that book that was most unlikely to be in the possession of the South Africans. And they could make the combinations. Then they could instruct their men without the South Africans hearing about it.

GILIAN JACOT GUILLARMOD
Branch Public Affairs Office; USIA
Cape Town (1964-1969)

Administration Section, Exchange Program
Pretoria (1969-late 1990s)

Ms. Guillarmod was born, raised and educated in South Africa. In 1964 she joined the USIS staff of the American Consulate General in Cape Town, working in the Branch Public Affairs office. In 1964 she moved to Pretoria, where she joined the staff of the Embassy's Administration Office, later transferring to its Public Affairs Office. From that time until the late 1990s Ms. Guillarmod

managed the Embassy's Visitors Exchange Program. Her career with this program brought her in touch with many South African and American influential political and cultural grantees. Ms. Guillarmod was interviewed by Daniel F. Whitman in 2009.

Q: Now, when you were working at the U.S. embassy at Pretoria, you had spent several decades working on cultural exchanges and other types of things. I'd like to ask you first, where were you born?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was born in Cape Town in 1942, and I joined the embassy there in 1964. And I was there for five years until I left to come to Pretoria to be married.

Q: Now, you say embassy; in those days it-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was USIS (United States Information Service).

Q: -the embassy used to go back and forth, I believe, from Pretoria to Cape Town, depending on whether Parliament was in session.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes but we had an American consulate general and I was with the little- tiny little USIS office.

Q: Tiny little USIS office within the consulate.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Okay. Now, going back, sorry, you said '64?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Sixty-four to '69.

Q: When we think of when this started really changing in the '90s, this was 30 years before. So tell me what you can remember of the things that you did during those five years and what was it like in Cape Town at that time, with the- Well, the previous system, as it was.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, it was horrible. I mean, it was better, I have to say when I joined there I really wasn't aware of quite how horrible it was. My being with the embassy affected by outlook on life and I had the great privilege of being- I was a Gill of all trades because we had a librarian and then there was Gill, and I did the press placement and I did the film library. I used to take movies into the townships in the big old station wagon and screen films.

Q: Now, when you mention townships, I know there were restrictions.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. I went usually to Guguletu.

Q: Guguletu. Were there restrictions on the people classified as whites in going into the

townships?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes but I was in a dip car and I never, ever had a problem.

Q: Now, was this a given already in 1964 that 16 millimeter films- What were the tools of the trade back then? Films, press releases?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The library. Oh, and a lot of press, a great deal press. We used to get all those, you might remember from IPS (Inter Press Service) thousands of photographs, all these photographs and multiple copies of them, many of them with no captions on the photo.

Q: From the photo archives from Washington.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And then everything about, or desalinization and the Hoover Dam and just all sorts of things to tell America's story to the world.

Q: And what were you able to do with these materials?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: With the press I used to- When I worked for a new BPAO (Branch Public Affairs Officer), David Michael Wilson, David- you know David- and David decided I was young and blonde and mini skirted in those days that just sending the things in the mail would just- the press stuff would all just land up in some news editor's in drop box and not get used. I used to take the things up to- go up to the "Burger" and the "Argus" and the "Cape Times" and then get to meet people.

Q: The local papers.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And it- it definitely did improve placement. I'm not saying that was because I was young and blonde; I think it was the personal, you know, actually handing it over to somebody.

Q: Although Cape Town had its importance as the parliament-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Of course, yes.

Q: and at that time- it was parliament, basically, yes. Now, parliament was in session, I think half a year?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: From January to June; end of January to June.

Q: And what used to happen from June to January then? You were still there, you were-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Would things slow down a bit?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I can't even think that it was quiet, actually, because I think we always were doing things with education, with University of Cape Town; NUCES, the student body was- we were very active and we tried to work with them quite a lot. And with the- in those days there was that big high building behind us, the South African Information Service was there and the BPAOs would make a point of mixing and establishing relationships with the officials from South African Information Service.

Q: So even back then it was- was it a tempered thing of trying to be in touch and in contact with all strata of society?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, we made a concert- We liked to lay claim to the fact that we provided the first opportunity for a little black theatrical group to perform, and they did a play and I can't now remember the name of it, but they brought into our funny little library that we had and we had a play with a mixed- they were from Guguletu. There was a man there by the name of Ben [Office.]

Q: Whose idea was this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The BPAOs usually.

Q: The BPAO. Just David-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was David, it was Clark Thornton, Tom Gunning; those were the three.

Q: Oh, so you had a team of three?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no, they were successive ones.

Q: I see.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was the secretary to the BPAO so I did, you know, I would do the filing and the secretarial work.

Q: The Gill of all trades.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Now, you said-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Used to get the Wireless File in those days. I used to say oh God, I'm going to get embalmed; when I die they'll bury me and wrap this around me.

Q: It was paper at that time that came; it was sort of a telex.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Lots of trees; lots of trees. Yes, it was a telex, it was a telex. We sent messages by telex and I had a-

Q: We almost have to explain to young readers what a telex was because I'm not sure they have them anymore.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh yes, certainly.

Q: It was like a telegram but it was a little bit more-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It's like in the old movies, if you look at that.

Q: Tick, tick, tick, tick.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Tick, tick, yes.

Q: The ticker machine, yes. It would come overnight; you would actually find it in paper form in the morning.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Clip it up and- no photocopiers at that time.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. Well, there was a photocopier but you did what they called to burn a copy, and you put this piece of paper with- you put another piece of sort of shiny kind of paper over it, and bear in mind I'm technically challenged, so I can't-

Q: As I am, for the record.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And you would feed the piece of paper with the other copy into this machine, it would go over rollers and then come out on this paper, shiny paper, which eventually then, didn't last for a year, even, I don't think. It would just fade. But you had the copy when you wanted it.

Q: I've seen those; it was not so different from the mimeograph machine.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And we used to do that also. If we did a newsletter then you would type that up.

Q: And the type was not so good, it smudged something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And it made holes in the paper.

Q: I guess we could note for future generations that this is the origin of the word "burn,"

because they burn a CD, right.

Now, at the beginning Gill, you were saying that it was horrible. In what way and when did you find out about this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, it was just that- it was just because black people were denied everything.

Q: You said at the beginning this was something you were not aware of. I understand that the system separated-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, I think I was just blind.

Q: -and didn't make things visible.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: In your work with the U.S. consulate how did this become apparent to you?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think just for the first time the people that I encountered, that I would serve in the library when I was there or who would come in for an appointment, come in to ask questions also, would be black people. Before that all the black people I had met had all had menial jobs. They worked in the streets or in people's homes and I then got to realize wow, you know.

Q: Yes. What were the possibilities in the '60s for a black person, I suppose we should talk about colored, Indian and the others as well.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Don't forget there weren't a hell of a lot of black Africans in Cape Town in those days. There was Guguletu-

Q: They were in the Cape but not in the city?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: So but you did get a trickle of people in the central business district.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: What type of person, what type of black person did you get?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Educators and church people.

Q: So they knew in the beginning that they were welcome in the Center?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Yes, yes.

When had the library been created? In the '40s, in the '50s, in the '60s? Any idea? It was there when you arrived.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, I can't. It was there when I arrived. It was in Monte Carlo building. The consulate general was in Broadway building and Monte Carlo building was adjoining; there was a big door that separated us. But I used to- and I'd go to work, I would come in through the Monte Carlo entrance.

Q: What was your sense of the relative prospects of people? Did they all- did all types come in the library at that time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: And as you got to know them gradually did you have a sense of what their future possibilities were, relative, one to the other?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: You know, I can remember David describing to me how he saw South Africa and he saw it as- there would be- the White people were at the front of the river and then there were the Colored people and then there were the Indian people and then the great big Black crocodile at the back, behind- In the river, if it was a river where you were going.

Q: Through the eyes of the outsiders seeing this for the first time.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because people were pushed away so that you didn't see the-

Q: But you took the effort or you were asked to, to go to some of the townships, Guguletu and others. Does anything stand out from that five year period; any particular program? You mentioned the theater group that you gave a venue; did you do any international visitors or Fulbrighters?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. You know, I didn't have anything to do with exchange programs then.

Q: They all came through Pretoria, I suppose.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They came through Pretoria, yes. And I didn't really understand. I knew that they were students and I've kept my records of people that I had and I knew that there

were names of people that I knew came from Cape Town in the '60s who went on the Fulbright program, for instance.

Q: That's fine.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: During the time that I was there, and I joined from '64, and then I recognized some of the names of people who would come in to the office; I'd see here a name, Richard Reeve, a famous person, yes, who went and did a Masters in literature at Columbia in 1965; people like that.

Q: Fantastic. Where was Dennis Brutus from; was he from the Cape? Johannesburg perhaps.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think Johannesburg; I think Johannesburg, yes.

Q: And then you met a person named Jacot.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. But I met him the same year that I joined the embassy, 1964 was my year.

Q: Because that's the name you now bear we have to spend a moment finding out what it was that took you from Cape Town to Pretoria.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A wedding ring lured me to the land of the Voortrekker Monument. Indicating nothing else would have. When people used to come into the library and say we hear you're leaving, where are you go, I'd cry and say Pretoria, because Pretoria had such a reputation for conservatism and it deserved its reputation I found, when I got there.

Q: So the wedding ring and I think the man who offered it were something of great worth, taking you to a place- you did not want to come to Pretoria.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: Did you know that before coming that you did not really want to?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I came to Pretoria for the first time when he had come to Pretoria and then invited me to visit him, which I did, and that was my first exposure. But I just wanted, you know, I wanted to be wed. Let's not go all into the wrinkles or anything.

Q: It's up to you, actually; you're going to get to edit all of this.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Okay.

Q: Okay so love and marriage triumphed over your sense of place, I guess. Do you remember the day you left Cape Town?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I remember the little farewell party that they had for me and photographs and things. I had a lot of friend; I was very happy and I used to- I enjoyed- I had a couple of wonderful experiences when I was there. Bobby Kennedy came to South Africa.

Q: UCT (University of Cape Town).

JACOT GUILLARMOD: and to UCT. And we worked for him and I can remember going into the consul general's office and seeing his- Bobby's aides sitting with their feet up on the desks- I was appalled to see that.

Q: Now, you must know this is too historic a moment for us to pass over lightly. You must help us remember the famous visit where he spoke at UCT.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He spoke, yes, and we all went up and I can remember my teeny little car, I had Jacot's little gray Vauxhall and we couldn't get up- We followed the cavalcade and then it was just, there were so many- what seemed like thousands of people and probably was close to a thousand, outside in the grounds and we just parked in the middle of the road on the UTC campus and went up into the main hall.

Q: So you heard the speech?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes, yes, I was there, yes.

Q: Now tell, before we get to the speech, which is a historic moment, what was your involvement with the Robert Kennedy visit?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: We did some typing for them. It was the UTC visit and then they also went and visited the Simonsberg hostel, a hostel at Stellenbosch University.

Q: Why did Robert Kennedy come? He was attorney general at that time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: What was it, was it his personal interest? What brought him this great distance?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh gosh, I don't know.

Q: Was it just part of being the Kennedy clan?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think so. And the U.S. saying what they thought about academic freedom and that, because he delivered the academic freedom speech.

Q: Yes. And I know it's, well 30 years, 35 years ago, what do you remember, not the quotes, but what do you remember of the gist of that speech? The text is readily available I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Just encouraging; I don't know that I really remember too much. I think I was so over overwhelmed by the whole occasion, you know, and just being there, part of it.

Q: Can you describe what it was that was overwhelming? Was it him, was it the group?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was also him. Don't forget we were in the presence of the man who everybody thought would be the next president of the United States of America and that was an assumed experience.

Q: This was '67?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Sixty-six, I think it was.

Q: Sixty-six. And he lived until '68.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And then we met- we got to meet him afterwards. There was a function at Hedding Hall and he and Mrs. Kennedy were there and he had all his aides and they came along and we got to shake his hand and he said give her a pin, give her a pin, and I still have the U-boat from JFK and that was- I've got that little pin.

Q: Oh my, oh my. How many people were at that reception? That was a by invitation?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh hundreds.

Q: But it was hundreds, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, but we were all there as the workers.

Q: Now, in the hall, at that time it was a white campus, I think. Is that correct?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. But I think there were-

Q: The audience was mixed?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Predominantly, predominantly white.

Q: Now, okay, and then after his visit, I suppose you must have been busy providing photos and text to the local newspapers perhaps?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes we did.

Q: Was it a big story the next day?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh huge, huge.

Q: I mean, stupid question. Yes. And did it-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Banner headlines. And then I think we also- I'm trying to think what it was, there were headlines in the paper because he was in Waterkloof; he came to Pretoria after Cape Town, I think, and there were pictures of him walking around Waterkloof shaking hands with domestic workers and gardeners and that, you know.

Q: So he made a point to-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: So he made a point of acknowledging the black citizens of South Africa, yes.

Q: Did you have any sense of the regime at all stressed about this contact? Did they mind, did they care? Was there any sense of being observed or any sense of an attempt to control the venues?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no, that doesn't mean to say that it didn't happen but that I can't remember specifically.

Q: Right. It was done subtly perhaps, at times.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well maybe not even so subtly because subtlety wasn't part of their vocabulary.

Q: Okay. Well, let's get you to Pretoria. Nineteen-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Sixty-nine.

Q: And did you immediately find yourself at the U.S. embassy?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. Because the only job they offered me was in the budget and fiscal section and not being able to control my own checkbook I decided no, and I went and worked in commerce for two years. And in those days they didn't used to advertise; all appointments were made by sort of word of mouth.

Q: This was the commerce section of the embassy or the ministry of commerce?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, just the embassy itself.

Q: Oh yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The embassy, the personnel section and I got a- I was really getting tired; it was a 20 mile trip each day, you know, there and back to the job that I had and they phoned and asked would I come back. And I came back and for two years I was the FSN

(Foreign Service National) assistant to the admin consular and I had a very- didn't have nearly enough to do and I was complaining about that and after awhile they gave me- I would stand in when people were on vacation and it was very valuable. I did a stint in the general services and I got to appreciate what those good folk do. You know, we tend to complain about them but they had their schedule for the day and then the ambassador's wife phones because the loo's broken and they have to drop everything. So I did- I worked-

Q: Well we complain when things go wrong but we never notice when things go right.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: When it goes right, no. I worked in personnel; it was very helpful, I worked in the general services travel section for awhile and I learned a lot, which was to stand me in very good stead when I eventually moved to USIS. I worked in budget and fiscal, all of them, and then, I remember the late Frank Strovis, he was there in those days working with the PAO (public affairs officer), was Perry L. Peterson.

Q: Perry L.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, whom I'm still in touch with. And Frank was his IO, and Frank was dating Marcy McKee, who was the American secretary to the admin counselor and March and I were great friends, and Frank knew that I had had- I'd worked for USIS for five years and my predecessor in the exchange program, a wonderful woman, Mrs. Robbey, who'd been there for a million years, they discovered that she was 70; horror of horrors, you're not allowed to work a day over, I think, 65, and she- and so they wanted to replace her and I got the job because I had the previous-

Q: There you were right there.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: -yes. And Obe Pitswana, Obe the driver and I joined USIS on the First of February 19- First of January, sorry, 1973.

Q: Seventy-three. So it was four years-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Since I'd left-

Q: Purgatory. Before finding yourself-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And from day one it was just wonderful.

Q: We're going to, of course, get to that. I'm going to break the rule of chronology and ask- I should have asked if there's anything you want to point out about your family, your upbringing, your education back at Cape Town.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't think so. You know, I don't have a- I've got no tertiary qualification or anything. I grew up- I matriculated, I did a secretarial course afterwards at the Technicon and then I worked for a leading firm of jewelers where I did the secretarial work and

checked in the jewelry repairs, etc., for two years, then I went to work for an attorney, and I enjoyed that very much. I was there for a year but then he decided to go into commerce and joined a company and that was when I then was unemployed, which was rather nice, Cape Town in February and not having to work and going to the beach, etc. I was only 20, don't forget, and then- No, no, no; I was 21. And then my girlfriend was dating a young political officer and they knew that there was a job break going in USIS, and she was a librarian but she didn't have secretarial skills and I had the secretarial skills which they said was more important than the library, I'd be able to learn about the library, so that's how I got- Ernie Colton was the BPAO who interviewed and employed me.

Q: Okay. Okay, let's fast forward to coming in USIS in 1979.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Seventy-three.

Q: Now, you said it was wonderful from day one.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes it was. Just the exchange program.

Q: Can you remember the first day or the first weeks or the first month?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I remember my first mistake. I can remember- I had great respect for Mr. Peterson; he was very, very nice. There wasn't a cultural attaché at this stage; Jerry Prillaman was yet to come so there was just- there was me and there was the American secretary and there was the RPMAO, budget person. And there was Ghandi Chang, who was Mimi's brother-in-law and he was in the film library; he was also a very able photographer. And my mistake was the grant; the IV grantee was the late Stan Kweyama, who was with the Citrus Exchange. I got a phone call from Mr. Peterson one Saturday morning. I was going to the racing; there was a phone call to say oh, Gill, there's a cable in from Washington and we haven't said when Stan's arriving. And I hadn't, I hadn't sent an ETA cable. I said, oh Mr. Peterson, I'm so sorry; I don't want to get you into trouble. And I came rushing in and sent off the cable so that was very-

Q: Rushing in?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Into the office on a Saturday.

Q: At odd hours on a Saturday.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I often rushed in on weekends.

Q: Again, this was before the days of easy phone calls.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And that was also long before the days of computers.

Q: Yes, of course.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was an electric typewriter there.

Q: Very state-of-the-art, yes. Well, that doesn't sound like a mortal sin.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was quite conscientious.

Q: Maybe venal but not mortal.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Quite conscientious in those days.

Q: Okay, so you got Kweyama off on time, he went to the U.S. In those days it was 30- or 40-day trips, I think, international.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, they were six weeks. And it didn't matter if they took their spouses along.

Q: Ah.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They were allowed to take their spouses. And in fact in many ways they were encouraged to take their spouses, particularly for people who had- who were disadvantaged in that they didn't have big budgets and that to go abroad was a very expensive exercise and you might be able to find the money for one person, and why should one person in the family have this wonderful experience and not be able to share it with his life partner.

Q: Later discouraged in the '80s and '90s.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Late '80s discouraged.

Q: Discouraged because the Washington bureaucracy found that having a spouse distracted the visitor, I think.

I see you looking at a list-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I'm looking at- these are some of the IVs I sent in that year.

Q: Do any names leap off the page?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh yes, Sheena Duncan, national president of the Black Sash; Wilkie (inaudible), who's still a huge name promoting mathematics. He was the first- he was really the black expert in the field of mathematics, and you know from your experience here there's a shortage of qualified black- black and white mathematicians that got much worse.

Q: And scientists.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Sam Motsuenyane, who was the head of NAFCOC (National African

Federal Chamber of Commerce) and he was a lovely man; he brings back lots of happy memories for me because he used to come into the embassy, well, into USIS, and he didn't have an office or anything and if he- I would make phone calls for him for appointments and with a white- the people would hear a white voice answer, make the call and I'd phone and say please, can I speak to Mr. X, Y Zed and they'd put me through and then I'd hand over and say here's- He ultimately- he got an honorary doctorate; he is Dr. Motsuenyane so I sort of acted as a, that is, his-

Q: You were the intermediary.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was a wonderful, wonderful man, yes.

Q: Okay. Now, at what point did you meet these folks? Did you- In some cases were these people that you brought to the attention of your American colleagues or did they-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Occasionally but you know only after I'd been there for awhile. For the first time, if you read that document that I gave you, I give great credit to my colleagues in the embassy and that for spotting "comers," to use an American expression, that they really- And so many people who you see- who are running South Africa today were the occupied- key positions in our country were identified when they were still ready to be junior staff.

Q: What types of people were spotting these? Were they South Africans and Americans alike?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But it was more, it was more the Americans because in the State Department there weren't too many FSNs in the political section and that.

Q: So the political section people were out and seeing things?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They were seeing things.

Q: And they-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And they identified-

Q: Maybe they had fewer reporting requirements than they do today, maybe?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know but they certainly- And don't forget it was very different then. It was so easy to identify the good guys and the bad guys.

Q: How was it easy?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because any- All the government people were associated, for the most part, you know, you've got the exceptions and then you knew about them but for the most part the government people were associated and I became very anti-government; I became very intolerant, I think, of anybody who I thought didn't agree with me.

Q: Yes. Now, but the embassy was sending some government visitors of course.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh yes, yes, because they didn't send only the people that they- who liked you; you also sent people you didn't like. I mean, before my time they sent Jimmy Krueger, that dreadful minister of justice who was the one who said that because death left him cold, and I think he went in about 1968.

Q: So the American agenda was to try to reach every- to not be exclusive, to take people from the various sectors and if they misunderstood us or if we didn't like them, all the more reason for them to have some- if they were leaders-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Exposure.

Q: -To have some exposure to the American system-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They would send- don't forget, they sent a lot of media, they sent media folk. In the early days, if I go back and I look at my records of before I was involved with exchange program, the majority of people who went were white but gradually as the years went by the numbers-

Q: And I gather from what you just said that your preference, your greater pleasure, was in sending those who did not have the established credentials of being in the government but who were thinking about the country's future. Now, the famous F. W. de Klerk visit-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, 1976.

Q: Seventy-six.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was a member of parliament for Vereeniging in those days when he went.

Q: Okay. Now, and in the famous quote he said, eight, seven or eight years later he said because of the trip to the U.S., something like I understand race relations; he said something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you remember, in '76, were you at all involved in processing this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he was from Johannesburg so I- I did the paperwork so it would have my letter- my signature at the bottom of the letter which would have gone sending off his air ticket and his travel allowance and telling him what to expect. But I didn't meet him personally; I really only- I would meet- I obviously met the people who came through the Pretoria office and I used to go to the airport almost without fail, I saw off almost every person of color who went on- In those days it was Pan Am flights twice a week and they went via Rio de Janeiro and beyond.

Q: Now, why did you feel it was necessary or helpful to accompany people of color?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because so many of the people that we sent had never flown, had never been out of the country and also to make quite sure that they didn't encounter any difficulties with checking in.

Q: What types of difficulties might they have encountered at the airport? Documentation, exit visas and all that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Perhaps; perhaps, yes. And also you wanted them to know that we really wished them well and that- it was nice.

Q: Do you remember what you felt when you signed the de Klerk grant or invitation letter? Did any-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he was no different than anybody else in that state.

Q: He was just part of any other person in the government.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Who knew that he would be the person to release Nelson Mandela?

Q: Did you, actually just on de Klerk on a moment, I mean, you must have met him in following decades, I guess.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes but only on about two occasions and I don't even think that they were thanks to-

Q: To the U.S. program.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: It was just because you were-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It happened at other things.

Q: - or public events where he was present.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Things like that, yes.

Q: Yes, okay. Pan Am; imagine.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Pan Am 202.

Q: Pan Am 202. Which is what, Johannesburg-Cape Town-Rio, like that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. But you didn't get off the plane in Cape Town.

Q: So you would just stay in the plane for many centuries and end up somehow- And then from Rio-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And I don't think you boarded either. I think those people came from Cape Town to Johannesburg and then it just stopped to refuel, something.

Q: I mean, that's the closest geographic point in the Western Hemisphere to land in, I suppose, just about.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think there was some- They didn't all go. Don't forget there would be a couple of years when you'd have a particular route and then there were others when they went round through West Africa and across to Washington.

Q: Right. There was the Dakar-New York Pan Am flight.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And you had to fly American carrier, regardless. It didn't matter if you could get a British Airways at half the price.

Q: That's still the case. I know because here I am in Pretoria and, same thing.

So, do you have any- What would be your guess as to how many people per year benefited from the International Visitors Program in the '70s, '80s in South Africa? I mean, you had to sign the letter. Would it be 15 or 20?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I would do the- No, many more than that; about 35.

Q: Thirty-five.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And there were partials, too. It was before, really before the volvis [Voluntary Visitors] program grew and what- in those days we called it FSV, facilitated assistance.

Q: Okay. We'll, just explain the voluntary visitors program very briefly, which is a program which-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: With somebody who is going to the United States but they would have the same characteristics of an IV so that if they weren't going you might nominate them and they would be there and you would set up appointments for them with counterparts in their field. And occasionally- Now they also give them- even when I was leaving they were giving funding but initially they would set up just the appointments and there was no money entailed.

Q: Facilitated assistance.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Facilitated assistance.

Q: And the programs can be as short as one week, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: So 35 visitors per year; did you notice the gradual shift in demographics from '79 to the '80s and the '90s?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: For which program?

Q: International Visitors and for Facilitated Assistance.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was an unwritten rule that it had to be two-thirds black.

Q: Ah. Whose rule? The U.S.?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know; I don't know.

Q: Ah, interesting.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But I know I- It was just- That was when they had the IV selection meeting; they- that's what they did. The list of finalists that came out-

Q: When we say- black in the American sense, which would include colored and Asian?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh very definitely yes, yes. I think that was during the Carter Administration that we started using a policy of two-thirds black although this was an unwritten law.

Q: Did you find, in the '70s, you started in '73, did you sense a directive coming from Washington or from your American colleagues in country here, what was the objective of U.S. policy from your- What do you guess? A gradual change or status quo or we're here to make commercial, to benefit commercially; do you think it was a mixture? Was there a consistent policy?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think to show South Africans that they were- there was a better way to do things, to show that democracy worked.

Q: Okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And then I think also, depending on who the officer was, some of them were more, you know, were more proactive; somebody like Jerry Prillaman.

Q: Prillaman, yes, who was what, CAO (cultural affairs officer)?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was CAO, yes, from 1973 to about early '75. I've got something from him; I can look that up.

Q: Yes. Later he was in-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He went to Yaoundé also.

Q: He went to Yaoundé, that's right. So Jerry stands out-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And then he was in Paris.

Q: As one of the more active-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I actually saw him- I had lunch with him in Paris a little while ago.

Q: I was in touch with him by email a few weeks ago.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Did you? About these things? Oh good. Because remember I had suggested to you that you contact both him and Brooks Specter.

Q: Yes, but serendipitously I received a note from him- Maybe it did come from you but I received a note from him related to something else, I think. Anyway, I did have the honor of working with him.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because his memory- and he had kept lots of notes.

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It would be very valuable for this exercise.

Q: Excellent. I'll try to do that. He lives in Paris I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, just outside of Paris. I've got his email address.

Q: Yes, yes, please. I have it somewhere.

Okay, so things began to change and should be talk about Operation Crossroads Africa? At what point did it begin? I don't want to skip-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That was, I think, 1974.

Q: Seventy-four, okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think about '74.

Q: Okay. Tell me, and tell the listener, the role of OCA, Operation Crossroads Africa, in the-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: OCA was the only racial program that we presented.

Q: What do you mean by that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It did not- it was not possible for a white person to go on an OCA program but it all- people of all other colors could go.

Q: We have to mention Bart Russeve, our late friend from New Orleans, who administered these programs, who came here every year recruiting-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He started- and at 73, I'm sorry; he sent for Franklin Sonn, who ended up being- who was the-

Q: Franklin Sonn, later ambassador.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: To the United States, he was in the first-

Q: The first real ambassador, I think you could say.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Was he an IV?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he was OCA.

Q: OCA?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. In 1973. There were four people who went that year.

Q: Well gee whiz. Did you know Franklin Sonn?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: No. But you-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He came from Cape Town but Frank Sassman knew him.

Q: Yes, yes, yes. Frank Sassman knew him.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Wow.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was the principle of the Peninsula Technicon in those days.

Q: The Pen- yes, Peninsula Technicon. And then the first ambassador under the Mandela- under the new regime, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think so.

Q: I think so, I think so. Ninety-four.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Ninety-four, yes.

Q: Well, there's evidence of-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: An effective list. But we- If you and I had 30 hours we could go through here and come up with hundreds of evidence of the victims.

Q: I have 30 hours; maybe you don't.

Now, we have to mention, as part of this, that Bart, an African American traveling to South Africa during the apartheid era, he once showed me his visa; it said honorary white.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Ridiculous.

Q: That's what it said. Tell me about what you remember of Bart Rousseve and his visits here.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I just worshipped the ground he walked on. After he'd been here for a few years, it was just wonderful; he always used to let me have a party for him when he was visiting and I always got 100 percent acceptance for that because everybody would just come for Bart.

Q: He came once a year, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He came once a year, yes. A shame, you know, even then, I realize now when, you know, after he died, that he had, what's it called? There's an illness call necropsy.

Q: Narcolepsy.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Narcolepsy.

Q: That's exactly-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he clearly had that because I used to sit him on interviews- after

awhile I began- The first several years I didn't, wasn't part of the interviewing process and then I got to be asked and it was lovely and I did that; I did it with- I ended up doing it with Fulbright, I did it with OCA and I used to do the, for IVs I used to do the program suggestions, he met with the grantees.

Q: And the narcolepsy?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And Bart would nod off in interviews and I would, you know, take over.

Q: So it would be you and Bart plus the candidate?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And always-

Q: An officer.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Another, an officer.

Q: An officer, whether Jerry Prillaman or somebody like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. And sometimes an alumnus.

Q: Again, let's get this away from you and the subject is you but we should mention that Bart died in a car accident when he was driving at night on the Taconic Freeway in New York State, and we think he fell asleep; he was driving to Boston.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Because he'd been to a farewell party that they were having for him before he went off to- he was going to join the cloth.

Q: Yes, 1994, 1994, the year that Mandela became president, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he was- when he left OCA he went to work for the IIE (Institute of International Education).

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he worked in the South African-

Q: International Institute of Education, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. Based in New York.

Q: Yes. And also for African American Institute at some point; AFGRAD (The African Graduate Fellowship Program) something.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: AFGRAD, yes.

Q: So he kept coming kept coming here; he changed his position in the States but he kept coming here and working with you as he changed from one organization to the next.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And he was very kind because he used to say to me, oh Gill, what can I do to repay you? And I said, in 1988 I said, there's something you can do. I had a whole lot of South Africans studying in New York at that stage and he let me cook them a meal in his apartment on 121st Street in Harlem, and I walked from 42nd Street to 121st Street and then I went and did shopping, cooking and they all came along. It was a most marvelous evening.

Q: So you cooked a meal for South African visitors in Bart's home.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A chicken dinner in Bart's home, yes. And many of those, the Fulbrighters and the OCAs and the AFGRADs, then all became friends also; people met who hadn't met other than that. So Bart was such a catalyst in bringing people together.

Q: Yes. They also met other Africans from other countries in the continent.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: And I was eyewitness to a number of times when the South Africans were greeted with suspicion from the other participants.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I experienced it myself.

Q. Gill, tell us what you remember of the difficulty in integrating black South African participants into African programs in the U.S.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh no, I didn't mean it that way; I meant that when I went on my FSN orientation program in 1979 I was on the same program as Deva and Ron Hendrickse and it was for all cultural assistants across Africa. They were a group of about 30 and I was the only white and the rest made it very difficult for Deva and Ron because the rest of the group were very unhappy that I was there.

Q: Why?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because I was white.

Q: It may seem obvious but-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, because I was white. I mean, the guy from Kano, Nigeria, big, big man, said if my government had known you were going to be here I wouldn't have been allowed to come. And the lady from Liberia, with her Diane von Furstenberg luggage, said to me, tell me- Ron and I had been in Miami for three days beforehand and I'd had my hair permed and curly

and I'd been in the sun so I was quite brown, probably browner than Ron, and she asked me was I classified colored, and I said I was very sorry to tell her but I was classified white. And so they really resented me at first but by the end of the trip they were quite good about saying, oh- the same Kano man patted me on my head and told me I was a good woman. And Gilbert from Togo said he was going to take me home to be his South African souvenir.

Q: Well, let's give Gill Jacot Guillarmod some credit for making people feel at ease. This is something that you've always done supremely well.

Deva, Ron and you, I had no idea you went to-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The same-

Q: - you had known of them and you had worked with Ron?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, had worked with them both, no: closely.

Q: So this was not a new relationship?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no, no.

Q: Well, let me just add that with IVs, which I did deal with at that time, black South African IVs were met with extreme suspicion.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because their people thought that they were sellouts.

Q: Exactly.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, that was true.

Q: Or spies or what have you and they had to prove at a very early stage that they were not in order for there even to be the possibility- It was quite tense, quite tense.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I know that, and I'll tell you this, let me tell you another little issue. There was a time during the Carter era that the South African government introduced the homeland situation, Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu, etc. And then they would enforce, nine times out of ten, they would insist that anybody, if we invited them- I have to- No. Let me back track also.

I have to tell you that, and I found that quite interesting when I listened to my counterparts in other countries; the South African government never dictated to us who we had to invite.

Q: Very important.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Unlike in many of the other countries where you had to go through the

ministry of this, that and the other, and there was quite a bit of nepotism in that, this is what I heard from my own colleagues over there, the South African government never did but on the other hand they had control by denying an invitee a passport, so that was the way. Then, when the homeland came into being they insisted that people travel on homeland passports and many-several blacks refused to travel on these dummy passports while there were others and let me, if I can quote you one, Sej Motau, who coincidentally is now standing as a DA (Democratic Alliance) candidate in Pretoria—I can't believe it. He went on OCA and he also went and did a Masters in journalism at Berkeley. He was a senior journalist on the "Pretoria News" and he occupied big positions with DeBeers in Canada and London; everything. He was the- But when we invited him for the first time on OCA he was told that he could only have homelands, Bophuthatswana passport.

Q: Which was not recognized anywhere outside South Africa.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Nowhere else in the world, no, no.

Q: So he could not have arrived- He could not have been admitted into the U.S.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But we gave- we would give special, a special document that the consulate general would then stamp so that the person could get in.

Q: A travel permit.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A travel permit, yes. Sej said I know what I am. I'm not going to be deprived of a trip- of realizing a dream by somebody giving me a fake document. I will accept it to go and he went.

Q: So others did refuse.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A few did. Some said no, that they wouldn't travel on it.

Q: It's their loss, perhaps.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I would think that it was. I did find, also, that many people who'd been very vehement and said oh, they'd never go to the land of the imperialists, that once they actually had an invitation in their hand they were able to come to terms with the decision.

Q: The body language does not go on the tape. Implying, what? A certain openness or opportunism or-?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But I think, but whatever it is, who would blame them? No, no, no.

Q: A marvelous offer.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: So it's covering- What's it doing to your principles but so what? No,

so what? Because don't forget we send people over, the languages for the mutual exchange of ideas and that, so they were going to influence Americans and Americans were going to influence them.

Q: You mention a phrase which to me is a very potent and emotional one, mutual understanding, which is a phrase used in the Fulbright Hayes Act of 1948-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And which was always part of the letter of invitation.

Q: Always part. And injecting myself just for a second, I think that this mutual understanding aspect has taken a secondary place in our exchanges. Share with us your feeling of the importance of mutual. I mean, it's a leading question because I'm in favor of it and now that we're sending text messages out and all forms of electronic communication for which there's no real face to face feedback, do you have any reflections on this notion of mutual understanding? Because it's important to me I'm asking you.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I used to think also that America was so vast a place, with every kind of opportunity there and every conviction, that you could send people, and I mentioned earlier we didn't only send those who liked us; we also sent those who didn't, people like Adrian FIVak and Jimmy Krueger but if a person had a really narrow mind there was enough going on in America that was disappointing that they would find it and if they wanted to they could come back saying oh, you see, it's exactly the same over there. But most times, I think, that people's persuasions were changed. I really do think. If not immediately but I think that it impacted on people, that they were able to see that there was a different way to do this.

Q: I guess it was never codified or a particular policy but I know the U.S. Government tried to show everything and not to conceal anything while visitors were in the U.S., hoping for the best. And as you say some people had their prejudices and their stereotypes confirmed, others found some surprises. Would you recommend this to any large country, to have unfettered access? Again, I ask a leading question.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Q: Okay now, you were going to tell me about the homelands act. Oh you did; no, you did. That is the government insisting on-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The people having- on people traveling-

Q: -the homelands coming on these passports that were not recognized.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And it would say citizenship un- You know, it also would say citizenship undetermined.

Q: A passport?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A passport.

Q: I don't get it. How can you have a passport without a citizenship?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, it would be stated but undetermined.

Q: Amazing. Okay, so the U.S. embassy found a way of issuing a travel document that allowed people with these useless passports nevertheless to be recognized by the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service).

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But then of course they could only go to the United States, so that they couldn't-

Q: No multiple entry.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And they couldn't go as- when there wasn't an American carrier people could go by London. There were times when there wasn't a Pan Am, you could go somewhere- They couldn't, they really had to- But what they could do, occasionally, was to just go and stay in-

Q: Transit.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In transit, in transit.

Q: So they could go through London but they could not go to London.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, they couldn't go to London. And of course people- For a while we worked with the British embassy if somebody was going- Jerry was very good about this; if he saw- read an article in the paper that somebody was going to the UK or-

Q: Jerry Vogel?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Jerry Prillaman.

Q: Jerry Prillaman.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: We would write to them and I continued doing that; if we read about anybody I'd write and say, you know, from time to time we have exchange programs and would you be prepared to give me your bio data.

Q: Yes, the UK was cooperative?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. We'd occasionally- They would pay for them to go to a round trip to London and we'd pay from London to the United States.

Q: Really? Really?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Not often but a few times.

Q: Sometimes.

Now, we've talked about OCA, we've talked about International Visitors, writ large; we haven't talked about Fulbright yet.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. Let's stick onto short-term ones so let's do the CIP.

Q: The Cleveland International Program.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, for youth leaders and social workers.

Q: Yes. Again, the late CIP. But, your recollections of CIP.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, just phenomenal, phenomenal. And people would go for four months. They were all social workers initially; they'd go for four months, they lived with American host families and they worked under the guidance of a mentor. And it was phenomenal and I can remember-

Q: This is like internship sort of.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, it was an intern but a practical hands on experience. And I can remember in 1975 we had a CIP- I'm trying to think, Dr., the name of the man who- Oh, who can I forget? Who was CIP for many, many years. Ollendorff? I think that was his name.

Q: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Henry Ollendorff.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Henry Ollendorff. And Henry came out to South Africa and we had a workshop and in- at the Boulevard Hotel, and I had to get special ministerial permission for black people to stay at the Boulevard- It wasn't an international hotel but we still had to get special permission for black people to stay in the hotel and that's where we had- they were accommodated there and we had-

Q: In Pretoria.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: -the workshop in Pretoria, yes.

Q: Was your own race, did it make it easier for you to get such permission?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, it was the embassy.

Q: Ah, ah. Okay, okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That opened many doors if I started a conversation with, hello, I'm Gill Jacot Guillarmod from the American embassy.

Q: Yes. Now, so you mentioned this visit of Henry Ollendorff.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: What was the occasion?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: To, I think, because CIP had been in existence for quite awhile and they wanted to have- It could have been the tenth anniversary or something that we had it.

Q: Now, you said phenomenal, wonderful; four month internships, host families.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And I think why it was so amazing was because in those days, particularly I'm talking about the black social worker, they weren't just social workers; they were every single- they occupied every single position in the townships that they could. They were fundraisers; they were guidance counselors; they were parents in- what's that expression?

Q: Mentors. In loco parentis.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In loco parentis. Yes. They really- And their doors were open 24 hours a day to people and so that was wonderful, to be able to give people like that an opportunity to go and- Because they were trained at Fort Hare; that's where the only sort of black school of social work was.

Q: Yes. Now, on selection, did they send out people the way OCA did or did you select them? The people-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, we would select them.

Q: Fort Hare, Eastern Cape, right?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Fort Hare, on the Eastern Cape.

Q: Easter Cape.

Okay. Again, I don't know if it's all that important to remember the individual names but generically what's your sense of how this transformed people, to go off from a township, be in a city in the U.S. for months and to come back.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was able to- that's one of the reasons that the job was so meaningful to me, because I was able to witness people return with a greater sense of their own self worth. And I can remember after an OCA- a woman who went on the OCA program, we had- there was

a lady by the name of Dorothy, she was the counsel, chairperson of the African- the American Council of Negro Women, I think. Dorothy something. And we had, in our funny little- this is when the embassy was still downtown, not in its great big luxury building now, we had a multipurpose room, which had all sorts of wonderful things there. But we had a group of women come together, talking, and Miss Dorothy was the keynote address and she was, to be honest she was no great shakes but she was the most marvelous catalyst at bringing all these women together.

Q: This was an American who had traveled-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: An African American woman who came, she was our guest-

Q: As a speaker.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Because don't forget, I didn't do only the outgoing exchanges, I did all the incoming exchanges as well, in those days, which is wonderful because I could get the two to mesh together. You'd meet somebody and then send them on exchange program then you could program with them again when they came back; it worked so well. But I can remember that particular day, and I can't think what the topic was that she spoke about and- but I can remember an African woman getting up and a white woman had spoken in a rather patronizing way and the black woman got up and said, you know, don't you tell me that. And she just spoke- and I was so proud of her, she was just really-

Q: This was, you think, partly because of her trip to the U.S.?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I'm pretty sure. I mean, it happened just two months afterwards. I don't think she would have had the, well, not the courage but-

Q: The gumption.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, gumption, probably a good word, you know, to have done. So yes, we certainly did see people come back-

Q: So what you remember of the value of CIP was it increased people's self confidence.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, but she, don't forget the lady that I'm talking about- Joyce was a grantee of OCA; I'm saying that all our exchange programs did that; they enabled people to get a sense of their own self worth.

Q: Very important. So that's something you could say generically for all the exchanges.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Absolutely, absolutely, yes.

Q: Before we go to Fulbrights, other comments, other recollections of the short-term visits? There were Humphreys-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, don't forget, you know, CIP closed and then we had another- we had the Indiana- the South African internship program but that was- I don't know what period you're covering.

Q: The whole thing.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: What, up until I left?

Q: I remember when CIP was put to rest; it would have been in '93 or '94 and bureaucrats- because I was there at that time- bureaucrats- the comment was we've supported them all of this years, let's give someone else a chance. That was the argument; I was in the room. A truly idiotic decision.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And how. And how, because they did wonderful work. I happened to be at a CIP conference in Cleveland and I was flying from Cleveland to San Francisco when P.W. Botha made his Cross the Rubicon speech and the South African exchange rate, the rand plummeted, never to return.

Q: Please explain this speech, "Cross the Rubicon."

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Everybody was expecting him to make- to say some nice enlightened remarks and he didn't, he just said nobody's going to dictate to us; we'll do whatever we want to do.

Q: And you were in the U.S. at that time.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was in the U.S., yes. With all the CIP grantees who happened to be there. It was '85 and I was on the senior FSN program that I went- I was based in Washington for three months.

Q: So did it feel as if on a micro level things were advancing very nicely partly because of your programs and on the macro level it sounds as if you were frustrated with the slow-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Very, yes, very frustrated. Because strange things were happening. Because, I mean, during that time also they changed the laws about the group areas act, the passports. And I can remember seeing Sheena Duncan, whom I mentioned earlier, who was the head of the Black Sash, I can remember seeing her being interviewed on CNN and her eyes just filled with tears. She said well if it is true it's the most marvelous news. And it was true.

Q: Sorry; if what was true?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: If it was true that people were no longer going to have to- the group areas-

Q: Abide by the group areas act.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

Some of the readers of this are not familiar with Black Sash. Could you explain Black Sash?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was an organization founded by a bunch of women at the time when the South African government was about to remove the colored, the so-called colored people from the voter's roll and these women got up to protest and they formed the group and they stood- they chained themselves to the fences of the houses of parliament and they wore a black sash to show this sort of, this in mourning sign and that's how they got their name. And then they continued; they had branches around the country and they had advice officers, where people would- their members would volunteer their services and people would come in and it was usually for areas, things like people having been evicted because they weren't a with pass for the Group Areas Act.

Q: Now, I think, my understanding is that members of Black Sash had a certain social prestige because of who they were. I think. Or was it people of all the groups?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I just think that you- black people, the black people were perhaps a little- appreciative of what the Black Sash were trying to do.

Q: Was Helen Suzman at all connected with- she was a member of parliament at that time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't- She was a member of parliament in the Cape. No, I don't ever remember Helen as being- because I was a member of Black Sash in Pretoria.

Q: You say they chained themselves in Cape Town.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, to parliament one day.

Q: Do you remember which- what did people do in Pretoria in Black Sash?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: We did quite a few things. We would- when, in '87 when they banned all the- "The Mail" and "Guardian" and the other newspapers and that, we held demonstrations in the streets and that. But the most helpful thing that we did, I think was, running this advice office, where we would take and then we would get lawyers to work pro bono and assist people.

Q: Now this obviously was extracurricular to your position at the embassy.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Was there ever any question about your doing both things at the same time? Did anybody

ever-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: What, by the embassy?

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: No. The embassy was just fine, just fine.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. Didn't mind, no.

Q: Because the embassy, I think, was dealing with laws and practices that the embassy did not agree with. For example, refusing to get the passes that would allow them into the black market.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: So there was a certain confrontation but they had to be following some of the rules, I suppose.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Okay. Well, we're still talking about CIP here and you were mentioning, off line, there was an individual who sort of became the unofficial South African representative.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes, a Mrs. Mary Uys. She went in '62; she's gone to heaven a long time ago. And in initial years there were two, three, four people a year. When I started off in '73 there were five that year and then five and four and then they started, every now and again there would be extra- we'd get extra money for a special program and the numbers would then be increased.

Q: Now, what, Gill, explain how, in a country of, what, 40 million or something like that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, now, yes.

Q: We're talking about five per year.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Tell me, how can you change a society with five people?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Each little drop; each person has a multiplier affect and each person reaches somebody else and goes on with the group and they're an inspiration to the people in the community with them.

Q: Did you find that some of the visitors, or most of them in turn, aside from their personal and

family connections, did they make public appearances that may have alluded to their visits directly or indirectly?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Very often they would- most people would give great credit to their American experience. And you'd get some who didn't want to share, who didn't want to- another companion. Don't forget, people who have been deprived of so much for so long are going to also want to keep things to themselves so they perhaps wouldn't be so good about recommending other able candidates.

Q: A certain jealousy, yes?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. But that's, you know, that's-

Q: That's not South African; that's human.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That's worldwide.

Q: That's human, yes, that's human. Okay, but whereas Mary Uys was active or- was she self-selected? Did she- after her experience-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know; that was in '62.

Q: That would be before, before you were there.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was all before my, yes.

Q: But she was known to you as a CIP alumna who was helpful in finding other candidates.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. Now, did CIP candidates come from the various provinces? Did they tend to be from one-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: From all over. And they were all races. As I said, OCA was the only program which was restricted to people of color.

Q: Okay. In its final days OCA did have white South Africans; very few, very few.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know that I ever met-

Q: I met some actually.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. No, no, no, no, you are right.

Q: The point is that CIP-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, you are right. In, just in the last couple of years.

Q: But CIP did not have this policy and they welcomed everybody.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Okay. Again, before going to Fulbright, other recollections of the individual program- well, and group, group program, because sometimes you would send small groups that would become part of larger groups, the single country programs, you would collect three, four, five, six South Africans, send them together perhaps.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. I think something that's important to say is when I was first started being involved with the IV program, just about everybody went on an individual grant and South Africans weren't sent on group, multi regional group projects or regional group projects because having a South African in the group, no matter what his or her color was, was like a lightning rod and the whole group would then only want to talk about what was happening in South Africa. And I think they found it disruptive and they didn't- and gradually they started to go more and more into group projects until now I think the majority probably are on group program- even in my last years.

Q: I think so.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because it was also, I mean, it was- on a group program you've got access- a high powered person is far more likely to make him or herself available for an hour or two to meet with a group of 10 or five or 20 than they are for just one little individual.

Q: Groups will get to see Sandra Day O'Connor; individuals may not.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: That's from my own experience.

Okay, so until the social change took place in South Africa it was just difficult for many reasons and to mix any type of South Africans-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I mean, they did go; they did go on group programs but really- And we also then would occasionally have single country projects but for the most part people were on individual programs.

Q: What were some of the themes of the single country projects? You would have people of a similar profession, I think; journalists or community-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Gender; maybe some gender issues.

Q: Gender. Are we now into the '80s here?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Into the '80s, yes. But I mean, you had asked me about numbers; if you look-

Q: Okay. So just taking your- maybe at random, 1988-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Going to looking at my records and that, in 1988 there were 47 people went on the IV program and those numbers there, 1989, large, the budget was very, very large.

Q: Yes. Did you think that South Africa got an increased share of IVs because of its special circumstances?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think also- I think we were quite on the ball. We would always send a number of alternates and then towards the end of the year, when other posts hadn't used up their funds, we had the people there already, the application was in, the person was able to go.

Q: So some of your 47 was by dint of your own cleverness?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think probably.

Q: Some of them were allocated, yes, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And the same happened to the Fulbright.

Q: Yes. Ready to shift to Fulbright?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Okay. And if you aren't- I don't know if you want to go to the '90s, when after-

Q: Yes, oh yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because, I mean, that was a hugely important part-

Q: Especially when AID assisted in paying for some of these, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. We once got, going with AID money, it was all secret; we weren't allowed to know that the money came from AID but I think it was about in 1978 was the only time we had an undergraduate program and we sent undergrad students, about 18 of them, to get bachelor degrees-

Q: You weren't allowed to know that AID-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: We didn't want anybody to know that it was- We didn't want the South African government to know that it was- that AID money was being spent in South Africa.

Q: What difference would it be to-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: This was in 1978. Don't forget AID wasn't-

Q: But it's the U.S. Government. To the South African government what difference would it make if it's the embassy or AID?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know; they just called it CU/AF. I just remembered that.

Q: Yes. The bureau-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I mean, I wasn't- didn't have access to classified material and things like that, so.

Q: Yes. Okay. So the idea was that the South African government would not have been comfortable having USAID money spent without going through the government or something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Perhaps, perhaps. I'm not sure.

Q: Which is a problem- which is a factor in every country, overseas aid. The government always wants it and AID sometimes does and sometimes does not-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Want to work with-

Q: -agree to go through the government; in this case not, I suppose.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But what I was going to say was after the South African government- after, you know, Mandela was released, etc., the United States Government threw money at us and we had all sorts of money and all sorts of different categories. DES [Dire Emergency Supplemental]; I loved that.

Q: Dire emergency.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Dire Emergency Supplemental, yes. That enabled us to send people for short periods, countless people who today hold very senior government positions.

Q: This is AID funded, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I don't know. You know, for me it just came from Washington, yes. And that was followed by COLD.

Q: Sorry; starting in 1992, when he was released? Or thereabouts?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Roundabout there, yes. Let me, if I just look and see- Ninety-two.

Q: Okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Ninety-two; '92 we sent- started sending people with dire- DES.

Q: Dire emergency. And then we should explain, I think, they called it "dire emergency" because the situation was changing so rapidly and the idea was not to avoid catastrophe but to benefit from the changes. Urgency they might have called it, rather than emergency.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Emergency, yes.

Q: Maybe, maybe. But-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That was followed by COLD.

Q: COLD.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: COLD. Community Outreach and Leadership Development.

Q: Similar money for similar purpose.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Also helping to address the imbalance and level the playing fields for historically disadvantaged.

Q: Right. And between- By the way, between '92 and '94, was there any question that there would be a major political change? Was it a given that the change was coming?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. But don't forget there was a lot of violence and that going on as well.

Q: Potentially much more.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: More unexpected.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And things also with people, Mandela sort of clashing with de Klerk.

Q: Yes. So that must have been a very important period, '92 to '94.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And of the people that, you know, we sent-

Q: And this was the time when these dire emergency, COLD-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And then followed by the TSF, Transitional Support Fund.

Q: Yes. So they changed the name of it but the gist of it was similar; it was to accelerate the exposure of the future leaders to the United States.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And they all- they sent people, well we sent people in all different groups. We sent people from the Institute for Multi Party Democracy; there'd be a group from there. We'd send people from [inaudible, Safety and Security provincial legislature group. We sent a group that- of eight military folk, four from the South African, four from the South African military and four from the MK [military wing of the ANC.]

Q: Now, this was a very dramatic event. I was present at the debriefing of this group.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, okay.

Q: It was Bob LaGamma's idea.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was Jerry Kenner, and who was the econ officer who subsequently became ambassador? Don Steinberg. He was a driving force with that.

Q: Really?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Okay. Now, that was dramatic because it was very risky. You had people in the same room and sharing at a period where the outcome was unknown-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Who had guns against one another.

Q: Spending their efforts trying to kill each other.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: So this was conflict resolution, enormous conflict resolution. What was your recollection of the- selecting that group, the- Did you sense any risk in putting these people together? Was there any apprehension? These were enemies trying to kill each other, put in the same group.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But I think, no, me, I always think everything is going to turn out right, so I wouldn't have been-

Q: And it did.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And it did. Yes. But we had all sorts of different programs on constitutional reform and federalism, housing projects, conflict resolution; conflict resolution we sent a lot of people on that.

Q: What's the group in Durbin?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: ACCORD.

Q: ACCORD.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But now that- Accord was founded- one of my Fulbrighters was the founder of ACCORD and he came back. He went in about '85, I think.

Q: Wow.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Vasu Gounden.

Q: Vasu Gounden. I remember the name. I remember; yes, yes, yes.

So he was a Fulbrighter.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: And then he created ACCORD, the main conflict resolution NGO, not only for this country but for this part of the world.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. I have a wonderful Washington, DC red tee shirt that he brought me.

Q: And speaking of DC, you've mentioned a couple of trips. You went on two FSN training trips.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. In '79 and '85. And I went often on my own.

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I've been to the States 11 times.

Q: And when you went on your own you went to see friends; you went to see- And I think you would sometimes see some of your Fulbright grantees or-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They got- my bosses were very kind; on two occasions they gave me money to have luncheons in New York. On two occasions- times when there were a lot of students and they came from far and wide, the students. You may have about 20 odd coming for lunch and brunch; one time was brunch and one time was lunch. It was wonderful.

Q: These would usually be Fulbrighters, I guess.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They were Fulbrighters, yes.

Q: Okay. Because those were the ones who would stay for awhile.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Most Fulbrighters went for one or two years I think?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: One if they were doing an LLM or if they were doing a one year non-degree program but for most of them, the majority were actually two year programs.

Q: Did you do Humphreys from here?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Did all the Humphrey, yes.

Q: Yes, yes. And did some of them go to New York also?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: You just happened to be- In New York there just happened to be a concentration.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Quite a few would go to- Humphrey was big. And I spent time with the people in Humphrey and-

Q: Now, this you did on your private time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, but it was such a joy, you know.

Q: Yes, yes. These were people you had assisted in doing their trips to the U.S. and then seeing-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, it was so nice to see that what I asked for, and I think that's how they were able to justify authorizing the expenditure on the- I mean, I was- I had seen them when they applied to go on their Fulbright application. I'd seen them at the pre-departure orientation program and now I can see them in situ, you know, doing what we'd sent them to do.

Q: And then I'm guessing you also saw them at a fourth stage when they returned.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: When they came back, yes. And I mean, we had- that was the wonderful thing about it; we've had very- the attrition rate's not been bad at all. They really have- they've all come, for the most part they come back.

Q: Oh, the terms of coming back, yes. Yes, I forgot to ask because that is a problem with some countries.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: You know, some stay. When they go for long times then that's when they fall in love and marry, want to stay and give-

Q: Well, we're opposed to love in this program. It creates brain drain. We discourage it.

Well, okay, and some of the fields of study of the Fulbrights and the- it was intended to be American content, American studies, American- but it was sometimes used for different purposes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, you could justify anything because it was going to be- the black student was going to be a role model so it didn't matter, even if it was areas that perhaps weren't of a high priority, like business, an MBA or so, but this was going to be the first person in the whole of South Africa who, you know- And we had several people who got- Jacob Mohlamme became the first black South African to get PhD in history and it was that sort of- So you could just-

Q: Was that through your program? Where was he, Columbia?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He went to Wisconsin. And I'll tell you why I'm proud of him, because he kept- we had already made our selections for the year and he came in to see me absolutely desperate. Reverend Buti from Alexandria had made him a promise that he was going to get him a scholarship and he got his admission to Wisconsin and everything and then Reverend Buti let him down. And here was this man, he thought he was just about on the plane and all of a sudden there was nothing. And I was able to persuade-

Q: A scholarship from his home university?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I'm not too sure where; I think not from the church or anything; he just made a commitment which he then was not able to maintain. And I was able to- I was so touched and the man impressed me so that I was able to persuade, and I can't now remember how we got the money, where we did, but we were able to get- I think there was extra money in Jackie Cotton's shop in ECA, and I think they were able to then give us an extra grant.

Q: In other words he was intending to go but not on a Fulbright.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Not on Fulbright, not at all.

Q: And at the last minute you were able to-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: To give him a Fulbright.

Q: Even though this was not the whole long elaborate process you made it happen.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. That was one that I know I did help with that.

Q: And have you maintained contact with Mohlamme?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Not for several years, no. He's retired now. Because I used to see his

wife also and they came to my farewell party, the wonderful farewell party that Tom Hall gave me.

Q: Tom Hull?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Two thousand one or something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, that was in 2001 that the party was.

Q: Yes, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: April.

Q: Well, we're not nearly at that point now.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: Fulbright, Fulbright. Okay, so did you find a very cooperative sense- from Washington? You say that the field of study was less important than the demographics of giving some empowerments and enabling of people who would not have had that- turning to the sense of self confidence, perhaps.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Not long after Jerry and I started the majority of the panel, the panel that was chosen became black. We had, in South Africa, a category that I don't think any other country had; we called it placement only, and we would send vast numbers of South- my own, the man who got me to the center, Christof Heyns, was a placement only. You didn't give them any money but we would facilitate. They would go through the whole process and I used to say to them, you're perfectly entitled to put Fulbright scholar on your application, even though you didn't get any money from us, because you went through. We paid for them to do the GRE and the TOEFL and we paid their, you know, their entrance fees, etc., and the IIE treated them just as though they were a funded scholar.

Q: So where did they- how were they funded?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They were always so stellar that the universities either- either they had their own wherewithal or else the universities gave them such general fellowships, like Christof who got a full tuition waiver from Yale.

Q: So do we mention anything about Christof's father?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh. Because he was an IV; he was an IV and I'd worked with him, he and his wife. Christof's father was the moderator of the NHK (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika), which is the Afrikaans- the Dutch Reform Church, and most of the government

people were members of the Dutch Reform Church. And he was regarded as very enlightened for his position; he saw the error, I think, of the policies that the country was following and he clearly was too moderate for some because one night, when playing cards with his children, his grandchildren, he was shot by an unknown assassin, shot in the head, died; the assassin has never been found. This was in 1994-95.

Q: Oh, that late. The son, Christof Heyns, now the Center for Human Rights-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well no, Christof was the director of the Center for Human Rights for many years and the brain- Christof was the director of the Center for Human Rights and was the driving force behind the creation of many of the programs that we present at the center, two of which the center was awarded the 2006 UNESCO prize for human rights education, the first institution in Africa to get that award; 39 applications- 39 nominations in that year, we got it.

Q: We should explain the center is-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The center is a non-academic department in the faculty of law at the University of Pretoria and Christof is now the dean of the faculty of law; he's moved upstairs, literally.

Q: Now, we haven't talked about IDASA.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Institute, it was the Institute for Democratic Alternatives for South Africa and it's now the Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Q: You were mentioning other - ACCORD and other groups - that did provide a steady stream of visitors and that was cooperative in doing programs-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh yes, well, there's Institute of Race Relations, the Urban Foundation, South African Institute of International Affairs, IDASA, lots of organizations.

Q: Yes. Now, in that sense this has been a very developed country for a long time.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Because-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Pretty much First and Third World.

Q: In what sense First and in what sense Third?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, after you think about it, in First, if you think that the first heart transplant took place in this country and we have Nobel Peace Prize winners, we've had Nobel literature winners and in scientific strides we've done a great deal, where some of our universities are competitive around the world. But on the other hand you have a huge- we've got

the greatest, and I never know what this expression is, the greatest discrepancy between the rich and the poor. There's an expression one uses for that.

Q: The gap.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The gap between rich and poor, I think it's greater in South Africa than anywhere else in the world. And we have- we've got a huge unemployment rate, we have vast illiteracy rate, a lot of people homeless, many, many people- so very much-

Q: I can't resist the temptation to ask you about your sense of the last 10 years, we'll skip ahead for a moment, the whole country trying to grapple with this discrepancy, First World, Third World; how has this been working?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, you know, you can read in the press and that; I mean, I think so much has happened and nobody would go back to the old days at all. There's so much- more people have access to water, more people have access to electricity, more people have access to free health, to education, but- and there's been an extraordinary amount of black wealth as well. But complaint seems to be that it really has selected to a few; there are a few black billionaires now and there's an awful lot of people whose situation hasn't changed.

Q: And we're talking about housing, education, infrastructure, water, electricity, paved streets; there's been efforts and I was in Mamelodi yesterday; it looks better, it looks better.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes it does, doesn't it?

Q: Yes, but-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Did you see- Oh, obviously you went to the Science Library, so you went to our campus. Yes.

Q: Fantastic. Now, so there are examples that you can point to where there's been great material progress. Are you saying that this is not enough, the norm; it's more the exception than the norm?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no. I think that it is, but I think also a whole lot of the people who occupy public- who are in the public service - haven't had the training and so a lot of the money isn't well spent and sadly, there has been a lot of corruption, we've got the best finance minister in the world, Trevor Manuel, we certainly do have. We've been shielded from the economic recession by the policies that he put in place, he and Mbeki, because, I mean, without Mbeki's approval he wouldn't have been able to apply those policies. I don't know how long we're going to remain protected from the globe-

Q: The crisis is worldwide.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It's worldwide, yes.

Q: Nobody is immune but you-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, but we have been quite-

Q: Well, repeat what you just said; best finance minister in the world.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In the world. I'm no economist but I-

Q: I know, but in terms of taking what there is and making the best of it.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. There's Pravin Gordon, who went on one of our programs in- after '94, who runs SARS, the South African Revenue Service, is reputed to be one of the best departments in the country. At the end of the year the "Mail" and "Guardian" always does a rating; you know, they give a report card for all the ministers, etc., and Trevor Manuel always gets an A.

Q: And Pravin Gordon was an IV?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was- Well no, not an IV, he was one of these TSF [Transition Support Funds] or COLD or something.

Q: Oh yes, he did go on- Those tended to be shorter, more focused.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Very short lived, for about a week or ten days and focusing on a specific area.

Q: Now, you said a minute ago, back to the training. Those who were fortunate to benefit from our exchange programs had some training or had some exposure.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Do you wish we could have had ten times more?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, of course. Yes.

Q: Would it have made the difference, do you think?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Who could say?

Q: That's- Again, I ask you unfair questions.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It would be nice to say that it would have, but-

Q: Yes. When you were in the heat of this tremendous volume and tempo of exchanges, did you

feel there was enough of it- Well, did you feel that there were enough people to make this happen, within the embassy? There was a lot of work. You, Gill Jacot Guillarmod, were often at that office until 7:00, 8:00 at night.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, no, no, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 at night.

Q: Ten, 11:00, 12:00; pardon me.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: John Dixon used to say to me, I'm going home now, get out of here. And he was our desk officer.

Q: And this would be our desk officer in Washington with a six hour difference, sometimes seven.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes, yes. So nobody made me, nobody stood with a gun at my head, I did it and every moment gave me great, great joy. But I did feel troubled when, for no reason, I mean, why did they take away the money for the South African internship program? I used to think of it as a wonderful thing because we only touched on that briefly. That was based on the same program that- the same format that CIP had followed, we would send people to the States for two months, a two month program, live with American families and work under the guidance of a mentor. It didn't have to have a tertiary qualification to get it; you could be working in the driving- the drivers license thing.

I used to think of the Fulbright program as the American Government's long-term fix for South Africa and the internship program as our short-term fix, because you'd have somebody who perhaps worked in a drug and rehab- drug counseling section, as I said in the licensing department, somebody else in the social work department, other people in business; all sorts of areas, some on university campuses, depending on the particular area, and they'd have these two months and come back and it'd just give them a crash course in whatever it is they were doing. And then they'd- It was one of the reasons I left, was because I'd heard, the day that Christof phoned to ask me to come and join I had two- I'd had the last two days and when I'd come home and said what difference am I making to anybody else's life.

Q: Because of the reduction of funds for these programs?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. But it seems to be a lot better now and I've talked to my colleagues, Tashina and Irene and all of them, they've introduced a whole lot of pretty super programs that they're doing, really nice.

Q: Now, there are 200 countries in the world, more or less, clearly a very special relationship between the U.S. and South Africa, enormous Dire Emergency and Transition Support Funds; what- and this country had to make a lot of progress in a very short period of time. It did not do so only with the help of the U.S. What were some of the other benefits, the other programs? Was the UK involved?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. But don't forget, after 1990 then South Africa, everybody was

throwing money at us and people- you were sending people who would say oh well, I can't go now because I'm going to Singapore or Australia or something, you know.

Q: So it wasn't the U.S. alone but the U.S. embassy was at the forefront.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, but for a long time it was the U.S. and the UK.

Q: Okay. When you say "everyone," well, you just mentioned Singapore; I guess the EU perhaps?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think so. Germany brought people over- Japan. I think Israel.

Q: Why do countries do this? What's in it for Singapore and Japan and Israel?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, perhaps it's, let's be charitable and say it's for mutual understanding, they want to promote a good relationship with- And so, and then thereby increase trade, educational exchange.

Q: Okay. Trade. Now we're, this is now March, 2009, and we're in an economic, worldwide economic crisis. Yes, you're quite right, I think, that in parliaments legislators and members of parliament justify the use of money to develop these programs by saying this will create a market. Where's this going now? Trevor Manuel has his hands full, doesn't he? And this goes-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And I mean, I don't know. Are the American people going to want, when you've got an unemployment rate that's increasing, are they going to want to put money into other countries, no matter how deserving they might be? I don't know.

Q: Existential questions. Maybe there's a new sense of the finite quantity of money; we never had that before. And make some tough decisions.

Okay, 1990s; everyone was pouring money- Before we get to the 1990s; again, you have the unique offering of having been here in the '70s and '80s. Everything changes in 1990, basically, and then '92 and '94.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think it must be harder to work with USIS now than it was when you and I were there.

Q: Please explain.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I think because of that good guy/bad guy thing, because now, just because we have a democratically elected government in power doesn't mean to say that they're doing everything that's right.

Q: Why would this make it harder to work at USIS? Because- Was it-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I just think it was so easy to say, because you wanted to put the bulk of your grants into the good guys but now-

Q: We're not sure who the good guys are.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Actually not so sure who they are, yes.

Q: The good guys previously could be defined as the ones who were not in government.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Well, yes.

Q: And now- Okay. I was going to ask if you could contrast, and any aspect of it, the sense of the social dimensions, the political, whatever; '70s and '80s and then major change in the '90s. Before we leave the '70s and '80s, tell me your sense of the contrast. You've made some comments about it was horrible in the Cape and there were difficulties in dealing with the regime.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It wasn't, you know, I mean, it wasn't nice having to go, when you had a black visitor, to phone a restaurant and say hello, I'm Gill Jacot Guillarmod, and I'm going to be- I'd like a table for six for lunch; these two of my guests will be black. I had to get permission to do that. That wasn't nice.

Q: Permission from the-?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: From the restaurant; the restaurant had to say yes. And you know, some would say no, we don't want any black.

Q: Seventies and '80s. Now, could you have phoned up and said this is Gill Jacot Guillarmod, I'm bringing six visitors? Could you do that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And humiliate my guests?

Q: Ah, ah. Because they could have been refused entry-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, absolutely, yes.

Q: -at the door. So this was a routine; this was something you had to do all the time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, always, always. We did different things, like, even in Jerry's day we had- we took a black cellist and a white pianist, or was it the other way around? And we went to- a hotel had just opened and we collaborated with "The Pretoria News" and we had a concert that people- there was no charge but you- there was a hat and you could give a donation to read- to LEARN, Let Every African Read Now, it was a program that "The Pretoria News" was having. So we did that and we didn't get permission for it- we didn't get any government or- permission for that but it was a very nice social occasion. And don't forget, you would have

heard about- they didn't go on exchange, well, not many of them went on exchange programs but one of the things that the American embassy did was wonderful; we had the Pretoria Music Appreciation Society and we used to meet in that funny little multipurpose room downtown and have- and [inaudible], who was an OCAer, also in heaven now; he was one of Bart's driving forces; he went in '75. He was wonderful at- did a great deal to promote the arts and music in the townships and was instrumental in-

Q: In the '90s we talked about Eurocentric culture. Was that a factor in the '70s and '80s?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No.

Q: Promoting music- music was music.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Music was music. And jazz, we promoted jazz. And then we would have movies; we'd get- just because, don't forget black, there weren't bioscopes or cinemas for black people or anything; we would get- have movies from the States and then have everybody come and you had blacks and white South Africans.

Q: When you showed movies in townships what was the venue? Was there a community-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A community hall in the- We never, we didn't go- we didn't do that in- Well, I don't recall that we did that when I was up in Pretoria. I don't think we did.

Q: So you did bloody everything. You sent Fulbrights, IVs, Humphreys, interns, CIP and you also arranged-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I did all the exchanges, all the outgoing and for awhile I did the incoming also, and I did- Then as we grew we then had a cultural section; we had people like Sheila, you know, who did the- who dealt with- But in the beginning I used to do the incoming lectures and-

Q: How could one person do all of that?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: With luck and a nice typist assistant- it worked well.

Q: When you did this, you were a South African working for the government of another country, the U.S.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. When I was in Cape Town the guy from the South African information service came over to see me one day and asked me wouldn't I come and- I was single- wouldn't I come and work for them. And I smiled and I said you know, that's really very tempting because South Africa can only really go to nice countries, I know that. I said but if you are asking me to sell Pepsi Cola and I really liked Coca Cola then I might be able to do it. But you're going to ask me to do something that I really wouldn't want to sell. And he still continued to come and visit.

Q: So they wanted you; they saw the value in what you could do and they wanted to- they wanted your skills on their side.

Now, working in-between two countries, one of them, there was a certain antagonism between the two regimes, let's say. Where did you find yourself in this personally?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I used to get my "we" and "they" mixed up.

Q: Explain.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, well, I would say "we" and I even still- The other day I answered the phone and I said, cultural office, good morning.

Q: Really?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Happened to be [inaudible]. He said my God; he said you've been gone eight years.

Q: Now, if your subconscious was talking when you said "we," who was "we"? South Africa or the United States?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, very often it was America. It was America. But don't forget I watched- I saw a lot of changes, you know. I went through the time during the Carter Administration; the South African government wanted nothing to do with us. They avoided coming to Fourth of July functions, etc., for the most part. And then Ronald Reagan came in and with it the constructive engagement policy, which saw a reversal of those of us who liked us and those who didn't. But we continued to invite South Africans of all colors and political persuasions and actually as- though many blacks spoke out vehemently against the capitalist supporters of apartheid, when there were- as I said to you, when they were actually presented with the letter then they were able to accommodate their principles.

Q: Are you suggesting that constructive engagement, Chet Crocker, under Reagan, actually created a friendly- a greater friendship with the apartheid regime and a greater alienation of the majority population?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I do think that.

Q: Looking back, was it pragmatically the right thing or the wrong thing to do?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well you know, I think maybe it wasn't such a bad idea to try it because we achieved absolutely nothing under the previous administration and in fact it was becoming harder and harder, you know, to- I can't say more and more people were denied passports, I can't really say that but I think it was difficult to- I can remember- I struck up a relationship with a guy in the passport office and so- and I would phone him and then say oh

come on, won't you tell me, is he going to get this? Just tell me; is he going to get the passport or isn't he? Because if he's not then we go- at least we know. But if you think he's going to get it even at the last minute I can be planning for his trip. And then one day when I phoned him he said, Gill, I'm sorry but I've been told I'm not allowed to give you any information.

Q: Really? So the person you dealt with, with a certain cordiality, was getting orders from above.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because I even- You know, even though I'd be damn angry with the answer, that's never been- I don't believe you-

Q: He was the messenger.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Absolutely. And he was only doing his job.

Q: Now, isn't it an irony Jimmy Carter remembered for human rights, because that was the policy. Many people say that it failed but anyway nobody doubts that that's what he intended to do. Jimmy Carter was more popular with the apartheid regime than Ronald Reagan. I'm sorry, is it the other way around?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, the other way around.

Q: Sorry, I meant the other way around; that it's ironic, is it not?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Now, Constructive Engagement.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think that's why people like Sheena Duncan were so happy when Ambassador Perkins came to visit, that he- here was an American who was going to listen.

Q: Nineteen eighty-seven, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think it was about then.

Q: Something like that, yes. And Perkins, I think, had a decision to make, as an African American, whether to accept or not accept to be America's representative in a country whose policies I think he differed with; I think he did not agree. But he did come, and did you feel that he was able to achieve anything?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think that- I think he did. You know, baby steps.

Q: Baby steps. Is that what it's all about in our business?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well isn't it?

Q: Yes, I think so.

Did you know Perkins well enough to know whether he felt- Well, did he feel he was making progress?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, I didn't know him well. Elizabeth Prior was his USIS person; she spent time with him.

Q: Okay. Okay, constructive engagement. I mean, it seems as if there are as many opinions about constructive engagement as there are people.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. I can remember Sig Maitrejean saying to us, that we got absolutely nowhere with the last policy; we are now trying something else.

Q: And was that persuasive, what she said?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think I couldn't- I don't think South Africans, black South Africans wouldn't have accepted that but I think I could see that it-

Q: As a pragmatic measure.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Just try-

Q: So I think-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And the thing is, it wasn't affecting our day to day work. My exchanges were still going with a flourish so I didn't really mind; I was still having the opportunity to send-

Q: Well, that's an important point, policy, policy which were all seized with in Washington, changes, it has different exaggerates-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But the exchange program goes on.

Q: Transcends, transcends.

What is it about the exchanges program, which is revered by so many people, the Fulbright inspiration, I guess, what is it about it that works so well?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, I don't know. I mean, I bump into people now who went 20 years ago and say oh, you've no idea what that did for me, that program. Dikgang Moseneke, who is the deputy chief justice of the constitutional court, he was- we had our moot court competition here in South Africa last year because it was the University of Pretoria's centenary, we had it here, and I had a dinner at the Pretoria Country Club for all our final- We have a very prestigious

bunch of international jurists serve on the final panel and I had a dinner at the Pretoria Country Club and Dikgang arrived early and he was with my boss and normally assistant director, and was very, very proud the way he said you have no idea what this lady did for me, how she- You know, he made it [inaudible]; he was exaggerating.

Q: This was in your current capacity?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. This was last year.

Q: Yes, when you were here at the center.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But he said to them, telling them about my previous life, how I had- he made it sound as though I'd held his hand all the way around the United States. But he said you don't know what- he said that was such a wonderful program.

Q: Did the other people in the room understand what that was about?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: At this stage it was before the others; it was just my two bosses.

Q: Ah, yes, yes; okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: So that was good for me, that he was saying that, you know.

Q: So this was an institution-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he said it when I had to take a group in 2005, when we had to move to Port- in Johannesburg. I took all the judges to the consulate, the chief justice hosted them, all those visitors, and it was the same thing; Dikgang- to all of them and to all his colleagues. He was a Robben Island "graduate."

So you know, they do, they remember their experiences.

Q: So the people remember the program but they also remember you as the personal contact. You said so; you said so. You personalized it.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: The program was you.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I was just- I was really lucky. I was able to be Lady Bountiful. You know, I mean, it was me in particular, I think even more so with the Fulbright program than of any of the other programs, because with the IVs, CIP, etc., the branches connected more with the grantees. With Fulbright once they had gone through the interview, came to Pretoria, I dealt with them directly until it was time for them to be going. I would be the one who would phone them that- And I had a policy that I wouldn't go home at night until I had- If an admission offer had come through I wouldn't- even if it came through at 9:00 as I was going out the door, then I

wouldn't go out the door because then I'd stay and let the student- person know, because I knew how- and I would be as excited as they, you know, to say, how does University of Los Angeles sound? You know? So, it was lovely, wonderful.

Q: Where else in the world is there someone who takes this job so personally.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, no, no; Monica Joyi, who took over from me at the Fulbright Commission; Monica-

Q: Now in Washington.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Now in Washington, yes. Monica followed in my footsteps. I think she heard- she would meet with alumni who would say oh, where's Gill? I think particularly with the Fulbrighters, you know, because you really have a chance to change their lives. They've gone over and they've been there for two years, and when they worked with you closely it did seem as though it was me and I'd always say but it wasn't me; it was the U.S. Government money and it was you; you because of your talent and your skills and your brains and everything, you know. But- and then Monica was very, very, good and she'd always, she'd phone- invited me to participate in the selection. I must say they- I continued with the selection thing.

Q: It's more effective in dealing with these programs to either pretend or to genuinely feel respect for the people you deal with. How do people learn this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know. I just, you know, feel that I was so blessed. I must have done something very good in a previous life because it was so wonderful. On the other hand, in my speech at Tom Hall's party, I said that, you know, in all those years I never had a single day when I didn't want to go to work, even with the worst of hangovers, and I had many of those, and continue to have them.

Q: So, could you say you gave your liver for your country?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I can say that. Or for the United States.

Q: I mean, their country, their country; we, us.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: For your country.

Q: We can go backwards in time but since we're on it, since we're on it, remembering the day Tom Hall was the last PAO under whom you worked, I did too, at that time, what went through your mind during that farewell? This was an in-house thing or was it the whole- was it grand départ?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: There were 250 people there.

Q: Oh my gosh, oh my gosh.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It was in the Pretorian- There was an editorial in “The Pretoria News.”

Q: Oh my gosh.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In fact, and I know that the person who wrote the editorial is Pippa Green, who’s just written a biography on Trevor Manuel and Pippa invited me, I went to the launch of- And so both Trevor and Pippa have written in my book.

Q: Well, we must have a copy of that editorial for the archives. I’m sure you have one hidden away someplace.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think I do have that. I’ve got a picture of the-

Q: Two hundred and fifty at Tom Hall’s residence, right?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no, at the Pretoria Country Club.

Q: At the Pretoria Country Club.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. The mayor was there, because he was an IV.

Q: Now, the mayor, one of the mayors-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Mkhathshwa. And the other mayor was Joyce, was there also, yes.

Q: Let’s remember Joyce for a minute. Joyce was-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: You know, I tried to get hold of her, haven’t spoken to her for a couple of years. I’ve tried to get her on her birthday. And then I saw somebody at Mary Dean [Connor]’s the other night who said- I said please when you- if you see her, just tell her I’m trying to reach her, because I would like to just be in touch.

Q: Joyce was our colleague in USIS-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The admin clerk.

Q: -until 1994, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: And then she-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: She became the mayor of Pretoria.

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And she was a very gracious mayor. She was very nice. She did a very nice job when I would take- And it wasn't only me but on a couple of occasions that I took visitors to her there. I was very proud of her; she was very dignified and warm and well, she did a good job.

Q: I forget her last name.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Ngele.

Q: I believe the first week I was here was the week she left.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh really?

Q: And I remember we were saying to her, we expect you to remember us and evidently she did.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Okay, yes.

Q: She was-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And it was Richard Goldstone who got her out of jail.

Q: Jail?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: She was in-

Q: I don't know the story.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, oh no, no; she was imprisoned for a good six weeks or so, when we were still downtown, so that would have been about 1989; yes, round about there.

Q: Jail for what? For being there after dark?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: For- No, for her political activities. She and a whole bunch of women.

Q: Goldstone?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh he's just been one of the- was commenting on the Bashir thing now.

Q: The International Court of Justice.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He got- he was an IV in '84.

Q: I'm silent because this is-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: All the people who went on this program, yes.

Q: And he, who was of the organization that indicted President Bashir yesterday, an IV, was instrumental in getting Joyce Ngele out of jail.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Having Joyce released from prison.

Q: Wow.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. It's always so nice when I see him. He's a true gentleman. I just remember that. There are a few who I do remember, you know.

Q: Yes. And then he became a major- I do remember- a major international- he was in the International Court of The Hague.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: The Hague, yes.

Q: When did he- because he's been there quite awhile.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He's also been a visiting professor at NYU (New York University), I think, or Columbia, one of the two. I think NYU, he and his nice wife, Nolene.

Q: He left South Africa not forever, I suppose.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. He comes back, he comes back.

Q: But at least a very long-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he still is very involved in ORT, the Jewish charity. I forget what it stands for, ORT. He's a practicing Jew.

Q: Oh, back to the retirement party. Two hundred fifty people; I suppose it could have been 3,000 if the ones who really wanted to could have come.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Something went wrong with the invitations. I was unhappy because on my first day here I wasn't too sure where to park and I was walking across the campus and I bumped into two people who said what are you doing here? And I said well I'm working here, you know that. I mean, you couldn't come to my farewell. They said we didn't know anything about it. So I don't know what happened with that.

Q: The invitations went missing.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I don't know. But- no, it was wonderful. And Tom was very

supportive because you know; I agonized for four months before I decided to accept the offer.

Q: Well, a person who's taken personally so much, a working position, does not leave it lightly. But you say the reduction in resources was one factor.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A huge factor, huge. Because the Fulbright was now with the Fulbright Commission; I wasn't doing the Fulbright anymore. And then- I mean, I sent 60 odd a year on the internship program so that was very time consuming and that was going to be going, leaving me, and I just didn't know what else. And when I eventually went to speak to Tom [Hull, PAO] he said I've watched the diminishing of your position with concern and he said I wondered what you were going to do. And he said to be honest I think- He said I don't know that I would have said this if this was the start of my tour, but he said seeing how I'm leaving I think if you are going to go anywhere I think you could go to no finer place than the Center for Human Rights and work for anybody less, you know, of a person than Christof Heyns.

Q: Tom was here '96 to 2000, I think, something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he left in- he left after me, he left after me because he was again, at the party, he left in about August/September. Look here, I just got the invitation to his daughter's wedding.

Q: Yes, I heard that-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And then he was really good because he then went to Addis Ababa-

Q: Yes, DCM.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Where he was DCM. And then he went as ambassador to Sierra Leone and he hosted my LMN students on two occasions to- he got all the embassy, his political officers and everything, my group of students. We send them as part of the program they go on a field trip, they break up into groups and they are going to go to other places now but they went to Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Somaliland and Tom had them-

Q: These are law students?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Law students, yes, master in law.

Q: And so they got a special welcome in Sierra Leone.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes. And also in Rwanda because Brian George was there and then Jerry Keener was there also. So I keep looking to see where are they going next, where have a got a contact, you know. And of course Tom and I worked together in '79 when he was ACA, that's where- I mean, his daughter was born here.

Q: Tom was eager to be part of this project and-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He'll be, let me tell you, he'll be very good because his memory and his notes are terrific, I can tell you. And have you spoken to Brooks, Brooks Spector? Because I promise you you'll get more from Brooks than the rest of us; you really will. You really will.

Q: I'm writing it down.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I have his telephone number.

Q: Thank you, I'll take it up. And I am in close touch with Tom; he was going to come and spend a weekend with me, actually.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh really?

Q: Yes. He will. It had to be rescheduled.

You know, in a short time-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Nick Mele's another one. He was JOT [Junior Officer in Training]. He was one; he took Gaby Magomola to the airport in the boot of his car.

Q: Tell me that story.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, [inaudible] was going on a Fulbright. Was it Fulbright or IV? Which is it? I'd have to look that up. And we- the security- these were after him. And I wanted to get him out of there and so took him and he rushed him-

Q: Well, how did he make it on the plane? If they-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, well he- they weren't that smart to know that we were getting him there.

Q: If you could get him in the airport he was ok.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Though he must have lacked the documents.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he had a passport.

Q: He had a passport?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. We often- it was Gaby Magomola at my- Gaby was at my farewell also and Gaby- they did a wonderful book. Remember to ask me tomorrow night, ask me to show you; they did a book and people who were there wrote messages in it and it's really-

it's very nice and Gaby wrote and he said, you know, you took me, a jailbird, to be- those days. And I kept his passport for him so that they couldn't- until it was time for him to go.

Q: What was the importance of your keeping his passport?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well just that it was on diplomatic territory and then if they- they couldn't come and get it, take it away from him. It was just a precautionary-

Q: So the passport exists that they would have cancelled it but they couldn't.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He got it- Yes.

Q: So he had it previously.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He had it but you know it was a precautionary measure. He'd been released from jail; they might have just, out of a moment of spite, wanted to deprive him of this opportunity.

Q: Was this your idea to take the passport?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I can't remember. I might have.

Q: Yes. It was a mutual consent. And they were looking for him because of his political activities? He was-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Was there a warrant for his arrest or something like that or they just wanted to intimidate him?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, we went to Nick Mele and I, we went out, we got stopped in a roadblock. We went to his farewell party that they- He's written a book that I've got a copy of his-

Q: My gosh, oh my gosh.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Because he was in the States for a number of years. He went- On the Fulbright he went to do an MBA at Ball State University and then he stayed on and he did another degree, which I can't remember now.

Q: But he did come back?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He's back now; he's a successful businessman.

Q: It usually takes many, many hours to get this much information out of a person.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It's lovely; I enjoy it.

Q: It's coming.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Monica's always tried to get me to write a book; she said I'll do the work.

Q: I would say the same. And this transcript is raw material.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It's lovely.

Q: Raw material for such a thing.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I'm sort of thinking of things that- I'm not sure what you're hoping to get at the end of the day because I don't know, I mean, do you want to get the juicy things, the awful things that the South African government did or the wonderful things that we- I'm not sure-

Q: I'll tell you the name of this project which, I mean, the name I gave to it, "Outsmarting Apartheid." It's you, Gill, who gave me that idea; not the words but you gave me the idea because I know that's what you did during those 20 years; you outsmarted them many times. And the project has no trick agenda. We're talking about lessons learned and how diplomacy and public diplomacy in this case, can be used to create peace. It sounds very corny and very-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, but then you absolutely must speak to Brooks because you know, Brooks was the one who was the driving force behind the Dance Theater of Harlem, which broke the cultural boycott. And your government was very mean and awful to him. They took him out of here just before the Theater arrived and Rosemary Crockett was here and got all the credit. Now, that wasn't Rosemary's fault but poor Brooks wasn't here to get all the glory and kudos that he deserved.

Q: Took him out? Did he leave prematurely?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: They ended his tour. No, but they could easily have-

Q: They could have let him stay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: -let him stay. They could have easily let him stay.

Q: And he now lives in Pretoria I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In Johannesburg.

Q: Johannesburg, with his South African wife, I think.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And do you know, he was just at a- [inaudible] Ainslie, who was the Johannesburg Art Foundation; she passed away last week and there was a memorial service for her. I just couldn't go and Brooks had asked me for a few remarks and I got- I met John Burns's wife also. She said a few things and then Brooks spoke and he told me who all was there and I just wanted to die that I hadn't been there; Coral Nellon, Helen Sebidi and [inaudible]; ooh, just all those people that I had worked with.

Q: The cultural boycott. The intention was to put pressure, I think, on the regime, both economic-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, cultural and sporting, and the sporting, particularly the sporting.

Q: -cultural, sporting, economic. At one point there was an arms embargo under Reagan. Was it the right way to- it was a well intentioned thing; did it work?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. Oh, I do think so.

Q: Did it succeed?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think F.W. must have seen that look, no one out there...

Q: No one wants to be a pariah.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And we're not going anyway. What's going to happen to our economy?

Q: So the boycott in every form was indeed a surgical, effective policy?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think it was. I mean, it wasn't nice. Let me tell you, to travel as a South African was just horrible, horrible. I can remember in '85 when I was- took a cab, I was going, actually going to John Hicks's place for dinner and a huge, big guy from Sierra Leone and he told me, I mean I asked and he told me, volunteered that he was a doctoral student from Sierra Leone and he couldn't wait to get his degree so that he could get back home so that he could man an army to drive those whites of South Africa into the sea.

Q: Is that one of those days that you were a Canadian?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: So he said where are you from? And I said Australia. I wasn't in a ten minute taxi drive going to take him on, you know. So I said Australia.

Q: And he fell for it? He thought you were Australian?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Now, so the boycott was effective; was Brooks Spector's choice and efforts in breaking the boycott, was it well timed?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: It came at the right time?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think so, yes.

Q: This would have been-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It took him years.

Q: -'93, something.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It took him years. He worked on it for years.

Q: This was his personal thing.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It really was.

Q: Did he have to explain this to higher authorities in the U.S.? Must have had to.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I suppose so, yes.

Q: Somebody-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he spoke to people here. You know, he's better connected than anybody in the arts world, just- And I sing his praises. I know, you know, I know Brooks rubs his American colleagues up-

Q: I never met him.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But he and I- Oh, haven't you?

Q: Nope.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, and he's been very unpopular with his colleagues.

Q: Really? Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But he's the- I think he's probably- he was certainly the most creative, imaginative CAO that I ever worked with. We had, during Bill- And he and [Ambassador] Bill Swing were just the right people to be together because Bill Swing wanted to meet with everybody. We had Paul Simon; we had Whoopi Goldberg; we had them all at the residence. We

did the whole cast of “Ain’t Misbehaving” do a performance. Abdullah Ibrahim play and all Brooks responsible, all in the results.

Q: So, and Bill Swing was quite open to all of this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh yes.

Q: And must have been-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And then Brooks and I together, we organized what I think was the best thing the embassy ever did and everybody around said it was also. When Brooks came to me he came and he said- he came back as cultural attaché. We had worked together in '76 when he was ABPAO in Johannesburg, and we worked well together on the exchanges program. And when he came again, had been PAO in Swaziland and then came to be cultural attaché, and he said to me, what can we do to- and he was always looking for something new to do. And I said you know, we haven't done anything with the grantees; we really haven't done with them. We've got a brand new ambassador; why don't we start- We brainstormed, between the two of us, and we triggered a-

We ended up having a dinner at the Carlton Hotel and we had entertainment and we used former- people who had been on our exchange programs; we got them to do it. Siho Mpamle, now in heaven, read his poetry. Mary Jane Mohodiela told a story that she rambled on, unfortunately. Christof's father gave the- said the grace at the dinner. We- let me just think who else. Well, we ended with- We had Sean Reddy played the piano and we ended with Evita, who ended up with singing, “Free start and God bless America.”

Q: Was this a certain individual depicting Evita Bezuidenhout?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, it was Pieter-Dirk Uys.

Q: Pieter-Dirk Uys.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: As himself playing Evita.

Q: Evita Bezuidenhout, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He changed in my room-

Q: Yes. He was an IV?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He was an IV; that's why I asked him. He went on the Iowa writers program, and he cut the program short and I was at a show- a perform- one of his performances afterwards and he said being in Iowa was like being in Vrystaad. And “Vrystaad, I was born in Vrystaad.” I found it particularly funny.

No, but we had- I mean, there were a few hundred people there; everybody. It really was. We had everybody who'd been in the '80s and then Swing was so taken up with it, we had table of 10, yes, 10 at a table, and there was one of us, somebody from the embassy, an officer or something, and he hosted each table. And Swing, so taken up, he said he wanted to do it in Cape Town also. So we did it in Cape Town and there we did everybody from the '70s and the '80s. And I can't remember whether F.W. came; I can't- Frank would be able to tell you that. And then they wanted to do it- He said that was so- And we had David Kramer, who was- Eva Kramer and [inaudible] Peterson who- but David Kramer he said- We did this- followed the same format, you know, poetry, reading, music, etc., all donated. And then- well then we did in Durban and we did with everybody who'd ever been on an exchange program and so Brooks and I went to Cape Town and we went to Durban and that also- And I think that was really the things that we did and then Brooks doing the- was the best thing.

Q: So this was something you and Brooks thought up together.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: We did together, yes.

Q: And this was what? There's now an active alumni program which does- tries to do this systematically but I think it was-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But it was not, no, was nothing. I think that what they should have done at the embassy, and I suggested it but nobody took me up on it, last year, when it was the University of Pretoria's centenary, I think they should have done a University of Pretoria alumni thing because there's- I could that you wouldn't do it 10, 15 years ago when this was such a conservative place but it's not like that anymore. It's the most progressive university in the country.

Q: When did it become progressive? Because it was in the '80s it was thought of as very conservative.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In about- I can remember in about '94, I was at a function at, maybe a little bit later, '96 maybe, at something at the PAO residence and the former principle, Johann Van Zyl, a very charismatic, dynamic guy, and he was there and I'd had a couple of glasses of wine and was in my cups myself, and I said to him, you know, if anybody had ever asked me which would be the very last campus to transform I would have had no hesitation in saying this, and I said but it's such a pleasure to be able to say to you, you know, how good it is to have you-

Q: Was Van Zyl - would you give him some of the credit for the transformation?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Must be, it must have been.

Q: Yes. This happened in the early '90s I think, transformation, quite a transformation as I think I remember.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Except, don't forget, this place, the Center for Human Rights, was

established here in 1986 in the heart of- when it was at its most conservative.

Q: Because much was said about Wits [University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg] being transformed but there were many- it wasn't done very harmoniously.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No. And also, don't forget, they never- there was less need for transformation from UCT and Wits, etc. This was a bastion. I couldn't bring Mary J. Barnett, the black belly dancer here because she was- they didn't want to have a black dancer.

Q: Why did they do this?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Again, pragmatism.

Q: Did they think it was inevitable, might as well just get on with it?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think so.

Q: And have it done. Do you think that they- your South African colleagues on this campus, are they proud of TUKS [University of Pretoria] for having done this.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, I think so. Listen, you've got your little freedom front group clique that you always had that are complaining to say that they're trying to do away with Afrikaans but I mean, we had our- if you see there we have our logo on everything; it was in three languages.

Q: Yes. It's Afrikaans, English and-?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: English and Sepedi.

Q: Sepedi, which is the local-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Local black language.

Q: Of the 11 languages this would be the one-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It's more local, yes.

Q: Without compromising-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: When you do it in an invitation, I mean, you've got to have it translated into-

Q: Three versions.

Apparently, without compromising academic standards.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I think not; I really do.

Q: Yes, this is an enormous success.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And we haven't had, touch wood, we haven't had any, you know-

Q: Discord or-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no violence, no.

Q: This is what's remarkable and I must say, I lived here 10 years ago; when I came today there seemed to be five times more people than there were. It's a huge numbers of people here that I don't think was the case-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Fifty thousand.

Q: Fifty thousand?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: You're kidding.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I'm pretty sure that it; let me just look. I went to a wonderful thing on Saturday with Bishop Tutu.

Q: So Bishop Tutu came to this campus?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. He's got an honorary doctorate from here too.

Q: Ah.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: One of my favorite things was, and whenever I was asked to make a presentation on the Fulbright program, and I did that to all the people who were then on the committee before the Fulbright Commission was established, they came out from Washington and everything and I went to Cape Town to do that. And then I said, you know, I gave them all the statistics and I said, can I just give a little bit of a personal thing about why I think this is such a wonderful program. And I told them about- I said, you know, there have been so many magnificent Fulbrighters that one or two stand out in my mind, never to be forgotten. And I always tell the story of Johnny Mekwa, the trumpeter.

Q: Oh yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And I went- You remember that, yes.

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And I'm sure you know, I've told you this story also then so- We interviewed him in Durban and he was a late student. He was the first black student to do that- get a bachelor in jazz studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal under Darius Brubeck. And he started- His uncle was the embassy DCM's driver, Johannes Mekwa; and that's just coincidental.

And he graduated- got his bachelor when he was over 40. And we asked him, as we do everybody, you know, why should we send you, why do you want to go? And he said because I want to go and I want to learn things that will help me to come back and get my kids off the street. And he went to Indiana and he was very successful. He got his Master his jazz studies in two years, made all sorts of connections in the music world in America, and he came back, and he hadn't been back weeks and he went to the Daveyton, the Daveyton township there. And he went to the city council and he talked them into giving him a building, an unused building, and then he went to knocking on the corporate doors and he's very persuasive. He's a huge man; he's a huge man. I worry about him desperately for heart attack material.

And he went knocking on doors and Rick Menal, he always talks about Rick from, I think, either Anglo or De Beers, one of them, got generous money from him and all sort of other people got funding and he went to other fellow musicians to get them to agree to give up their time to give classes and then he went into the streets and he got his pupils. And they came from the streets and 18 months later they won the jazz competition in Chicago. And then he got here, about three years ago, the University of Pretoria ordered him an honorary doctorate and I was sitting in the third row as his guest. I remember him phoning me and he said, oh Gill, hey Gill, I'm telling you. And then he said and I'm going to get my ringgo now. I said good, Johnny, it's going to be a hell of a lot of red material.

And a year and a half after we did UNISA (University of South Africa) did exactly the same thing. But in his remarks, and he dedicated his award- he broke down crying and couldn't finish- but he dedicated it to John Burns, was one of the people, to Rick Menal and to many of his other musicians who had gone before. Obviously just when he thought about them it just made him cry and he wept. Isn't that a wonderful story? And then he got an honorary doctorate at UNISA and he kindly - I was his guest there too. And I sat next, with Professor James Khumalo, who's the person- who was an IV in '74 and he was the person who put together our South Africa national anthem.

So see, we've done things here in this- But he went- when Professor Khumalo went in '74 it was on a very strange program; it was a program we sent three Zulu students to the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale to teach- while they were studying they were teaching Zulu to the American students, and Professor Khumalo was- I think he ended up as a lecturer but he was their sort of warden, going with them. But he then also- His claim to fame now is that he wrote- he's composed lots of wonderful music but I mean, he put together our national anthem. You know, the combining of the two.

Q: The two.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: *Nkosi Sikelel and Die Stem.*

Q: Nkosi Sikelel and Die Stem, to show-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And in English.

Q: -the inclusiveness of the greatest groups.

Now, before we get to what you're doing presently, Gill, looking back at the times you spent at the U.S., do any particular individuals stand out in your memory?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I was very proud of- that we sent Maki Mandela, who was former President Mandela's daughter from his first marriage, and I happened to be on my three month senior FSN program in '85 when she was there and I had a photograph of she and I and Mickey Morgan, who's subsequently become a vice chancellor himself. There were three of us; photograph taken in the grounds of Gallaudet University-

Q: Yes, school for the deaf in Washington.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, school for the deaf, yes, and we were there on a program. And I used to come back and then when things got really hot in South Africa I would have this photograph and I used to say that- what I would say is if there was a horde coming towards me, a marauding, people with sabers and things, I would-

Q: Hold up the picture.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: -this is me with Mandela's daughter. And she was very good; she came to my farewell party, which was very nice of her.

And my other only- I haven't met President Mandela, which is- that's my one- If I could meet him then I could die happy. I haven't met him.

Q: How could he be- how could he fail to seek you out? What's his problem? Does he not understand what you did?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But I did have when Ambassador Lyman was here, as he was leaving he came to me and he said he wanted a favor, that President Mandela had only made- had made three phone calls to him during his duration and two of them had concerned a young man called Tanda Bantu Kwandawala, and he was a chief from the area where President Mandela had grown up and he wanted him to get a post graduate qualification and would I help. And I really thought, oh, this is my chance to be doing something. And Tanda Bantu and I spoke often on the phone, that I really bent all the rules because I rewrote his application. We put in all- and we got two scholarships for him from Massachusetts, because he wasn't a stellar student.

Q: What was Mandela's interest in this man?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because he was a chief from Mandela's part of the world and Mandela wanted to build up his-

Q: So this was a social-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: For that part of the world. And then Tanda Bantu phoned me one day and said no, that he couldn't go anymore, that his people, the chiefs around were begging him to stay. And I- In those- Then- At that time I was in touch with President Mandela's assistant, a lady who has since died, and I said to her, you know, he's a man. We can't make him go if he wants- The only person who might be able to persuade him is the president himself but obviously he couldn't. But I got a very nice letter from him back, thanking me for that.

Q: So he did go back to his village and-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And stayed, yes.

Q: Any sense of-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: But I met- When I was on one of my programs here I met up with Chief Bantu Holomisa, who's a former IV also and he's the head of- the chief of the traditional leaders. He's a member of parliament and that also. And I asked him, we were down on a program down on the Eastern Cape, and I asked him if he knew Tanda Bantu and he said yes, he did and he would give him my regards whenever he saw him.

Q: But this was a real person- this was not sending somebody's cousin or something like that.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, no, no.

Q: It was a real person of that time.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, that-

Q: Who needed to learn leadership qualities.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Probably, yes, probably. But in the end he didn't go, so, I don't know where he is now.

Q: Now, without going through the laundry list, you were saying a moment ago who- what came of all of this. The people- we can't take full credit for somebody being the minister of this and that just because they were to the U.S. but it's clear that many of today's leaders in South Africa were affected by the benefits of going to the U.S. Any examples come to mind?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Well, I mean, we sent, you know, there was a time when we would-

after Mandela had been released and we were getting all this DES, COLD money, etc. We had several group programs where we sent people and if I go through the list on that, I mean, there was one on constitutionalism, where the people who went on it, I mean, Pius Langa, who's now the chief justice; Matole Mastekhona; Bulelani Ngcuka, who was the head of the international prosecuting authority that was the first person to stop- who charged Zuma; Albie Sachs, a judge on the constitutional court; Louis Skweyiya, a judge on the constitutional court; Zola Skweyiya, minister of social development. I mean, that was all in just one program; it really was.

Q: Do you think there is a logic, cause and effect between the benefit of going to the U.S. and the fact that the person's curriculum vitae looked better as a result? Did that help people actually get positions or was it more-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I shouldn't think so, no. No, no, no. I think it was just-

Q: It's a coincidence. These are people-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: It would have just informed them better.

Q: Right. So these are people who are very-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Who were established.

Q: -astutely chosen by Americans and South Africans who understood that they were going somewhere important and were able to detect it beforehand.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: Yes. Okay, well you've just given- of the many, many programs you've done there's just one, the-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. There was another one on the demo- elections for the democratic convention and Essop Pahad, who was in Mbeki's office who's now out on his ear, he was one. He was with the South African communist party. He went on that one.

Q: Was this the recent Democratic convention?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, no, no; also '92.

Q: Ninety-two.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Because that's what I'm saying. You know, they were all identified then, in the '90s.

Q: Others will come to mind and we can add that.

Now, may I- I don't want to miss anything but can we talk about your present position and how your knowledge and your experience from working in the embassy serves the purpose of your present activities?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Sure. One of the- I'm quite sure the reason Christof asked me to come and work here was because there was a function, and you might not need this but just for your own edification, there was a function here, they gave- the university faculty awarded their woman in law award to Frene Ginwala, who was then the speaker of the house of assembly, and I was a guest. They're really good about inviting me to different functions and I came quite often. And it was a real who's who in the audience and most- I just seemed to know just about everybody; I had a wonderful time.

And now that I know Christof I could see the way he thinks, that he obviously looked around and he thought, oh, she could be useful to us. Because I knew people and they knew me so I was having loads of warm discussions and that. And at 10:00 that night I got a phone call from him saying I've had a crazy idea; wouldn't you like to come and work for us? And that was- I told you that I hadn't- I said to him, normally- you know how much I love my job but I would normally, you know, just say thank you but no thanks, but I said I've had two days in a row when I thought what difference am I making and I said I believe in coincidences; may I think about it? And I agonized for four months and I eventually then decided- a lot of upset- I wrote to a few of my colleagues that I had worked for, people who I thought would have USIS's interests and my interests at heart and only one said don't go; Jody said don't go.

Q: Lewinson.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Jody Lewinson, yes. She said no, stay, stay where you are.

Q: Christof valued you so highly that he was willing to wait four months to get an answer.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, he created the job for me so there wasn't anybody here; they created the position. And so I then did come and where I think it's been helpful that- From the mid '80s we took a constant decision in- at USIA that we looked at the statistics of the number of lawyers in the country and the absolutely abysmal percentage of those who were black, and so we got special money from Washington, Washington agreed to give us, in collaboration with Georgetown University, and we had- for several years it was called the South African Black Lawyers Program and we chose five or six and when Vasu Gounden was speaking he went on that. And there are several people now so, but as a result I ended up building up a large- a database of black lawyers because we had sent, over the years we sent so- you know, we had sent so many. And I think that's been very helpful. I know just about every judge on the constitutional court now, has been on one of our exchange programs and I'm able to- I have to- Sandile Ngcobo was a Fulbrighter. They don't all, to be honest. Some of them remember we well; others were reminded, others are just being polite because for them it was just an experience and maybe I didn't work with them all that closely. But we remained in the embassy's- I kept in touch with the embassy about the- with the Fulbright program and served on the interviewing committee and on, a couple of years on the national selection committee. I've worked with the cultural section

to- when they have speakers who they want to bring up to the University of Pretoria, sometimes even not in the field of law, I've worked with the embassy.

Q: What is the scope of your work now? What has Christof Heyns asked you to do?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I'm the liaison officer for the Center for Human Rights.

Q: Liaison-?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Meaning public relations officer for the Center.

Q: Tell me about the collaboration between the embassy today and what you're doing today in your capacity.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. This professor that I- was chiding me because I haven't responded to him. A professor- there's a Professor Anayin who is at Emory University and he is an extraordinary professor here. Our budget is very limited; we're dependent on donors for our existence. Just about all of us are subcontracted employees.

Q: The Center.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Here at the Center, at the Center, yes. So for us to bring a professor out from the States is money that we don't have but now that we have the facility to make use of the embassy's facility for doing a digital video, so that's what we're going to do. We're going to take our LLM students along next Wednesday and Professor Anayin will deliver a lecture to them and then there will be time for them to- for Q&A (questions and answers) afterwards.

Q: So you'll be using the facilities where you used to work, working with students, law students here-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That are from my present-

Q: -at the University of Pretoria. And- Is it still called TUKS even in the-?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes.

Q: And because you're so conversant with both sides of it there's a dialogue that would not have happened but will between a professor at Emory and a group of students here. What will the subject of the discussion be?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Let me just look up and see. Islam and- while we're chatting I'll look that up.

Q: So the topic of the digital videoconference?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Will be Islam and human rights.

Q: Islam and human rights. Is there an agenda that the Center here has for this discussion? Is there an outcome that the Center wants or is it a free open discussion?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: No, I think they just always- It's a very intensive course, this Masters in human rights and democratization and they try and touch on all aspects. It concentrates on Africa but you know, Islam is very powerful in Africa also.

Q: Yes. I mean, the title implies that somebody wants to have a discussion about how Islam can be consonant-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I guess.

Q: -with human rights perhaps.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: I guess so; I'll tell you next Wednesday. I'll go with the students, you know.

I had just joined here when Christof told me that there was an American professor that they were really hoping, they wished they could get over. And I worked with Monica and with the Fulbright senior specialist program and we got a grant for a Dr. David Padilla, who's the former executive secretary of the Organization of American States. And he has since come- We actually- they, CIES gave him the grant for the second time in a row and David is a wonderful person. We get him for absolutely nothing. He keeps coming back. We pay for his air ticket and we give him accommodation but we give him no honorarium and we don't pay for his meals or anything and he keeps coming back. He's coming back again, he's arriving on- this year, he's currently in La Paz, I got an email from him today. And he and I went up to the gorillas with Brian. He was on a Fulbright grant in Rwanda, which is why I- the timing, I went there.

Q: So, just to make the link visible, this is your previous career totally integrated into the current one.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, very much so. And now this- we have coming also, thanks to the PAS [Public Affairs Section], we made an application for another professor through the senior scholar program, senior specialist program but were- to my utter amazement we were unsuccessful. I couldn't believe it. I didn't think anybody did any work better than we did but when I spoke to the PAO, Mary Dean [Connor], she was very kind, she said she hadn't known about it and then she and the cultural attaché came here and they wanted some stuff from me also and they'd given a grant; they've given him a grant.

Q: Local?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: A local grant to bring him out. So he's arriving on Sunday, the 22nd.

Q: Oh, this is for a brief visit. It's not for-

JACOT GUILLARMOD: He'll be here for two weeks.

Q: Oh, okay, okay.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: That's what the senior specialist program is; it's between two and six weeks, they come for-

Q: Right. Window of opportunity to be with students here in the law school.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, yes.

Q: Great.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: So it's really is- I love it when- I always say I love it when my old life connects with my new. One of the people that- I hadn't been here very long; Donna Rodzinsky was still CAO, and she asked me and we walked with the Department of Business and Economic Sciences to bring out somebody who subsequently became very famous. He was then the secretary, was Robert Zoellick, and you know he's now head of the World Bank.

Q: Oh my. You brought- oh my. USTR (United States Trade Representative) and now World Bank. Wow. Did he come out as USTR? U.S. Trade Representative?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. And they said afterwards, and I think that- I believe the embassy told me afterwards he said that his session here with the students, and we brought in some students from the Mamelodi Campus as well, and he said that it was the highlight of his trip.

Q: Wow.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes. So.

Q: For the record, Robert Zoellick found this the highlight of his trip.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: And he- I also worked with them- Because of my links with Indiana University over the South African internship program and Patrick Amara, who's the head of international affairs, a former South African of many, many years with CIP and that as well, we- I worked with- The law faculty set up- had a- State Department gave a grant to the law faculty and Indiana University and Indiana brought out experts to deliver lectures on legislative drafting and then took a bunch of South African magistrates over- or prosecutors, I think, over for legislative drafting in the States.

Q: Tulane did that also. Tulane had a legislative drafting program that came here.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, did they also?

Q: Yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Ah.

Q: Poor Tulane. But you know that the storm didn't shut down Tulane. They're still at it, yes.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, good, good, wow, because that-

So that's kind of where my connection-

Q: Marvelous. You know, we should keep this open ended; we should consider following up on another day. For today, Gill Jacot Guillarmod, this is your life. And before we shut off the mic, the sense that you've had of your- in the sweeping fate of things that have happened in the last 20 years in this country and you've been right in the middle of it; what does it feel like, what do you think you were able to accomplish and what does it feel like when you look back at what you did during that period?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Oh, just a feeling of such gratitude, really, that I could have been part of, really part of history, that I was able to- and I was so lucky that I just landed in a job where I could help make opportunities and make it possible for people, as I said early on, to realize their own sense, you know, their own worth and that. And then, you know, come from there and to now, with a continuation with the Human Rights because it really is an absolute follow on from what we did at the embassy. And now I've gotten to travel throughout my continent; I'm going to Nigeria in August.

Q: Where you used to be persona non grata and where you're now very grata.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Well Gill, knowing that we'll add anything to this at any time, I want to thank you for sharing these brief episodes in a remarkable career.

JACOT GUILLARMOD: Lovely; I've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed- I like looking down and then when I- my eye falls upon somebody's name I think oh, yes, and it brings back a memory, you know. There are so many wonderful, wonderful memories. Sadly the more recent ones, I'm afraid, are not that good.

We had, oh, just a lovely little story. Obed Magure was a blind man and we sent him to Boston College where he did a Masters in educational-

Q: Education?

JACOT GUILLARMOD: In education, yes. Well, he came back to South Africa and I really- obviously I was at the airport to meet him and my friend, she then became my friend, Serena, she

was my counterpart at the IIE, Institute of International Education, and she was very nice. She met Obed on arrival and put him on the plane to Boston and everything and then when he came back he- I got a phone call from him, he said he wanted to pay me a visit. And he came down; obviously somebody brought him and then we had a lovely session in my office and then he said oh Gill, I've got a few things for you in the car.

So I went out to the car and they opened the boot, you'd say the trunk, and in it was- he comes from- he came, he's now based in Pretoria, he came from the northeast, the northern part and eastern part of the country where things grow very prolifically, and this boot was filled with pineapples and mangos, avocado, pears; and I said oh, Obed, I don't want you spending your money on me. And he said, drawing himself up and looking down his face, he said, we do grow things, you know, Gill. Putting me in my place completely.

Q: A perfect final note; a perfect final note.

WILLIAM M. ROUNTREE
Ambassador
South Africa (1965-1970)

Ambassador William M. Rountree was born in Georgia in 1917. He received his law degree from Columbus University. During World War II, he served in the Office of Lend-Lease Administration. After working in numerous positions in the State Department, he served as ambassador in Pakistan, Sudan, and South Africa. Ambassador was interviewed by Arthur L. Lowrie in 1989.

Q: That was under the Kennedy Administration. Now the appointment to South Africa is under Lyndon Johnson. How did that one come about?

ROUNTREE: I don't exactly know how the decision was made, but I did know President Johnson had in mind appointing me to some suitable post. I welcomed the opportunity of going to South Africa.

Q: What was your main mission, objective and US goals in South Africa at that time, in 1965?

ROUNTREE: The situation in South Africa and US relations with that country at that time were wholly different than at present. South Africa was one of the few independent countries in Africa. We had had a long history of close relations. They were with us in both World Wars and Korea. It was country with which we had done business on highly favorable terms. For example, at that time our favorable balance of trade with South Africa was in the neighborhood of \$700-\$800 million a year - that is, in our favor. It was a country upon which we relied for many, not only important but absolutely vital, minerals, things which we could not do without in our defense industry and our business.

Q: What was our policy on apartheid?

ROUNTREE: Apartheid had always been repugnant to the United States and our policies were to work toward its end. We expressed our objection in many forms. However, it did not have the enormous opposition of the American public that it later received. I wouldn't say that it was not a factor in domestic attitudes and politics, but the public attention it received was small compared with that which attached to apartheid in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nevertheless, it has always been our policy to oppose apartheid and to use whatever influence we could to bring about a change in South Africa's race relations. After the 1960s, the willingness of the United States to take progressively stronger measures grew. We joined, for example, with other countries in imposing restrictions against the provision of police equipment, arms, ammunition, anything of that sort, and took initiatives at the United Nations and the International Court.

Q: During your period there, did you have contact with prominent black leaders? Mandela was already in jail wasn't he?

ROUNTREE: Mandela was already in jail.

Q: You knew about Mandela and he was famous?

ROUNTREE: Oh, yes, he was famous. Our attitude toward apartheid was manifested in many ways, including deliberate efforts on the part of my embassy to meet and exchange views with blacks and members of other racial groups.

Q: Would you have mixed racial parties?

ROUNTREE: Yes, of course. This was a real bone of contention in our relations with the South African government. The Fourth of July party, for example, would include a large number of blacks, coloreds, Indians, as well as white South Africans.

Q: And Afrikaner officials came?

ROUNTREE: Some Afrikaner officials came, some did not. As time went on, more and more attended, and eventually there was no problem in inviting them and having them attend. Incidentally, particularly at smaller parties where you got various races together, they seemed to enjoy exchanging views and discussing matters among themselves. It has been perfectly evident to me since I've had anything to do with South Africa, that the most constructive influence against apartheid, against repressive race relations, has been exercised by American firms doing business in South Africa. I regret that so many people in the United States, including members of Congress, have insisted that Americans disinvest in South Africa and that American firms operating in South Africa leave. Until recently, most of the really constructive things that were done, such as doing away with job reservations and achieving equal pay for equal work, were brought about more because of the influence of American businesses than any other factor.

Q: The argument was that it was too gradual, too slow.

ROUNTREE: That was the argument and perhaps there is some merit in that, but during the period in which I was serving in South Africa and had responsibility for relations between South Africa and the United States, I felt that this was one of the constructive things that was going on. This was one of the few means by which we were making any impact, and I regret that this was dropped, rather than being supplemented by other measures.

Q: Did you have contact, I assume you did, with Robert Kennedy during his visit to South Africa in June 1966, and I suppose he took the other side, things had to change quicker?

ROUNTREE: Yes, he and his wife came out while I was there. They stayed with us in Pretoria, and we entertained them not only in that city but elsewhere. We arranged meetings for the Senator with white South Africans, as well as blacks and others, but the South African government refused to meet with him.

Q: Why?

ROUNTREE: Because they objected to the purposes of his visit.

Q: He was invited by a students' organization, a liberal one, and black.

ROUNTREE: Black and white. He made a series of speeches, and met with people across the political spectrum, including some Afrikaners, but not members of the government. He said from the outset that he was not coming to provide solutions to the problem, he was coming to learn. He made clear his abhorrence of apartheid, of this kind of repressive race relations, and gained a lot of friends and admirers.

Q: He's quoted as saying during his visit he met Chief Luthuli. Robert Kennedy, I believe, called him "one of the most impressive men I've met anywhere in the world". Did you know Luthuli?

ROUNTREE: Yes. A very impressive man indeed. Another impressive man is Chief Buthelezi, who succeeded Luthuli as head of the Zulu tribe.

Q: Did you know Prime Minister Verwoerd before he was assassinated?

ROUNTREE: Yes. Verwoerd was the Prime Minister when I arrived and I saw quite a bit of him in my early days in South Africa. South Africa has several capitals. The administrative capital is Pretoria, the legislative capital is Cape Town, and the judicial capital in Bloemfontein. We had recently moved from Pretoria to Cape Town for the parliamentary session. I attended parliamentary sessions as a visitor only infrequently but an Embassy Officer was often assigned to sit in the gallery to observe the proceedings. On this particular occasion a young Political Officer was there. Before the session began - Verwoerd was on the floor, with other ministers and members still coming in. The American Officer noticed a uniformed messenger walk in the door to the assembly room. For some reason the messenger attracted the officer's attention. He was then recognized as a man of Greek origin who had been in the embassy several times to find

out how to sue the United States Government. The officer's eyes followed the messenger as he walked across the floor, drew a knife and stabbed Verwoerd. The officer rushed back to the embassy and reported this to me, and we sent a flash message to Washington, reporting the name of the man and the fact that he had been expelled by the United States on at least one and, perhaps two occasions. We knew that while he was in the United States he had been in mental institutions. We asked urgently for background data.

Q: He had been in the United States?

ROUNTREE: Yes, illegally. We had expelled him. And he wanted to sue the United States because we had deported him to South Africa instead of to Greece.

Q: I know he was a schizophrenic.

ROUNTREE: As so, within minutes intelligence, background from Washington started pouring in, giving full details. I don't know how they had such immediate access to all this information. This, of course, I took immediately to the Foreign Minister. It's an interesting little sidelight to the fact that, yes, I did know Verwoerd who was in office during my early days in South Africa but died soon after.

Q: Who was that embassy officer, just out of curiosity? Do you remember?

ROUNTREE: He was a young lawyer who had passed the bar exams and then had applied for the Foreign Service. This was his first assignment, and he was detailed to the Political Section. He was awfully good in ferreting out information and making contacts across the political spectrum. This was the only assignment he had, as he resigned soon thereafter. Verwoerd was replaced as Prime Minister by John Vorster, who remained in that office for the remainder of my stay in South Africa.

Q: Vorster had a reputation, I believe, as a ruthless Minister of Justice before he became Prime Minister.

ROUNTREE: He had the reputation of being a very strict man and disciplinarian. He was an extremely strong proponent of apartheid.

Q: He was also a golfer. Did you play golf with him?

ROUNTREE: Yes, he was a golfer. No I didn't. I played very little golf in South Africa.

Q: I understand they have some beautiful courses.

ROUNTREE: Yes, they do. Suzanne played regularly. I played twice, I think, the whole time I was there. Incidentally, we never even met Gary Player until our retirement in Florida.

Q: In February 1967, the US aircraft carrier FDR was visiting Cape Town. The US Government

refused shore leave because of segregated hospitality and apparently the South African government reacted very angrily. Could you say something about your role in all that, the implications of that ship visit?

ROUNTREE: Yes, it was an interesting event and in most respects a very sad event for me. I was back in Washington on consultation and I was asked to meet with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which I did. The purpose of the meeting was for them to impress on me the importance of ship visits to South Africa. At that particular stage in history, it would have been enormously beneficial to have access to South African ports.

The Secretary of the Navy at that time was Paul Nitze. While I was in Washington we worked out an arrangement which seemed satisfactory to all concerned, including to officials of Defense, Navy and State. Even before I returned to South Africa I was in communication by telegram with my staff setting forth the circumstances in which the visit could take place. I put in motion conversations with South African officials to work out the details. I returned to South Africa and all aspects of this proposed visit were completed in close telegraphic consultation with Washington, which knew exactly what we were going to do, when, where, and for what reason. This was all approved. The FDR was to arrive on a certain day. Twenty four hours before arrival time a large group of congressmen visited the Secretary of the Navy and, as I recall, other officials to protest the visit of the FDR. They exacted from the Administration, despite the fact that all the details had been worked out and previously agreed, conditions that rendered it impossible to go forward with the visit. I asked for and received a visit by helicopter from the Executive Officer of the FDR. We spent the night going over various alternatives and exchanging telegrams with Washington. But finally the word was, indeed, that there would be no leave except for organized, integrated activities. Now the arrangements included many organized, integrated activities which went far beyond the strict apartheid laws of South Africa, but there was such a tremendous variety of activities to render it impossible to say that each and every one was organized and integrated. For example, several hundred volunteers with automobiles were to pick up members of the crew to take them on visits, excursions, home dinners and so forth. Several hotels had canceled their business in order to give dinners and luncheons for members of the crew. There were all kinds of activities, but there was no way that the leave could be granted under the conditions imposed by Washington. Therefore, the result was that all leave was canceled.

Q: They insisted that everything be integrated?

ROUNTREE: Everything be integrated. Nothing except organized, integrated activities. And there was no way in a matter of a few hours of changing all the tremendous plans that had been made and previously agreed by Washington. Every aspect of it had been agreed. So the next morning the ship came in and the Minister of Defense and the Minister of the Navy, according to the program, called on the Captain. It was then we announced that there would be no leave. The next three days the ship sat at the dock, the crew had put big signs over the side "CAPE TOWN WE LOVE YOU." 25,000-30,000 South Africans of all races went aboard to visit it. It was truly an integrated activity there.

Q: Had the original plans had explicitly any segregated activities?

ROUNTREE: No, not explicitly. But it was the sort of thing in which I think everybody lost. The South Africans of all races and political persuasion were really unhappy. The enormous trouble to which hundreds of volunteers had gone was a dead loss. It had all been worked out on such an open, frank basis - and then to have it all collapse was sad, but the saddest aspect to me was that the arrangement under which American vessels could again visit South African ports, collapsed.

Q: Did you ever find out exactly what happened in Washington?

ROUNTREE: Oh, yes. The decision was made at a high level.

Q: It must have been the President.

ROUNTREE: The people who had issued the final orders, that is nothing but organized, integrated activities, did not realize the implication of that - that it really meant no leave. Now it's also interesting, too, that after this visit, within a matter of days, there was an American naval vessel passing southwest Africa. One of the crew, in this case a black sailor, had acute appendicitis and peritonitis, I got an emergency call and arranged for this ship to come into Cape Town to deliver the patient. He was put in a hospital and given top flight medical care. And then, within a few days, another vessel coming in from the other side around Durban, had a medical emergency. One of the engineers had metal thrown in his eye while drilling. I had to arrange for this vessel to come in to Durban and deliver this fellow for medical treatment. All this within a matter of days after the FDR incident, before the deep resentment had subsided. So what I'm really saying is that those of us most distressed over the results of the FDR fiasco - and it was a fiasco on our part - fully sympathized with the objectives of the decision. Sometimes in efforts to achieve objectives gross mistakes are made. This, in my judgment, was one of them.

Q: It must have gone all the way to President Johnson didn't it?

ROUNTREE: It probably did.

Q: Did no further ship visits take place then during your period?

ROUNTREE: The ship visits that I mentioned, the emergency ship visits.

Q: No, I mean regular.

ROUNTREE: No, and they've never been resumed. Now it may very well be, and probably is true, that the importance of having that facility available was much greater at that time because of our naval activity in the Pacific and Indian Ocean than it is now or ever will be again. But at that time it was worth going to an awful lot of trouble to achieve.

Q: The Navy didn't, for one thing, have access to the Suez Canal that we've had since the late 1970s.

ROUNTREE: Yes.

Q: Were there any blacks on your staff, any black officials in South Africa during that time?

ROUNTREE: Not during my time or before. The main reason for that was the difficulty in living arrangements for non-whites and the existence of South African laws which made such assignments highly impractical. But after my tour of duty, we were able to assign non-whites in an atmosphere rendering their service there more feasible. Incidentally, the assignment of diplomatic representatives from black African nations was a strong factor while I was in South Africa in causing the Government to alter its position with respect to non-white emissaries. The last time I was in South Africa we had a top-flight black Consul General in Cape Town and, more recently, we've had a black Ambassador to South Africa.

Q: During 1969 there was, I believe, a very important US-South African agreement on floor price for gold. Did you play a role in that? It was considered at the time a big victory for the United States and the International Monetary Fund. I think it was just before Nixon went off the gold in 1970.

ROUNTREE: I don't remember the details of that.

Q: The UN General Assembly decision on Southwest Africa, was that a bone of contention with South Africans?

ROUNTREE: Very much so. It was one of the matters under constant discussion and review during my tour of duty there. Generally, we urged the South Africans to adhere to General Assembly and International Court decisions, but unfortunately the court decisions were not all that favorable from the viewpoints which we espoused.

Q: We really didn't have a lot of means to influence the South African government, did we? We needed them in those years as much or more than they needed us?

ROUNTREE: We exercised some influence during that entire period, and considerable influence at times. The South Africans of all races were far more concerned with American attitudes than any other. As I said, one of the most constructive aspects of American influence has been American firms doing business in South Africa.

Q: Was South Africa, to your knowledge, engaged in a nuclear arms program in those years?

ROUNTREE: Not nuclear arms, but nuclear power.

Another aspect of our relations with South Africa, far more important then than now, was our space program, which simply could not have operated as it did without South African tracking stations. Their cooperation and the technical excellence of their participation were very real factors when I was there.

Q: Did they take any actions to try to hurt us when we got into conflict over Southwest Africa or others things, or threaten to close the tracking stations?

ROUNTREE: No. They were always meticulous in this and there was never any threat, while I was there, of if you do this we will do that. Of course, quite naturally, they pointed out the mutual benefits of one policy as opposed to another, but never made threats. Nor am I aware of threats made by the South African government following the imposition of the drastic sanctions in more recent years which rendered it illegal to import almost anything from South Africa or to export almost anything to South Africa. We closed down South African use of civil air facilities, banned imports of the Krugerrand, and so forth. It has never, to my knowledge, been the position of the South African government that if you do these things to us, we will not permit you to import our chrome, platinum, manganese, or other strategic materials without which you can't run your industries. Alternative sources are only the Soviet Union and communist countries. That has surprised me, and pleased me.

Q: Was there a change in the domestic interest in South Africa that was reflected in the Congress and the Nixon Administration when they came in as a result of what was happening in the United States, for one thing, during the 1960s, but during that five years you were in South Africa, by the end of your tour, was there a much higher sensitivity to events in South Africa?

ROUNTREE: Oh, I think so. American domestic interests in South Africa increased every year during the 1960s and 1970s. You see my first responsibility for relations with South Africa began in 1955 when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, South Asia and Africa, and then from 1956 when I was Assistant Secretary of State for that region. In these early years, public interest of the United States in South Africa and the racial policies of South Africa was relatively small. But since then, and particularly after the 1960s, when so much was happening in this country with respect to our own racial problems, the concern of the American public and consequently, the American Congress has increased dramatically and constantly. The answer to your question really is, when I went to South Africa in 1965 it was still during the process of racial awakening in the United States and demonstrations were leading to fundamental changes here. Naturally, during the course of my five years in South Africa interest in racial matters outside the United States increased.

Q: What about the Afrikaners, Afrikaner officials in particular, during this period? Did they know a lot about the United States, about our system, our racial problems?

ROUNTREE: They did, indeed. All of them made a study of it and, of course, drew parallels between our respective histories. Most of the educated Afrikaners became students, of race relations. Not only in South Africa but in the United States and elsewhere, because they wanted to inform themselves for their own purposes. Every aspect of racial developments in the United States was big news to them. They followed with great interest reports of demonstrations and so forth, and noted with equal interest the consequences of these demonstrations, changes in American laws and practices.

Q: Aside from matters of race, when they looked to the outside world, when and if they did look to the outside world, did they look more to Europe? Did they visit Europe? Did they have contacts with Europeans more than they did with the United States?

ROUNTREE: English-speaking South Africans constitute about 45% of the white population, and look mainly to England. Many still feel close attachment to their place of origin. Afrikaners, who are descendants of Dutch, French and German settlers, no longer look to Europe. They consider themselves to be white Africans. That's one of the main differences between the Afrikaners and other whites in South Africa.

Q: They didn't come to the States either.

ROUNTREE: They would visit Europe, but they did not look upon Europe as the fatherland, the homeland. The most important foreign country in the world to Afrikaners then and now is the United States, even with the existence of economic and other sanctions.

Q: When the South African government established black homelands and pursued the policies with regard to the land, they left the blacks with some of the worst land and a very small percentage of the land, given their population. What was the Afrikaner rationale behind being so stingy with the land distribution, do you think?

ROUNTREE: Possibly the most ludicrous aspect of apartheid was the decision to assign to such a huge percentage of the population such a small percentage of the land area, most of that being extremely poor land. The homelands concept was merely to establish some rationale for the deprivation of civil rights to the blacks occupying territory in what the Afrikaners considered to be white South Africa. I know of no South African, Afrikaner or otherwise, who has provided any logical justification for this concept.

David Michael Wilson
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Cape Town (1966-1968)

Mr. Wilson was born and raised in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and educated at Columbia University and New York University Law. Joining the USIA in 1963, he served variously as Press Officer, Information Officer and Public Affairs Counselor in a variety of posts including Abidjan, Cape Town, Ottawa, Geneva and Brussels. He also served in senior level positions with USIA in Washington, DC. Mr. Wilson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: So you went to Cape Town.

WILSON: I came on home leave and went to Cape Town.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WILSON: About the beginning of '66 to the fall of '68.

Q: What job did you have in Cape Town?

WILSON: I was the branch public affairs officer in Cape Town.

Q: Where was sort of the head office?

WILSON: Well that is an interesting question. You obviously asked it because you know the answer. The public affairs officer was with the embassy in Pretoria, but when the embassy in Pretoria, the ambassador, DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), political officer, economic officer moved down to Cape Town where the parliament is for four and a half months of the year, the PAO in Pretoria stayed in Pretoria and I in effect was the country PAO. It was a one person post.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa in the 1966 to 1968 period?

WILSON: It was very tense. Cape Town, if you will, was a bit like Boston. It was the sort of the intellectual, the long haired capital of the country. There was a university, the University of Cape Town, which Bobby Kennedy visited. It had something called the advanced league for southern students which was leading the opposition to the government. But about 20 miles away in a town called Stellenbosch there was the University of Stellenbosch which was an Afrikaans university from which five of the then six prime ministers of the country had graduated. So it was sort of the intellectual root of the Afrikaner movement. I had my first taste of real politics there. I worked obviously with the students at the University of Cape Town, but I also started to work very closely with both the students and some of the administration at the University of Stellenbosch. They speak Afrikaans, and I was dealing with a guy who was director of development there. I discovered he was the head of the so-called Broderbund, the secret South African society, he was head of the area group there, the secret South African Afrikaner group that kept things going. About a year into my term, the ambassador called me in and said that he had word that I was about to be PNGed, persona non grata because of my contacts with the South African Student Union, the English speaking student union. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I find that hard to believe, because I am doing nothing more than some of my other predecessors did. I may be a little more active. I think the real reason is my contact with the South African Afrikaner students at Stellenbosch. That is what the government doesn't like." In any case I was prepared to leave along with my wife. We had someone at the South African mission to the UN in New York who was then going to be declared persona non grata if they declared me persona non grata. They didn't, and so I stayed. They were very sensitive about that, about my dealings with the Afrikaners. I realized that whenever I went up there I was a jerk. There is no question.

Q: What were you doing with them? I mean what were they so upset about?

WILSON: I was a contact. I was maybe showing them films or giving them some books, talking to them, that's all. Which could be a very annoying thing if you want to run a closed society. But

interestingly I was there when the Six Day War between the Israelis and Arabs...

Q: June of '67.

WILSON: Yes, about that time. And per capita South Africans, particularly the Afrikaners, contributed more to Israel than any other country in the world, per capita. Obviously the U.S. contributed more. But the philosophy behind that was very interesting, namely that we, the Afrikaners, like the Jews, like the Israelis, are God's chosen people and we are surrounded by infidels, by these blacks in the case of South Africans, by the Arabs in the case of the Jews. We feel a great kinship to the Jews because we know what they are going through. So staunch support for the Jews. It was quite nice, it worked out very well.

Q: Well, 1966-1968 was pretty much the high point of our civil rights movement in the United States. Things were really...

WILSON: Well '68 was the assassination of Kennedy and King.

Q: How was that, I mean obviously you are doing the USIA thing, how did you handle that?

WILSON: Well the first question that always got thrown up at you whenever you are trying to talk about civil rights is, would you want your daughter or son to marry one. I mean that is the first thing out. You have to deal with people as individuals, not by the color of their skin. Actually the more interesting question came up was the Vietnam war, how we dealt with that. In effect the South Africans were more or less supporting us because it was anti-communism. They were violent anti-communists, so we just had to reinforce that a little bit. It wasn't a difficult thing. The race relations in the United States really didn't come to the fore. People knew about it, but it didn't in any way impede our dealings with the South Africans.

Q: Well did you find any curiosity maybe saying you know, this is the way we are going to have to, looking at the turmoil you are going through and ours is to the tenth degree more serious. How are we going to do it looking at the way you did it and all?

WILSON: To some extent, but don't forget Cape Town was not Pretoria and Johannesburg was not Durban and there was not that intense feeling. People were more intellectual, more liberal about it with their contacts. So there certainly was an undercurrent, but there wasn't a very major issue.

Q: And this was not a theme that you were sort of tasked to drive home. Apartheid is bad, do something.

WILSON: Well, we didn't come right out and say apartheid is bad, but we said you can not continue to live this way. It is going to bring down your country. Oh, yes, we did that from the start. They accepted that. There is a large naval base near Cape Town called Simon's Town. At one point the local government banned all the Bantu, banned all the blacks, from the area. Suddenly nothing got done. Garbage wasn't being picked up, the streets weren't cleaned. Then

there was a big movement, bring back our blacks. Ironically, Stuart, and this is a personal view, the South Africa that I saw at least from the Cape, was more integrated economically at least than was the United States. Because the South African economy could not have existed without the blacks or coloreds, whereas the United States economy could have. In Cape Town we dealt mainly with the Cape coloreds as opposed to the blacks, the Bantu. That was the dominant non-white group. Because of the smallness of the society, obviously many of the Afrikaners had Cape colored ancestors. It is just obvious. The divisions were not that great. One of the educators with whom I worked very closely and studied the United States used to say it doesn't matter to us, Cape coloreds, who is in power. Whether it is the whites, the Afrikaners, or the blacks we are always going to be the bronze spread in between the white bread and the black bread. We are always going to be there. Culturally the Cape coloreds probably felt themselves more akin to the whites than they did to the Bantu, to the blacks. One of the things that I used to work with in one of the black townships there was a stage play group that we helped get some American plays, help them out a little bit. But the Cape coloreds felt much more akin to the whites than they did to the blacks. We had apartheid. One of my good contacts was a major figure in the very liberal movement, and he was banned. He couldn't be around more than three other people socially. I could have him over. He had a house out in the country. He had a dog. He would let the dog out, and if the South African police were to come we would just get out of the room where this guy was so there would be no problem. Ultimately he left the country and went to England. He had gotten a lot of medical grants from NIH (National Institute of Health) to do some study. He was one of the three or four leading figures in thyroid study, in medicine. We gave him a lot of grants. But he was very liberal, and he was very wealthy too.

Q: Was there sort of a good solid demarcation between the Afrikaans speaking and the English speaking people, whites there at that time?

WILSON: There wasn't a great demarcation except that the two English speaking newspapers always delighted when an Afrikaner was caught breaking the anti-miscegenation laws. They would publicize this greatly. I knew people in the progressive party of the Liberals and the United Party and the government party and dealt with all of them. It was part of my job.

Q: Speaking of your job, what were you doing? I mean were you going around and showing films, having books, reading books?

WILSON: Yes, and going around with newspapers, dealing with the media, developing exchange programs, Fulbright exchange programs, various things. Not Fulbright, because they didn't have a Fulbright commission there, but exchange programs nonetheless.

Q: How about with the media? Was there, were they receptive with what we had to distribute?

WILSON: Yes, both the English, and I found a way to deal with the Afrikaans media. The most influential Afrikaans paper in the country was something called Die Burger. I eventually got to know both their area editing chief and their foreign editor. I made it my point to. That worked pretty well. I mean they didn't embrace me and say we accept all your views, but at least they were receptive to what I had to say. They understood why we were doing what we were doing in

our foreign policy in any case.

Q: Were you picking up any feel about what was the end game going to be?

WILSON: No because I don't know if people thought that far ahead. I personally thought the end game would end in bloodshed. I was extraordinarily delighted that it did not.

Q: I remember I was in African INR, not dealing with South Africa. We would sit around and talk, and the consensus was pretty much, this is early 60's, there would be a night of long knives, you know.

WILSON: Well the other thing that I found very interesting. On the cultural scene in Cape Town there are a lot of Jews.

Q: I thought Johannesburg would have had more.

WILSON: Sure they did, but in the cultural scene there were a lot. Slow to the business scene. I got to know one guy who ran a music store. His name was Hans Kramer who was straight from Germany. I said, "Hans, how can you for god's sakes support the nationalist party?" It was very interesting. He and others would say, "You know we have had to flee three times. We are here. We don't intend to have to flee again. That's why we can support the nationalist party." Then just as I was leaving, the minister of justice whose name escapes me, who later became a prime, not Vorster, before Jan Vorster. I don't remember at least offhand. They arrested some students up in Johannesburg, and he made a plea to the parents of Jewish students saying please rein in your children. We know you are good, loyal South Africans. But the student movement was a very important, very effective movement. There was a certain amount of anti-Semitism beneath the surface of the Afrikaner, but as I said, they also supported Israel very strongly.

Q: What about was Soweto in existence when you were there?

WILSON: Sure.

Q: Did you have much contact with it?

WILSON: I didn't.

Q: I was just wondering because later on we made a real effort to get into Soweto, I think with our programs and all that.

WILSON: No we didn't at this point.

Q: Who was our ambassador or ambassadors while you were there?

WILSON: The ambassador when I was there was a man named William Manning Rountree. A kind of a stuffed shirt, but I got along with him. His wife at one point was so ticked off at some

of the wives of the military that she forced them to sit down and read to each other from the book of diplomatic etiquette. I don't think he was a great ambassador frankly. He wasn't bad. He became assistant secretary for something, economic affairs or something.

Q: Well I am trying to capture the times. Did you feel that you had a sense of mission while you were there, that later I think, times changed particularly in the 70's and 80's.

WILSON: Obviously we did not support apartheid and would let the government know that. I was there when the prime minister, Verwoerd was assassinated in the parliament. They came up with a very novel, I mean it turned out though it never got publicized that the assassin had been dealing with our consular section for a long time to get a visa to go the United States. We were very hesitant to give it to him. The South Africans ended up handling it very nicely. He was not executed; he was put in a mental institution on the basis that only a mentally deficient person would want to kill this great prime minister. Good philosophy. It worked very well. I worked very closely with some of our British allies. The Dutch weren't so easy to work with. They caused a lot of problems with apartheid. It is interesting because those of English speaking descent tended to be more white gloves, you know, didn't want to deal with blacks and non-whites. Whereas the Afrikaners while there was apartheid, you know, they slept with them. You know, a different relationship.

Q: It is that way in the United States during this time. You have, you know, northerners who are talking big about doing things, but basically there was to a certain extent in certain areas a much closer integrated society in the south. People had been living and sleeping and eating together for a long time.

WILSON: People were integrated working with people of all races, and they had to. Non whites clearly outnumbered the whites and were a vital part of the economy of the country. I am going to have to leave you.

BERNARD FRANCIS COLEMAN
Staff Assistant
Washington, DC (1967)

Bernard Francis Coleman was born in Washington, DC in 1913. He graduated from West Virginia State College in 1935, served in the US Navy, and worked extensively in public schooling including as principal in schools in Africa. Coleman joined the Foreign Service and served in post primarily in Africa in addition to serving as ambassador-in-residence in the US. Coleman was interviewed by James T. Dandridge, II in 2001.

COLEMAN: Nobody said anything. Joe Palmer happened to be a favorite of Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk and I'll tell you that story. One day Joe Palmer called me in the office and said, "Barney, we are going to South Africa." I said, "You're going to South Africa." He said, "No, you and I are going to South Africa, don't you want to go?" I said, "If you go, I'll go."

And we packed our bags and we took a tour.

It was in 1967, when the Biafran war was on. We stopped in Nigeria, we went to Togo, Benin, Togo and Guinea and we stopped in Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia and then South Africa. When we were on Air Malawi going into South Africa, Palmer said to me, "Barney, do you have a gun?" I said, "Joe, I haven't carried a gun since I first went to Liberia back in 1953." I said I found no need for a gun. He said, "Good. Now I'll tell you why we are going into South Africa. We are going to get Mandela off of Robin Island." I said, "Oh!" He said, "Dean Rusk got a letter from the president, got word from the president." He wanted him off of Robin Island so you see how long before it became a reality.

But (the) surprising thing (is) when he did get out of jail, see he had been on Robin Island for five years. Johnson said that was, what was the term he used? "It's barbaric to keep a man away from the mainland that long." Vorster said to Joe Palmer, who was with the president then, when we got there, "Mandela will die on Robin Island." But through insistence, and I think that it was through insistence of Johnson, before he left, that they moved him to the mainland.

Hank Cohen went down on a Monday, and I think that he was in Cape Town on Tuesday, he left on Wednesday and Mandela was out in the street on Thursday. And, I always teased him about that.

MARK E. MOHR
Desk Officer for South Africa
Washington, DC (1969-1970)

Mr. Mohr was born in New York and raised in New York and New Jersey. He was educated at the University of Rochester and Harvard University, where he studied the Chinese language. After service in Korea with the Peace Corps, he joined the Foreign Service in 1969, and served abroad in Taipei, Taichung, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Beijing and Brisbane. In his service at the State Department in Washington, Mr. Mohr dealt primarily with Far East Affairs. After his retirement he worked at the Department of Energy on Nuclear energy matters. In 1997 he was recalled to the State Department, where he worked as Korean desk officer. Mr. Mohr was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: So did you have any goal in mind on where you wanted to go?

MOHR: Of course. I wanted to be a "new" China hand. I wanted to get advanced Chinese language training, and be a political officer in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, when I was sworn into the foreign service, it was one of those times of budget tightening. If you had passed your foreign language requirement, you could not go overseas. I passed in Korean, so I was first assigned to the operations center at State for a few months, and then to the Office of Southern African

Affairs (AF/S) for about a year and a half.

Q: Well had you ever thought about Africa?

MOHR: No, and the big irony is that my son is an Africanist. He has a Ph.D. in African anthropology and teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to being assigned to AF/S, I had never thought about Africa, and had no particular interest in it. It was an interesting time in 1969, though, to be on the Southern Africa desk. There was a bit of controversy, especially about the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia, which I don't think we supported.

Q: Never.

MOHR: Right, OK. As the junior officer, one of my basic responsibilities was answering the mail. We received countless letters in support for the white-only apartheid regime in Rhodesia, demanding to know why the U.S. government was not backing Ian Smith. Since in my opinion these letters bordered on the racist, my initial replies were fairly confrontational. By the way, most of this "hate mail" came from southern California and Florida., apparently from retirees who had nothing better to do. I remember the deputy director counseling me, explaining that the purpose of the reply was to smother the writer with such blandness that he would get fed up with us and stop writing, not to incite him to reply again. I was told to create boilerplate language and repeat such language as much as possible. So this is what I did, but some of the letters were really vicious. One, for example, suggested we should use nuclear weapons on the black areas of South Africa and Rhodesia to teach them a lesson. What I wanted to reply was something along the lines of how would you like it if we machine-gunned your children. But I understood the point the deputy director was making, and I got pretty good at creating a multitude of blandly correct paragraphs, and then cutting and pasting as necessary.

Q: It reminds me of a Tom Wolfe story called Bow Wow and the Flak Catchers.

MOHR: I am not familiar with that title.

Q: It is essentially in the housing administration in San Francisco, where these big Samoans would come in, and they are big.

MOHR: Yes, I know about Samoans. They are Polynesians, and most Polynesians are big.

Q: Yes, and they would come and lean over the desk and they would be up against the flak catcher. He was a guy with horn rimmed glasses and some pencils sticking out of his pocket and all. He would listen to these guys screaming and yelling and reply in very dulcet tones about well we will look into that and thank you very much. That was his job, to catch flak. The Polynesians were "mau mauing," which was trying to scare the hell out of him.

MOHR: So anyway I spent my time basically doing the office correspondence. I also was in charge of clearances throughout the building for policy papers. I would take, for example, a dozen of these long papers in shopping baskets and wheel them around the building, dropping

them off in the various offices as required. Then I would follow up on the phone and bug the offices for their clearances. After about a year of this, with about six months to go on my assignment, I got a call from my personnel officer. He said they had a job for me in Taiwan.

HARVEY F. NELSON Jr
Deputy Director, South African Affairs
Washington, DC (1969-1971)

Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, The University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland. Ambassador Nelson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

NELSON: We covered Zambia, Rhodesia, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Q: We are now at the beginning of the Nixon administration. What was the reaction of the African bureau?

NELSON: I can't really answer that question because I arrived after the administration had taken office. I don't really know what the initial reaction might have been. I don't remember my new colleagues talking about the change in administrations to any great length.

Q: I raised the question because many observers have said that neither the President or Kissinger seemed very interested in Africa. They had other fish to fry. What were your concerns in the 1969-71 period?

NELSON: We were witness to the disintegration of South Africa. That may not have been obvious at the time, but in retrospect, the situation was changing starting around this time. Our focus was on the "Unilateral Declaration of Independence" emanating from Southern Rhodesia under Ian Smith. The embargo on Rhodesia continued in an effort to get the white leadership to come to terms with the black majority. The white population was only about 4% - very small, but very much in control. In South Africa, the white population was about 17-20%.

Q: How were we dealing with South Africa?

NELSON: We were pretty soft on South Africa. We viewed them as "God-fearing" folks. We were pretty easy on them. We did make it known that we opposed apartheid. We wanted that

system terminated. But we didn't for example vote for UN resolutions highly critical of South Africa. We didn't support sanctions. It was a long time before we became very active on apartheid. The issue was not a very high priority for the Nixon Administration. There was no strategic interest that would have been served by our pressures. The Soviet Union was not much of a factor in the area of Africa that I covered.

One of the advantages South Africa had was that it was staunchly anti-communist. The government thought that most of the rabble rousing in the black population came from domestic communists. So the government was much on our side in the Cold War.

Q: Did we watch the ANC (African National Congress) at all?

NELSON: It had people in South Africa, although most of the leadership resided outside the country. They did mount terrorist operations as well as very vocal propaganda campaigns. They were active agitators. With Mandela in jail and the leadership outside the country, the ANC could not become a very influential organization. I don't think we communicated with the ANC very much. This was another preference of the Nixon administration. Communications with the ANC was not pushed at all. They were not to be encouraged by us showing any interest in them. I am sure that some contacts must have taken place overseas and they may have had some in Washington, but I didn't really know. We had a lot of clandestine contacts, but as a government, we were not really engaged or concerned with the ANC.

RICHARD J. DOLS
International Relations Officer
Mbabane, Swaziland (1969-1971)

Desk Officer, South Africa Desk
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Richard J. Dols was born in Minnesota in 1932. He obtained a law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1960 and worked in the private sector for a year. In 1961, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in France, Canada, Swaziland, New Zealand, and Washington, DC. Mr. Dols was interviewed in 1992 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What were American interests in Swaziland at the time?

DOLS: We had a number of interests there. We, of course, wanted a peaceful solution to the South African racial question. We saw the possibility of building up our relationships with Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in such a way that they became kind of prosperous, peaceful, models for change and also a possible neutral ground for talks not only on South Africa but Rhodesia, which was still alive in those days.

We certainly had in Botswana an outstanding example of a functioning democratic system in Africa. The one in Swaziland at least had the appearance thereof. Less so in Lesotho where there were more problems. We did see it as a vehicle for that kind of movement, pressure for change in a positive way.

A meeting ground it was indeed already because of a flow of South African tourists to Swaziland. They began to see on a very practical level that apartheid was not the only way. They would come over in droves on weekends to the spa and casino which is a fabulous place there. They didn't die because they sat at a table that was adjacent to a table of black people or an Indian from Natal. It was curious that when they were all heading back to Johannesburg on a Sunday evening, there were two lines at the border, of course, the black line and the white line. The white line would have 70 cars in a row lined up to get through. Of course, the blacks could return to South Africa through a much shorter line.

There were a number of leaders of high standing in Swaziland. There was a doctor who was the Minister of Health. I remember taking one of our Deputy Assistant Secretaries who was on a visit down to have a chat with him. [The doctor] had been educated at [a] university in South Africa during the period before blacks were pushed out of white universities. He was a very educated type. He and people of his generation have an idea of confederation of states for Southern Africa. All in happy, harmonious union. And, of course, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland would be in that orbit. There were others like that. Unfortunately they tended to be the last of the last because it wasn't very long before they got older and left politics. They weren't able to exert the kind of influence that comparable people in West Africa do. Like Leopold Senghor, etc. They missed the timing on that. But there was a category of people like that who were possible assets in promoting a peaceful resolution and unfortunately time just zipped too fast.

Q: Then you moved from this healthy relationship to become the South African Desk Officer from 1973-75. Obviously, this had problems.

DOLS: Yes, indeed. Significant problems. I was selected, and I was told this, because the powers to be in the Department thought I would be very moderate on the question. They had troubles with previous Desk Officers who felt a little too strongly on the apartheid issue.

Q: We were opposed to the South African method of separating the blacks from the whites and very strict segregation.

DOLS: Having served in Swaziland I knew problems of both sides. What a horrible dilemma people in that area have, particularly the white population. On the one side, many of the enlightened whites in that period recognized the need for change, on the other hand, how do you bring it about in a peaceful, orderly fashion. Most of them saw disaster if you went down that road, even though they would have liked to have gone down that road.

So there I was. After a few months I went off to my first orientation trip as Desk Officer. The

Embassy very deliberately and again admittedly after a while, set up a program for me that would indeed in their eyes radicalize me. It was very effective. I had great access to all kinds of leaders on both sides. It was a million dollar experience because that is such an interesting country. Talented people of all stripes, color and whatnot and with a real dilemma before them. I came away dully appalled with what I saw. The Embassy had achieved its goal.

The environment I came back to was pretty much this. South African people bragged to us that they had x number of members of Congress who were "their friends" and quote numbers all the times, and friends in the White House. You remember we were doing those annual foreign policy reports all the time? Each year we kind of reiterated our policy on every country in the world. They were very useful, but the powers to be in the Department and particularly Henry Kissinger decided that this really stuck our necks out on the line too often. We at the African Bureau level saw it as a way to keep the policy the same until the political winds changed. Instead of reinforcing apartheid, as a lot of the White House minions wanted to do, and a lot of people in Congress, we wanted to at least keep the rhetoric up. So each year we would write that up...abhorrence of apartheid line into the annual report. We would write similar stuff almost every day going up to the White House for this reason or for that reason. And every time we got a kickback from NSC on that we would point to the annual report, this is our policy. It has been approved before and can not be considered a change of policy.

Q: This was the NSC when Henry Kissinger was Adviser?

DOLS: Right. You can't be seen as changing that, can you? So we would very ingenuously keep going. Sort of boiler plating, boiler plating, boiler plating.

Q: But using this as a way of responding to every bit of correspondence and question.

DOLS: Writing press guidance for the morning press briefing, whatever. Statements when some notable was banned or whatever. That kind of thing. But our main objective was to at least keep the policy where it was. The South Africans in particular were targeted into the military embargo. They wanted high tech military trade. That was a particular battle.

Well, what happened next was that a man named Connie Molder, Minister of Information, had great ambitions. He was going to be Prime Minister. He had two brothers, one was the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Information and the other was an Assistant Secretary. They were the brains behind Connie Molder. They decided to use the assets of the Information Service abroad for clandestine activities cutting a page out of the CIA's manual. They had a lot of money to work with. They cooked up all kinds of schemes. The most relevant was an attempt to buy the "Washington Star" as a front newspaper here. They had a certain [individual] who was in the publishing business who attempted to buy the "Star" by using funds provided by the South Africans. When Joe Allbriton finally outbid him, this gentleman was left with about 9 and 11 million dollars of South African money which was intended to be used in that purchase, and they had a little trouble getting it back. Connie Molder fell when part of this leaked out.

There were all kinds of activities like that. They began to solicit visits of Congressional staff

members and finally Members themselves. They were kind of naive about it in the beginning and actually published in their annual report an account of a visit by five members of the Congressional staff to South Africa in 1973. Right after that the ethics committee ruled that no staff member, Member of Congress or wife could accept these visits without approval from the House.

Of course, none of them wanted to go before the House and ask permission. So the Information people in South Africa cooked up a meeting at a local foundation to discuss how to overcome this problem. They decided to use a whole lot of funds to spent on the business. With that we began to see a lot of Congressional visits. A typical Congressional visit would be a particular Member hosted by the University of South Africa, or the Farmers' Union. Of course the money, programming and everything was the South African Information Service behind it.

This, of course, was in violation of our Constitution. Article II says you can not take "emollients from foreign countries without permission."

Q: Well, what would the Desk do? Were you letting the Congressman know how they were being used? Did they care?

DOLS: That was very interesting. We pondered that a bit and then decided what we would have to do is not be seen as not calling attention to obvious violations of law. On the other hand, it is not comfortable for the Department to confront a Congressman and tell him he is violating a rule. So what do you do? Well, we would get word of one of these upcoming visits and we would call the Congressman's office or the Senator, and say, "We understand the Senator is going to South Africa. As you know it is our custom to offer to provide briefings in advance if a Member is going to a foreign country. If the Senator is interested we will be happy to call one." Of course we would get a call because they knew we were on to them.

So we would go up and a typical round was three Members, one who had a lot of interest in the Rhodesian chrome exception to the embargo on Rhodesia. He would be the main spokesman. We would talk about our policy towards the area and answer questions. Then we would drop into the pot, "You realize that the sponsor of this visit is not who they seem to be. The money behind it is South African money, in particular the Information Service money." And, of course, they would challenge us as to how we know this. Because that was from classified information and they would reveal the sources if we told them, we would say we were sorry and there was no way we could reveal that. Well, it would always turn into a nasty encounter at about that stage. This one particular encounter with three of them ended with one of them saying to me as I was departing the office, "I used to run a union and if any word of this gets out I know what to do." That kind of thing went on. It was a hardball kind of game. I can think of only one Member who was dissuaded.

Q: What was their motivation in going?

DOLS: The whole variety of human motivations from the silly to the sublime. Silly was on the part of a very well known senior Senator who had just remarried and his wife wanted to take the

offer to take a trip to South Africa. He, I could see was very troubled by the whole thing, but she wanted to go. And that was the makeup within his circumstances. They all were ideologically and racially racist related. Interested, one way or another. It was kind of disheartening to see how racist people still were.

Q: These were basically people who were sympathetic to apartheid. It wasn't people from the other side who wanted to take a look and would take the devil's money to do so?

DOLS: No, there was none of that. There were a few with economic interests like the gentleman who threatened me. He was a Democrat. Remember old Charlie Diggs was the Chairman of the African Subcommittee in the House.

Q: He is also black himself.

DOLS: Right. I used to have to go up every Monday morning and brief him. We got on very friendly relations. After a particular round like this, the one who was threatening me, I related this to Charlie. He said, "Oh, he and I came into Congress together. We were freshman together. He has his problems and I have mine." He had missed the whole problem. Normally he was incensed with anything like that. But you can see how the game is played in that club. So I was learning all kinds of lessons. It was an interesting era. It went on and on like that.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the African Bureau was no longer the same place as it was when you were first there?

DOLS: It was changing. Don Easum became Assistant Secretary. They thought Don was not going to push too hard on any change in South Africa. Well, he was a very bright, activist sort. He was finally pushed out of that job because of our bucking of NSC, and our other fun and games, if you will. I use "fun and games" with some forethought. The South African Information Service was playing their own game. They were not coordinating, in fact they were pitted against the then Foreign Minister, who is a rival of Molder for the prime ministership.

When we found out things that the South African Information Service were doing, we would tell the South African foreign affairs people at the Embassy what was going on. By throwing the cat among the pigeons we could have feathers flying everywhere in their house.

It was the most effective means of dealing with it.

Q: So this was not a united policy on the part of the South Africans?

DOLS: No, no. It was one Ministry versus the other, or heads of Ministries.

Q: One of the great political stories was the Nixon/ Kissinger/Rogers relationship where Kissinger was the National Security Advisor with very close ties with Nixon, yet Nixon had a great deal of respect for Rogers, who was Secretary of State. Did you have the feeling that Kissinger had a different policy than our stated policy towards South Africa?

DOLS: Yes, I think I would have to say yes. There are a couple of aspects to it. The Embassy crew noticed the signs of some kind of relationship there and asked me to probe it. I never did learn very much.

There was another aspect though of Mr. Kissinger's policies and leadership, etc., and that is he was accused, maybe rightly or wrongly, I don't know which, [I think rightly] of focusing too much on certain issues. US-Soviet relationship. US-Arab-Israel relationship. And sacrificing every other consideration to movement in those areas.

One example of that was the question of suspending the South Africans for not paying their dues in the UN. We got approval through all the bureaus in the Department for a vote in the UN which would suspend them for a period of time. He, of course, nixed that. What was his rationale? It had nothing to do with the arguments that we were making about Southern Africa, but the winner for him was that if you could do that to South Africa, they will do it to Israel and we will have set a precedent that we don't want.

It was kind of an archetypical example of a thing that Latin American Bureau people were talking about, the Asian Bureau people were talking about, etc., that he will sacrifice everything to some relationship that he could either to the Arab-Israel situation or the Soviet Union. There is something to debate there. Do you keep your eye on the ball or what do you do? Do you argue slippery slope and set bad precedent or do we say we can always distinguish precedent too...we are good lawyers? Those arguments go on forever and I don't think there is any clear cut solutions to them.

But his solution was certainly a favorable one to South Africa and we always figured there were reasons for that other than just the given reason.

Q: Well, there was a close tie and there remains a close tie, which sort of surprises me, between Israel and the white rulers in South Africa. Was this quite apparent at that time?

DOLS: Very apparent, especially in a military way. They were sharing military technology. And we suspected that the Israelis were involved in that seeming space event which nobody quite knows about. Whether it was nuclear explosion in space or not.

Q: There was this flash that was picked up and no body...

DOLS: That seemed to have a South African/Israeli ring to it. That was a peculiar one that I picked up much later in my career.

Q: I hope we can pick that up later when we discuss your later years. I am always interested in the Israeli connection in American foreign policy because of the very strong domestic political influence. Here we had a policy which was basically anti-apartheid. We had one of our allies who we were touting as being the one democracy and all in the Middle East, Israel. At the same time here they are with a close relationship that our policy was opposed to. Was it a matter of

treading very carefully about this as Desk officer?

DOLS: It was a matter of treading very carefully, but somehow or other keep the policy where it was. An example of that was, I told you earlier the South Africans were trying to break our arms embargo which had been put on about 1966 or so. It had been in effect some years. There were a few exceptions to it, but in general it was a pretty thorough embargo. The South Africans by bringing these Congressmen and staffers to South Africa, one of the obligatory stops there was the big command center the South Africans had dug into the silver mine behind King Town. They would make a big pitch to them about how strategic the Cape route was. They would tell all the World War II stories about how all the Nazi submarines sank tons of shipping going on around the Cape, etc.

The State representative at the NSC came over to me one day and said, "You have to give me some help with this Cape route thing." I said, "Well, you realize the Cape route strategy is kind of a misnomer just because of the title it has. Basically the South Africans were saying you have to run all tankers from the Persian Gulf around the Cape for instance, and the West is interested in that, obviously." The Suez Canal was closed part of that period, so it was really the route. I said I would write him a paper that would demonstrate that that was only one of six major choke points on that route and in fact it is the furthest choke point from any area of Soviet operations.

In other words the least desirable if you are really going to pick a choke point and squeeze. I mean, you start off with the Straits of Hormuz, and then off Somalia, and then between Madagascar and the African Continent and finally the Cape, then off West Africa and then off the Iberian Peninsula. Well you can see how the Cape is not the most desirable location if you are going to put the squeeze on. You don't pick a place like that to send ships or submarines out to. You pick a place a little closer and more operationally defensible.

So I wrote a Cape role on those lines. It wasn't very long at all before the word came to NSC staffers that they were not to solicit papers from the Department of this sort. All the papers must come up through the system. None of these other little support papers. And, of course, that command had an obvious origin.

So one more example that the public policy wasn't what it seemed.

Q: I might add because the history keeps changing. In this period during the Cold War often a policy of last resort, like patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, well military significance was often an argument used again for support of regimes with which we were having problems. With the Franco regime we had bases, South Africa, Israel was put up as an area of strategic importance for our forces, etc. I wasn't, but anyone who wanted to get anything would always use that argument.

DOLS: That was very much the case with South Africa. Clearly that. They argued again and again strategic minerals. Our counter argument was basically, "Look those strategic minerals are going to have to be sold to somebody and if you want to make sure you have an interruption just keep supporting a situation that eventually is going to blow up and you will have more problems

with those things."

Q: Did you get the feeling while you were there where Secretary of State Rogers and his immediate staff stood on this?

DOLS: During Rogers time things were pretty quiet. The action was over in the NSC. Do you remember the old joke about the spacecraft [that] lands in front of the Department and the Martians get out and they say the usual Martian thing: "Take us to your leader." Department employees were cranking their necks out of the windows and when they heard that they just laughed. Everybody knew the scene of the action was the NSC and not within the Department at all.

Q: As you went about your business did you find this rather disheartening?

DOLS: I think it is something that Foreign Service officers have learned. We have a certain obligation to keep things on some kind of even keel. Not irrigating to ourselves the decision making powers that are given others, but assuring to the degree they can that irreparable things aren't done along the way. So we took a kind of middle road trying to hold things together. After all, that was stated public policy and that was our justification even if we knew in our hearts it wasn't the private policy. If we are going to have political accountability in a democracy, you either get the real policy out in the open or if they are going to continue to mouth something else then lets make sure they mouth something else. We saw at least that kind of holding the finger in the dike as a legitimate kind of activity. Not again irrigating to ourselves democratic choices.

Q: While you were there the Ambassador in South Africa for most of the time was John Hurd, a political appointee from Texas. What was your impression of him and how he ran things?

DOLS: John was a very nice sociable man. He had originally been nominated to be Ambassador to Venezuela but because of some of his oil dealings with Venezuela they refused to have him. So he was named for South Africa. He had no great interest in South Africa, *per se*, it was just a second choice. He was from southern Texas and felt very comfortable with the racial situation in South Africa. This presented a lot of problems because between the Ambassador's Office and the rest of the Embassy there was a great gap. One day when the political staff was up in Pretoria, they got the word that the Ambassador had gone to Robben Island. This was the year that no one got to Robben Island and I mean nobody. Nelson Mandela had been stashed away there for years.

Q: This was a prison island?

DOLS: Yes, off Cape Town. All they had was the word that the Ambassador had gone to Robben Island. They rejoiced. They thought he had done something, he had got in. This should really be interesting. Wait until he comes back.

What he had done was to go bird hunting - I don't know what kind of birds - on Robben Island with the Minister of the Police and Interior and they used the prisoners to shag the down birds. They were worried it would get out to the press and eventually it did showing up in a Jack

Anderson-type column.

There was that kind of problem during Hurd's time.

Q: Was there a sort of two-track Embassy with the Ambassador up there sort of benign and an activist Embassy working below him?

DOLS: It created great problems. They were always sparring. Then Hurd would do things that were indelicate, like having prisoners shag birds on Robben Island. That was never resolved. Like so many situations it was only resolved by transfer.

WILLIAM BEVERLY CARTER, JR.
Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Washington, DC (1969-1972)

Ambassador Carter was born and raised in Pennsylvania, and was educated at Lincoln University. After a career in journalism, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965, serving first in Nairobi as Public Affairs Officer and then as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In 1972 he was appointed United States Ambassador to Tanzania, serving there until late 1975, at which time he was named Ambassador to Liberia, where he served until 1979. Ambassador Carter subsequently served as Ambassador at Large from 1979 to 1981. Ambassador Carter was interviewed by Celestine Tutt in 1981.

CARTER: And we particularly worked on southern African issues. Dave and I made a trip to South Africa together and I helped to change some of our policies, both in dealing with South Africa on a government-to-government basis, and also in terms of policy changes within our own government about assignments of officers. We got our first black American officer assigned to one of our installations there; it was the purpose for our visit. We were able to get black South Africans upgraded in positions that other nationals held in the Embassy and consulates. So with that kind of background ... for three years ... and also having arranged for a ten-nation tour of Africa by Secretary William Rogers, which was at that point in time the first time an American Secretary of State had ever visited Africa, it became fairly clear to the people in the (State) Department that I had some African experience, some African contacts, some African know-how. And Bill Rogers, whom I regarded as one of our very finest Secretaries of State, and David Newsom, said that they would like me to go to Tanzania when that Embassy became vacant, because Tanzania was on the cutting edge of our southern African situation with so many things happening in southern Africa. And I was asked to go, and I was confirmed by the Senate. And we left in June of 1972.

CHARLES LAHIGUERA

**Political Officer, UNESCO
Paris, France (1969-1973)**

Mr. Lahiguera was born and raised in New York. After graduating from Georgetown University and serving in the US Navy, he entered the Foreign Service in 1963. Though he served outside the South East Asia, his primary duties concerned the Vietnam War and its aftermath, particularly refugees. His overseas posts include Germany, Curacao, Vietnam, France, Hong Kong, Thailand and Swaziland, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. Mr. Lahiguera was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: What was your impression of the Third World, particularly talking about Africa and some of these poorer countries?

LAHIGUERA: The main issue that the African delegations were always bringing up was the question of South Africa. They would always bang the drum on apartheid. We had a big investigation of non-governmental organizations. There were several hundred non-governmental organizations that were associated with UNESCO. There was an investigation of all these organizations. There was pressure brought to bear on them to either expel their South African members or to be expelled out of UNESCO. I thought they dedicated themselves to a lot of this kind of thing and there was not a lot of energy coming out of the developing world for development programs. There wasn't any great deal of interest. We felt disappointed. There were field programs. The secretariat proposed them and they were in the budget. But UNESCO didn't have a lot of funds for field projects. The UNDP, the UN development program people, would put up funding for these budget items and we'd provide experts. We supported these kinds of things and I think we would have certainly preferred that kind of positive approach rather than beating political drums all the time.

Q: In a way having dealt with Southeast Asia and all this would have been a little bit of a relaxation, rest or come down or what?

LAHIGUERA: It was going from one kingdom to another for starters, that was the similarity. In addition we had the African National Congress operating against the South Africans. We also had Mozambique next door. Swaziland borders Mozambique and South Africa. There were some stories; in fact our embassy staff expedited my getting there. Our embassy staff in Maputo had fled into Swaziland. Swaziland was an interesting place. It was a very prosperous island in the middle of Southern Africa. The Swazis fancy themselves as the Switzerland of Southern Africa. That's a bit of a stretch, but it is a lovely place. The capital of Mbabane is about 4,000 feet up. The country became independent in 1968 and its king was a gentleman by the name of Sobhuza, II. He had died just before I arrived, just a few weeks before I arrived. He had about 90 wives and he had over 100 children. He was really something of a semi-God to the people. He was a very cautious, wise, well-balanced man from what I could see and heard. He ruled after Swazi gained independence and they didn't go into promoting radical change. There were many British; it was

originally a British protectorate. Many South Africans invested in the place and they had a fairly substantial tourist trade. It was very active and had some of the most modern sugar plantations in the world. They had the largest man made forest in the world until the Brazilians built a forest larger than Swaziland. The Swazis couldn't catch up. This is a country of a half a million people, a little bigger than Kuwait, but smaller than Massachusetts. I arrived when they were in mourning. I found the place very interesting. We had a FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) station there that was monitoring all the open broadcasts out of South Africa, Mozambique and Africa in general. I got some good political coverage from those events. It was an interesting window to see how things were developing both in South Africa and in Mozambique. I didn't do a lot of reporting on it, but found it quite interesting. The Swazis had a very traditional government. They had only this one leader and most of the population was very content under their system. They had a parliament during the British days. Then they were granted independence. They had a constitution and the king had suspended of parts of the constitution except the part dealing with the judiciary.

Q: I can just see you're trying to puzzle this out and put it into a sort of check list off of a human rights or something, you know?

LAHIGUERA: Yes. Actually I got very much involved in this. The Swazis, the royal family is very secretive about how they go about business and the average Swazi doesn't really know how decisions are made. I'm talking about decisions impacting on the royal family, but the government is a different matter. The government was a blend of tradition and parliamentary government. There were white Swazis, Englishmen, who were members of the parliament and the government had white ministers. One of the speakers was a white Brit originally and they have made a great effort and have continued to make a great effort in balancing both sides. This is a country that is 95% black, 95% Swazi, but they welcomed white participation in the economy and in the government. Outside of South Africa they have one of the highest standards of living in Africa as well as having good health conditions. They had abundant food. Anything you wanted you can buy there. Their money was interchangeable with the South African Rand, and they had a proper relationship, correct relationship with South Africa. While I was there the South Africans set up a trade office and the head of the trade office was a Foreign Service Officer from the South African Foreign Ministry, so he was obviously in the sense their ambassador. It was a very interesting period. I could talk a long time about just the structure of the society and how it functioned. They have two different sets of laws. They have polygamy, which is permitted, and a woman can be married under the traditional system or could be married with a modern judge or priest or whatever. Some members of this parliament and the government had one wife and some had several. We had dinner with all these folks and had some of them over. Some of them always came with the same wife. I can remember one colonel who became head of the army. Every time he came to dinner at my house he had a different wife, so I just got used to it. I thought it was interesting, sort of starting all over to meet another one. But, you had this very interesting mixture of how I approached them. We had a large aid presence. We sent quite a few Swazis to be educated in the United States. In fact the present Prime Minister of Swaziland, Barnabas, was educated in the United States. He's an accountant and he was a minister, finance

minister when I was there.

Q: How did that work I mean sometimes the United States can spoil somebody, you know, coming back full of American piss and vinegar and wanting to change things around. How did, not just him, but other American educated people?

LAHIGUERA: I don't think it was a problem. Swazis are very conservative people. I used to say they were lovers, not fighters. The fire-eaters would be more likely to come from the South African University people who were influenced by the ANC. There was an ANC presence, which they went along with. What the Swazis didn't permit were any anti-South African activities. Activities on either side. They felt that they were a neutral area and they were in favor of a democratic rule in South Africa and they didn't want any operations against South Africa to be conducted from Swaziland. While I was there the South African government in fact attempted to cede to Swaziland the area between Swaziland and the ocean on the East Coast. The area south of Mozambique. The South African government had felt it needed to cede the property and the Swazis had accepted it and the Zulu tribe sued in court. The court found that the South African government hadn't followed the proper procedures and the Zulus claimed this territory was legitimately part of the Zulu area. As a result the land transfer didn't take place, but it was an interesting example of how business was done there and how their relationship was. They got along and when the senior Swazis became ill they were all evacuated to the hospitals in South Africa. It was just an interesting situation.

Q: Were we sort of looking at this through your Swazi contacts, were they telling you how this thing was going or not?

LAHIGUERA: Well, the Swazi government is very sympathetic to our approach. They themselves were trying to do the best they could to get along and to work with the South Africans. I think they would foster any meetings between the South Africans and ourselves and the rest of the African states. So, I viewed Swaziland as an opportunity to demonstrate what free market economy and investment could do in Southern Africa. I was hopeful that we could encourage more investments there. My own feeling was that if the economy grew the majority of the people would be drawn more and more into the economy and would take on more management roles. I thought this was a very constructive way to go through change. I'm not convinced that we were wrong.

LARUE R. LUTKINS
Consul General
Johannesburg (1969-1973)

LaRue R. Lutkins was born in 1919 and raised in New York. His career with the State Department included assignments to Cuba, China, Malaysia, Japan, Hong

Kong, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and South Africa. Mr. Lutkins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

LUTKINS: But, be that as it may, by the time I came up for an assignment in '69, there weren't many suitable positions available in the Far East. I was offered the Johannesburg job and took it. It turned out to be a fascinating post, although it was a dead end careerwise. But it was a very interesting period to be in South Africa.

Q: What were you doing? You were in Johannesburg, the embassy was still in...

LUTKINS: Pretoria.

Q: Was it Pretoria and Cape Town, or does it rotate?

LUTKINS: No, they divide the time each year. The administrative area of the government is centered in Pretoria, but the parliament meets in Cape Town. Which means that the senior elements of government, particularly the political side, move down to Cape Town for anywhere from four to six months while Parliament is in session. So that at that period of the year the embassy is divided, since the Ambassador, the DCM, and the Political Section go to Cape Town with the government.

The thing is complicated by the fact that Pretoria and Johannesburg are only about 40 miles apart. And whereas the politics is completely centered in Pretoria, and to a lesser extent in Cape Town when the government is down there, except for that, everything important is in Johannesburg. It is the center of industry and commerce, the leading educational center, the leading media center, etc. Except for politics everything is centered in Johannesburg, with lesser developments in Durban on the east coast and at Cape Town in the south.

Which makes for a rather complicated situation, because the staff in Johannesburg was really limited, and many of the functions there were really national in scope. For instance, our chief commercial officer was based in Johannesburg; similarly the mineral attaché with national responsibilities and a labor officer with national responsibilities. So, in a sense, although they were part of my staff, they were also reporting to Pretoria. So it was not a very tidy situation personnel-wise, but it worked out.

Q: You got there more or less with the advent of the Nixon administration. And so you were in Nixon One period, I guess, weren't you?

LUTKINS: He came in, in '69. Yes, he was president the entire time I was there.

Q: What was the policy and how did it reflect on what you did? South Africa has been controversial for a long time, but what was our policy and how did you operate with it there?

LUTKINS: Incidentally, of course, policywise I was like the consuls general in Durban and Cape Town. I was completely, under Pretoria, but acting independently in my consular district. The

only difference was that, being so close, I would attend the weekly staff meeting in Pretoria.

Our policy at that time was rather similar to that during the Reagan years, in that it followed a period, under Lyndon Johnson, when Soapy Williams was assistant secretary for Africa, and where the emphasis was very much on civil rights, and supporting the new African governments, black governments and so forth, and harshly critical of the South African apartheid regime. Under Nixon, while we remained hostile to the system of apartheid, it became somewhat the policy, as in the Reagan years, where we toned down our criticism of the South African government and tried to work with it by persuasion, to get it to adjust to changes rather than bludgeoning it. Which I personally thought was a very sensible policy. I've never been very much in favor of the later idea of sanctions, because I don't think it's the way to get South Africa to change, and because I don't think they have been all that effective.

But, be that as it may, it was a period of relative calm in South Africa. There was no major unrest. The underlying injustices and weaknesses of the system were obvious, but things were quiet. Following the outbreak of protests and disorder in the early '60s, they subsided, and the thing was not to flare up again until the mid-'70s, after I left.

Q: How did you deal with the South African government?

LUTKINS: Well, as a Consul General I had no connection with the South African government.

Q: I mean, with the officials of Johannesburg.

LUTKINS: Well, that's an interesting point. At the time and traditionally the Johannesburg city government was dominated by the opposition party and the English-speaking business element, so that there was never any possible tension with them. And relations with the Afrikaner-dominated central government were handled by Pretoria. I had no reason whatever to come in contact with them. I would have been intruding on Pretoria's...

Q: And I suppose with a certain amount of relief on your part, in a way.

LUTKINS: They were difficult people to deal with, but, as I say, it just didn't enter into the picture. Although my consular district included Afrikaner-dominated areas, and I did travel around and talk to people, it wasn't up to me to be discussing policy with them. So it was really more or less courtesy calls whenever I spoke to them.

Q: How about contacts with blacks or coloreds?

LUTKINS: Very interesting. Fortunately, as I say, things were quiet then. And our general policy was to make contact to the extent we could with such black leaders, or embryonic black leaders, as we could identify, and to entertain blacks. And we went in for that in quite a big way, I think more so than Pretoria.

The South African government knew that we were entertaining blacks. They did not approve of

it, but they didn't try to prevent it. So, for instance, when we had a Fourth of July party, they knew we were going to have blacks present and they would not send any white South African government official to attend. They would boycott it, which really didn't mean anything in the case of Johannesburg, because there were no South African officials that I would normally have invited anyway. But it did affect Pretoria.

But we were quite successful in this interracial entertaining. On many occasions, and particularly when we had visitors from the United States, congressional or from other fields, I would have stag dinner parties at which we would have a number of our black contacts present from various fields, and then have influential whites as well, from the business community, academic community and this sort of thing. And the latter were almost pathetically grateful, because this was, in many cases, the first time they had ever spoken to a black in terms of equality. It had always been a master-servant relationship, because that was what they had been brought up with and what the system involved. So that it was an eye-opening experience for them, which they appreciated.

And we also were able to go out and visit blacks in their homes, in Soweto, the huge black township area outside Johannesburg.

Q: Soweto, was this before or after the...? Wasn't there a major riot of sorts?

LUTKINS: That came later in the mid-'70s.

Q: Did you have a problem with your staff feeling uncomfortable in this situation? Or were you having to ride herd on them and say, "Well, our policy is not one of confrontation," or not?

LUTKINS: Are you talking about the American staff?

Q: American staff, yes.

LUTKINS: Oh, I see. No, I don't think there was major uneasiness on the part of any of the staff. I think most of them were very realistic. If anything, there were one or two who were more South African white than the South African whites. One of them chose, when he retired, to settle down there. No, I don't think there was any major agitation on the part of the staff, for a more activist, confrontational policy. And I don't believe that was true in Pretoria either. Everybody knew that the Afrikaners, and the Afrikaner politicians in particular, were difficult people to deal with. And I'm sure there was no great love lost on the part of the embassy personnel for them.

Q: The ambassador most of the time you were there was John Hurd?

LUTKINS: Yes, but for much of the first year it was Bill Rountree. He was sick a lot of the time at the beginning. He and his wife both got hepatitis. I guess he must have been there about maybe the first six months I was there, and then he was succeeded by John Hurd, who was a Texas oil man.

Q: How did that work out?

LUTKINS: Surprisingly well. He had originally been nominated to be ambassador to Venezuela. And then I guess the Venezuelans objected, because of his oil connections, so he was sent to South Africa. A very bright, personable guy, and I think he handled the job very professionally. He was certainly easy to work with. He didn't try to throw his weight around. He accepted the advice of his professional staff.

Q: Were there any major problems you had to deal with while you were there?

LUTKINS: From the administrative point of view, personnel point of view, I've mentioned the difficulty trying to run an office in which a lot of the officers had a divided responsibility to the Embassy and the Consul General.

Incidentally, most of my work turned out to be semi- political in the sense of reporting on developments. I didn't get involved, except in a supervisory capacity, in commercial work or in consular work. I got more involved, perhaps, on the labor side, because part of our policy was to try and encourage the American firms doing business in South Africa, and there was a very substantial, one- or two- billion-dollar American investment in South Africa, with many of the very large American companies represented.

One of our objectives there was to try and get the American companies to take the lead in introducing more open, liberal labor practices, as a contrast to the rather restrictive ones of the South Africans. You know, equal amenities and opportunities for blacks to improve themselves and this sort of thing. This was before the thing really came into focus in the 1970s. At which time there was a Reverend something Sullivan, who laid down some rules for American companies to follow. It was all involved in this agitation for sanctions and withdrawal of investments and so forth. But this was before all of that, and we were in the forefront.

The labor attaché and I would go around and visit many of the American company installations there. Not in a high-handed manner at all, but just inquiring about what they were doing and so forth. Also, not too subtly, we would let them know that Washington favored more enlightened practices on their part. That was quite interesting.

ROBERT P. SMITH
Deputy Chief of Mission
Pretoria (1970-1974)

Ambassador Robert P. Smith was born in Montana in 1929 and entered the Foreign Service in 1955. In addition to South Africa, his Foreign Service assignments included positions in Lebanon, Ghana, South Africa, and Pakistan. Ambassador Smith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

SMITH: South Africa, again, was a choice assignment for me, particularly since the ambassador, who was named just a few weeks before I was named, was a political appointee with no Foreign Service experience whatever. I was, therefore, the senior career State Department officer in the embassy.

Q: *His name was John Hurd?*

SMITH: John Hurd, from Texas. A delightful man, warm, generous, outgoing, but with a considerable bit of naiveté, both with respect to Africa and even, indeed, the civil rights movement here in the United States.

Q: *Why?*

SMITH: He had been Chairman of the Texas Republicans or Texas Republicans for Nixon, I forget exactly. He always insisted he was not a heavy, major contributor, but he was active in Republican politics in Laredo and San Antonio, Texas, and it was, admittedly, a political assignment. But John Hurd was enormously popular with the South Africans.

Q: *When you say South Africans, what do you mean?*

SMITH: With white South Africans. Your point is well taken. He was popular among the embassy staff, too, in terms of John Hurd as a man, as an individual, because he looked every inch of the American ambassador, tall, handsome, distinguished, and without a mean bone in his body. He was just a warm, generous guy.

But in a way, I think he felt then, and perhaps he still feels now, that I pushed him awfully hard a lot of the time to do things that were "nasty" as far as the South African government was concerned. I had very strong views then and do now about this institutionalized racism that permeates the scene out there.

So those four years as DCM to John, in one way, were delightful in the sense of our personal relationship and the beauty of the country and the people that we liked, black and white. At the same time, it was a real strain because I was always regarded by the South African government as the guy who the State Department sent out to keep John Hurd from being John Hurd and letting his normal instincts run; i.e., let the South Africans handle their own problem. "It's an internal problem and why should we be butting into their business. We wouldn't like it if they were butting into our business, et cetera, et cetera." And the whole human rights equation didn't loom that large in Ambassador Hurd's mind. I say this, despite the way it may read, without any rancor whatever. He's very conservative. But to me and, happily, to the overwhelmingly majority of my embassy staff, the South African government was simply anathema in many respects.

Q: *But in a way, you can say, "Okay, but you represent the United States Government's policy and, being the principal professional there, you wouldn't be giving guidance or pushing according to your predilections but more because this is American policy towards Africa and such and so, and Mr. Ambassador, you should do such and so even if you don't want to." Did you*

feel, maybe, you were giving a little extra twist or something because of how you felt?

SMITH: Perhaps at times I did. But on the other hand, our policy was all right. Our policy was one of open condemnation of apartheid, even then and that was during the Nixon years. There was no getting around that, but there are different ways of looking at a policy and then implementing it on the ground, as you very well know. Or you can wink and nod at a policy and simply not put your back into it. I guess the basic difference between us is I really wanted to put my back into it to a greater extent than the ambassador.

Having said that, it was under our regime, the Hurd-Smith regime in South Africa, that the first black foreign service officer was appointed to our staff in the embassy in Pretoria. He was a young economic officer named Jim Baker, no relation to the current Secretary. While Ambassador Hurd made all the right noises, he did have to swallow hard on this because I think he thought that was really going too far and rubbing the white South African noses in it a bit, whereas I didn't share that view.

Q: Whose initiative was this assignment made because, obviously, it was a policy initiative? It was in the papers of the day. I mean, it wasn't something that was unnoticed.

SMITH: I, privately, had been pushing it for some time and I think Assistant Secretary David Newsom and Bev Carter, his principal deputy and later my predecessor in Liberia, probably were instrumental in pushing that appointment through. Mind you, not that there was vociferous opposition to it. I don't know what John Hurd said privately on the telephone, perhaps, to someone back in Washington, but he never really opposed us in any open fashion at all. He would make veiled references to it to me, privately. He'd say, "Bob, is this really necessary? And isn't he going to be ostracized?" He would come up with reasons. "Where are we going to house him? Will he be able to go into the same restaurant and eat with us?" I would have to keep reassuring him. So he was sort of dragged into this a bit. He couldn't have been nicer to him when it happened.

I don't mean to say for a minute that John Hurd is in any way, shape, or form a racist or anything approaching that. It's just that one brings different perspectives to this and he felt strongly that we shouldn't be pushing the south Africans quite so hard.

Q: To finish up on this, how did the Baker assignment work out?

SMITH: It worked out very well. For one thing, the South African government leaned over backwards to show us that they were not racist and that they did not put American blacks in the same category with their own Africans. Therefore, he was lionized. When Jim Baker arrived, this young officer, his picture was in every paper in South Africa.

I remember once when we went to lunch with the ambassador, Jim, and I, and our political counselor and a few others, the maitre d' in this restaurant pointedly ignored Ambassador Hurd and walked up to Jim Baker, this young black officer, shook his hand, and gave him the seat of honor at the table, which gave us all a roar, including Ambassador Hurd. The South Africans

worked very hard to make it work. This is not to say that there wasn't real pressure and strain on Jim, as there has been on every black officer since.

Q: I was going to ask that. How did this work out personally?

SMITH: It was a great strain on him but he had the moxie to handle this, and the intelligence, and the emotional stability. He handled it very well. He also, obviously, provided another entree into the black community which, while we had it before, we didn't have it to the same extent as we did with a black officer.

Q: We're talking about the 1970 to 1974 period. What were the United States' concerns in South Africa?

SMITH: We had genuine human rights concerns there. Our concern was that the country was going to explode some day unless they took their figurative foot off the neck of the black man. A position, by the way, I still hold because I still think we may have a blood bath in South Africa one of these days. And we did not want to see that happen.

In those early 1970s, I'm sorry to say, some senior South African officials, I think, really thought that, if a race war were to actually occur in South Africa, that we would come militarily to their rescue, that we could not stand idly by and see white South Africans slaughtered in their beds by Africans. I think only now are they beginning to realize that that was never the case, that we would not lift a finger.

Q: Was this a question that would come up and that you would try to scotch?

SMITH: Very hard.

Q: How about our military attachés?

SMITH: The military attachés, in those days, had very close relations with the South African military. I don't think that's the case anymore. I think their presence contributed to that feeling. Also, the fact that, for instance, the head of the South African Navy and my ambassador, John Hurd, were tied up alongside each other as Navy commanders during World War II at some point during the war in the Atlantic someplace. The South Africans would keep reminding us that they fought with us in several wars, that they were vehemently anti-communist, and so forth. They made all the right noises.

If you could leave the race question aside, which in my judgment, is absolutely impossible, the South Africans would be the strongest allies we have anywhere in the world, if you look at in those terms. But you can't put the race questions aside, in my judgment.

Q: Did you find that the communist menace was raised every time?

SMITH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Q: Was this having any real effect on our policy? I mean, were you getting concerns from Congress or from other American business interests and all this saying, well, let's not push too hard because if we do this the communists are going to take over?

SMITH: I would have to say we got very little of that. On the other hand, we were getting pressure from the liberal side in Congress, particularly members of the Black Caucus who were critical that we were too close to the South Africans and that we should take a tougher policy towards that country. Actually, it's remarkable when one looks back on it.

The last eight years our policy has been called constructive engagement. In point of fact, I think that would be a fair characterization of the Nixon-Kissinger policies in the early '70s because, when I look back on it, that's about what we were doing. We were engaged and our leverage was then and is now quite limited. But we felt that, by continuing to whittle away at them and hammer these points home, we would slowly get them to come to their senses. But that was not to happen and has not yet happened.

They continue to think that American blacks are not blacks. They're colored, as far as the white South African is concerned, because there's a mixture of white and black. And, therefore, when we talk about their race problem, they simply say, "Bob, you just don't understand blacks. You just don't understand. Congressman Diggs is not black. Look at him. He's colored." To them, that changes the whole picture. It's really quite pathetic.

I had discussions with Prime Minister Vorster and so many others. But we felt it was sort of a one step forward, two step back thing, and that they would continue to do outrageous things. Our closest white South African friends, of course, tended to be in the progressive liberal community, people like Helen Suzman and Lolin Eglin, who remain some of our closest friends today. And they fought the good fight for a long time, but it's far from over.

Q: Did you find that you had much relations with the Dutch element?

SMITH: Yes. It was somewhat more strained. The current president, P. W. Botha, we used to call "Guns" Botha because, in our day, he was the Minister of Defense. Ambassador Hurd had him to the residence for dinner, as we tried to do with all the cabinet. But the Afrikaner was always much more suspicious of us and of our motives, particularly of me. There was less of that with Ambassador Hurd. They genuinely liked Ambassador Hurd. But the career officers in the State Department, they were quite suspicious of them. Too liberal, too protective of black rights, et cetera.

Q: Did you have any contact with the black community?

SMITH: Oh, yes. That had been started even before I arrived but I certainly intensified it. I had a terrific political section staff and we worked very hard at it. We were somewhat circumscribed. There were certain places where you couldn't go, or they couldn't go, and so forth, but yes, we would have lunches and dinners. We had more success in that we could easily have, and did

have, a great number of functions with black South Africans. Where you got into trouble, where you had to be very, very careful, was trying to mix them with white South Africans.

I remember once the Minister of Police Affairs had a suspicion that I was going to have a black South African at our residence. He happened to be a very distinguished doctor. And he asked me flat out before coming were there going to be black South Africans there. I said, "Well, yes, Jimmy, there will be." And he said, "Aw, come on. I can't come, Bob. Don't do that to me. I can't come." Private Afrikaners would and there are a number of progressive, liberal Afrikaners. They're not all Neanderthals by any means. But the government, the ministers in particular, some of them were just beyond the pale. They just were and are hopeless, some of them, and they wanted nothing to do with them.

I think you'd have small successes in that I've had a number of Afrikaners, after a mixed function at our home or one of the other embassy homes, come up to me and say, "Bob, I want to thank you because this is the first time I have ever eaten with a black man and talked with him as an equal. I want to thank you for that." But this is just such a small thing compared to the enormity of the problem.

Q: What about the American business community? This has become such a focal point. This is the one place where we can sort of show our policy by trying to get people to disinvest, American firms, from not putting money into South African firms. Was this much of an element at that time?

SMITH: With some exceptions, I think the average attitude of the American business community in those years was, don't rock the boat, don't fiddle with the status quo. I must say, in more recent years, I think they've become far more enlightened. We were constantly pressuring them to do what they could to upgrade the working conditions, salary, etc., of their black employees. Many of them tried hard but I think most of that has happened in the last few years.

Q: At your time it was, "We're here to do business and we'll do what we have to."

SMITH: Yes. We stay out of politics, don't talk to me about politics. So they took sort of a standoff attitude. But we've leaned on them, I think, more strongly in recent years with some success.

I had more congressional pressure in South Africa than anyplace else, in particular from Charlie Diggs. He did not like our policy in South Africa. Indeed, he would not have been happy unless we had broken relations, I think.

EDWARD WARREN HOLMES
Consul General

Durban (1971-1975)

Ambassador Edward Warren Holmes was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1945 and a master's degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1946. Ambassador Holmes joined the Foreign Service in 1946, serving in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

HOLMES: I went back to South Africa as consul general in Durban.

Q: You were there from '71 to '75.

HOLMES: Yes, a four-year period in Durban as consul general. It was extremely interesting, because, of course, I had served in South Africa before, to see the changes. There were a lot of changes, although not the changes that have come more recently. Apartheid was even more rigid, in one sense, but there was clearly more opposition to apartheid within the black community. There were stirrings of all kinds within the ANC (African National Congress), underground elements, students.

Durban is in the heart of Zululand. The Zulu tribe is the largest African tribe in South Africa, headed by Buthelezi, who's still in the news. And one of my important charges there was to establish contact with Buthelezi, who lived a two- or three-hours' drive away from Durban. My predecessor had established good contacts with him, and I was enjoined to keep on with this contact, as one way of seeing what the largest tribe in Africa, at least, what they were thinking. Buthelezi was technically head of the ... couldn't stay in a white hotel, still, in those days. It's hard to believe how things have changed there. He would stay with me in the consulate residence frequently.

Q: ... important figure. How did you evaluate Buthelezi...?

HOLMES: Well, he was a very astute politician, a very able leader of his people, of the Zulu nation. As I said, we would go up there frequently. He had a parliament that met, and we'd go to the opening of parliament. It was very much on the British model. I would say he's pro-British, basically, or at least the British way of governing, let's say. Well, it was... that is, the whole situation in South Africa, although it hadn't reached the point of this enormous change that we see nowadays, was still pretty grim for blacks.

That is, I knew Steve Biko personally. He was a student in Natal at the black medical college. The only black medical college in those days, in all of South Africa, was in Durban. Durban was sort of, in a sense, a liberal element. It's the only province that's dominated by English-speaking people, so it has a certain tradition of British liberalism. And so it has various elements, the University of Natal is really a liberal sort of place. And you had this black medical college. And Steve Biko, of some fame now, who was murdered by the police there eventually, I knew him, he came to my home. I would see him and other students. And one had to be somewhat discreet

because the South African intelligence services are very good. I know my phone was tapped and my mail was opened, that's almost routine. But one could meet these people.

Q: Was it implicit that you were to make contact with...

HOLMES: All elements. I think, I think, yes. By then, our policy had changed considerably from my first time there... essentially... all elements of the population... At first, white officials refused to come to our parties. But that was changing. Every party I gave was multi-racial; I just didn't give purely white... perhaps... dinner, possibly. But essentially all of my official parties were mixed, deliberately. I think, for the first year, the white officials did not come, but I think, by the second year, they did come. So there was some change going on.

This was a symbolic thing, but you know. There was an order that no white official would shake hands with a non-white; there was a written order at one point in South Africa. That changed.

During my four years there, I saw a lot of change on a personal level; that is, people would come and would talk with black people. Some whites would tell me, "This is the first time I've ever talked to a black person, except my household domestic staff. And, oh, so and so is certainly an interesting man," whether he was a journalist or a doctor. There was a growing black professional class, mostly who had been trained overseas and came back. So things were changing in that sense, although apartheid was still extremely rigid.

Even that changed slightly. I remember Buthelezi, by the end of my time there, could stay in a so-called white hotel. Before, he could not. He had to stay in a wretched little black hotel, which was really a filthy little place that he wouldn't stay in. And so he enjoyed staying in my house because he could find it amenable to him. But that did change; he could stay in the best hotel in town - not all hotels, but certain ones. So there were changes on the social level.

Q: Did you find that the Afrikaans society would close you out?

HOLMES: No, I had, how should I say, appropriate contacts with the establishment. The so-called administrator of Natal Province was an Afrikaner, whom I would meet officially. The head of the police, the head of the army were all Afrikaners, because these are appointed by the national government. No, I had correct relations with them, not exactly warm relations. Most of my contacts tended to be with others, non-official, you might say. In the university and the press and the church there were a lot of outstanding people. Now some of these people in these other elements were Afrikaners.

One of the most outstanding men I knew there, bravest men, was an Afrikaner professor at the university, a professor of law, who would defend blacks who were scooped up by the police and charged with all sorts of heinous crimes. He would go to bat for them. He was a brilliant orator, and I would sometimes attend the trials that were held in the provincial capital, Pietermaritzburg, about an hour's drive from Durban, just to hear him speak and needle the... But he was so brilliant and so well versed in the law, he succeeded very frequently in defending these people and getting them released.

So it's not all English-speaking, by any means. Many were, but they were not government people; they were non-government, but important people, journalists, let's say. The newspapers there were very open, English-language press, with some valiant editors and reporters. South Africa is a combination of things, rigid in many ways, but they did have freedom of the press more or less all the time.

So the background for recent developments was happening then. But I don't think any of us foresaw the enormous changes that the present president has brought about in South Africa.

Q: When you left in '75, how did you feel about whither South Africa?

HOLMES: I felt very discouraged. I really did. I had seen a lot of my friends arrested. Steve Biko had been. He hadn't been killed yet; he was under detention. But I had many other friends, who were brilliant young men and women (mostly men, it just happened, because of the situation) who had been educated overseas, who were terribly discouraged because the government was rigid. If they went too far, they could be arrested, they could be banned. I had a number of people who were friends of mine who were banned, which means sort of house arrest, they can't see anybody. They're not in jail exactly, they're living in their home. But this threat hung over them. These were extrajudicial things: there was no appeal, it didn't go to court, it was the order of a minister. And once you had a banning order, you were banned for a year or two years or three years. And it could be renewed; some people were banned year after year after year.

So there was great discouragement. I was discouraged when I left. I feared it would lead to a blowup of some kind, a huge blowup of black against white, a vicious, bloody sort of thing. I just couldn't imagine that the government would change as much as it has done. I think it caught a lot of people by surprise. I don't think I was particularly obtuse at this. Everything I saw was this repression, with the secret service very powerful. Informers. If you'd get two or three blacks around, they wouldn't even open up because they didn't know but what the other one was an informer. There were informer networks. It's easy to see why, because with blacks who were oppressed, to get a job or some money was very appealing.

No, it was discouraging when I left. I couldn't have imagined the changes that in fact have occurred.

VICTOR D. COMRAS
Consul
Durban (1972-1974)

Victor D. Comras was born in New York State in 1943. Comras graduated from Georgetown University in 1964, the University of Florida Law School in 1966, and promptly joined the Foreign Service. While in the Foreign Service, Comras served overseas in Zaire, Nigeria, South Africa, France, Canada and Macedonia.

He also worked on the Law of the Sea negotiations. Comras was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Today is April 18, 2002. In 1972 you've been ripped untimely from Ibadan and off to Durban. How did you find Durban?

COMRAS: Durban was a very different place than Ibadan, Nigeria. The contrast between the two cities is enormous. And moving from Ibadan to Durban in just one day emphasized for me the contrast. Durban is a very beautiful, modern, economically vibrant city. In 1972, life there was very reminiscent of Europe of the '50s. Durban is both a port city and beach city, attracting tourists from around the world.

Durban, in 1972, while beautiful and comfortable, was also a very troubled city. Apartheid gave it an unnatural feel, and ate at the very soul of the city. Many of the people we met and knew in Durban were torn within themselves by their conflicting desires to be accepted as part of the modern world, yet knowing that the apartheid system they had created or accepted was a stigma the rest of the world would never condone. Many recognized also that the apartheid system could never hold. Yet, they remained deeply fearful of changing it. Some sought to justify apartheid as ordained, or necessary for their survival. But, one sensed that they all knew that it was not something that could last.

I think the mood in Durban was different from the mood in other areas of South Africa. Doubts about apartheid were more pronounced in Durban, which had a more liberal English background. This was an English speaking area of South Africa and many of the whites living there still felt very close ties to Great Britain. The English South Africans also considered themselves a minority, dominated by the larger Afrikaans community elsewhere in South Africa. This gave them the false solace that could blame apartheid on the Afrikaners, even if they chose to live apartheid themselves everyday.

Interestingly, Durban became the first testing ground for a new U.S. approach to South Africa and Apartheid - constructive engagement. I arrived in Durban just as this policy began to emerge.

Q: You were there from '72 to when?

COMRAS: I was in Durban from 1972 to late 1974.

This was the period when we began applying the new policy of constructive engagement toward South Africa. The heart of this new policy was to engage South Africans in a manner conducive to persuading them to soften, and to eventually abandon their apartheid policies. This included encouraging American companies and investors to adopt non apartheid labor practices. It also meant empowering black South Africa's economically so that they would literally "vote" with their "rand." It involved adoption of the so-called Sullivan Principles for American companies and investors. It also involved what became our Post's hallmark policy "Multiracial Entertaining." All social engagements sponsored by the American Consulate in Durban forthwith were to have a "multiracial" character. We afforded an opportunity in Durban, for the first time

in decades, for South African Whites, Blacks and Indians to sit down together, or to mingle together in a social setting, and to get to know each other. If we had a dinner or a cocktail party or any other kind of a social event, we made sure that our guest list included representatives of all communities of South Africa. We always included Blacks, Indians, Afrikaners and English South Africans.

Q: Was this a Zulu area?

COMRAS: Yes. Durban is the capital of the Natal province, where most of the Zulu's in South Africa lived. There was a Zulu township adjoining Durban known as Kwa Matsi. The Zulu leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, was based in Natal. He was the leading political spokesman for the Zulu people. There was also a very large Indian population in Natal and Durban. South Africa had established a special segregated university for the Indian population just outside of Durban.

South Africa's Indian population had arrived around the turn of the century to work on the growing sugar cane plantations established in Natal.

I should also mention that, besides Buthelezi, there were a number of other rising young Black leaders. The black youth were going through their own awakening and beginning again to take more radical stands against apartheid. Once such leader was Steve Biko. Unfortunately, he was subsequently beaten and killed while in South African police custody.

Q: He was killed in the police jail.

COMRAS: That's right.

Q: How big was the consulate? Who ran it? What was your job?

COMRAS: We had only a small Consulate General in Durban. It was manned by three officers. The consulate general was a Senior Foreign Service Officer, Ed Holmes. I was his second with the title of "consul." I acted functionally as the political-economic officer. The third officer provided consular services, and helped out on the other issues as required. While we were a small consulate size-wise, we took on great importance as a U.S. outpost in South Africa. We were a very busy post. Durban is a very important port city.

But, perhaps our most important function was to test the application of the U.S. government's new constructive engagement policies. We became the testing ground for the idea of using our post to foster social contact between the different races in South Africa. We were the testing ground for multiracial entertaining.

Q: Had it started when you were there?

COMRAS: It had started before I arrived. The previous consul general before Ed Holmes was Ed Dugan, who was blind, and therefore certainly color blind. He had pushed for this for quite a while and had gotten a green light finally. He began the practice of multiracial entertaining/ Ed

Holmes continued and built on this approach. I believe I also contributed to this process.

The rationale for multiracial entertaining, as I mentioned earlier, was constructive engagement. We wanted to engage South Africans in a process that would undercut apartheid by setting examples, and by adopting our own practices that would undercut Apartheid, and convince White South Africans of its detrimental effect on their own interests. We provided a social meeting place for South Africans of all races to gather in a relaxed atmosphere as equals, and to get to know each other.

The next step after multiracial entertaining was to force South Africa to begin to interact with Black American diplomats. As a first start on that, the Department assigned a black American officer to the Office of Southern African Affairs in Washington. He was assigned responsibility for South African economic issues. His name was Ollie Ellison.

The second step was to send him on an official orientation trip to South Africa. The Department sent him TDY to South Africa to see what the consequences would be. The Department wanted to determine if this could work and how we might make it work and how we could push to make it work. It was decided that this experiment should begin in Durban, as our post was already engaged in multiracial activities. Also, it was commonly held that South Africans of English decent, which made up the majority of the White population in Durban, were more liberal than their Afrikaans brethren. This was not always the case, but anyway that was the assumption. So, Ollie Ellison flew into Durban. I was assigned to accompany and work with him as the economic-political officer of the consulate. We scheduled a number of social and office events around Durban and Natal, and into the Transkei. After a successful first week we undertook a long two-day road trip from Durban to Elizabethville, where I would hand Ollie over to my counterpart from our consulate in Cape town. Our first week had been very useful and smooth. It was clear that the South African government was making every attempt to make sure that there would be no problems. My wife decided to accompany me and Ollie. We took a road trip to Umtata, the capital of Transkei, which was one of the then so-called Bantustans- Semi autonomous areas set aside under the apartheid system as homelands for South Africa's different Black tribes.

Q: The so-called "separate homelands."

COMRAS: That's right. These were the African homelands. Umtata was the capital. It was like going way back in time to another time in Africa's colonial history. It was like pre World War II Africa. The whites living in these areas were really living in an earlier age. If we were going to have a problem traveling with Ollie, it was going to be here in Umtata.

We arrived in Umtata in the late afternoon. We had reservations at Umtata's establishment hotel - an old colonial structure. All the guests were white. Blacks were employed only in the more menial jobs. This was a colonial style hotel in the old tradition, with ballroom dining facilities. This was apartheid in its strictest form. We were staying in an all-white establishment where Blacks could only act as servants. We could sense the tension that surrounded us the moment we arrived. Ollie was probably the first black ever in history to stay at that hotel.

We moved into the dining room and when we walked into the dining room, you could hear a fork or a knife cutting butter, just deadly silence. But, we acted as nothing was happening, completely oblivious to the surrounding tension and silence. My wife was so very natural, and our diner conversation was so normal. Ollie also appeared at ease. And after about 10 minutes, the room began to return to its own normalcy. The level of chatter began to build through the hall, and the pace of activity increased. The moment had been absorbed! We had tested apartheid in its strictest environment, and we had prevailed!

The South African government had its own reasons to see us succeed. They decided they would do their part to make the Ollie Ellison visit a success. I don't know for sure what steps they undertook on the side but, I'm sure that their Bureau of State Security (AKA BOSS), was shadowing us the whole time.

The next day we went to the dining room for Breakfast, and everything was natural and normal. After breakfast we packed the car and left for the drive down to Elizabethville. Everything had gone smoothly. Our mission was accomplished. We handed Ollie over to our colleagues, and they flew down to Cape Town.

An editorial comment: Ollie never really got the credit he deserved for breaking the South African color barrier, and for his part in helping to undermine Apartheid. It seemed that all the credit went to the next officer, James Baker, who was actually assigned as the first black American officer at the embassy in Pretoria. I don't want to detract in anyway from the credit that goes to James Baker. He did a terrific job there under the most difficult of circumstances. But, I must note that his assignment to South Africa was made possible only because of the breakthrough that Ollie Ellison had made. Ollie certainly deserves a lot more credit than he ever got from the U.S. Government or Press for his bravery and his acumen and the way he handled himself in South Africa.

Q: Did you find that Durban society responded positively to this opening up? I've heard sometimes when we end up getting people together, it's the first time various groups have had a chance to talk to each other.

COMRAS: That is right. It was gratifying for us to see the positive reactions and effects that came from bringing people on different sides of the apartheid barriers together for the first time to talk and meet with each other and to get to know each other. Let me tell you about one such occasion. I had made contact with a black magistrate serving in Kwa Matsu, the black suburb of Durban. In fact, he was the first black magistrate appointed under apartheid in South Africa. His jurisdiction was strictly limited to dealing with disputes and disturbances among black residents of Kwa Matsu. He had no authority over whites. But, he was a very smart, well educated, cultured and otherwise impressive person. But, even he needed a pass to be in Durban after 6 PM. We had invited him to dinner. In order for him to attend, we had to go and fetch him with an official Consulate Car and to bring him back home when the dinner evening ended. I just loved to see the impression he made on several of the white businessmen we had also invited that evening. It took them a while to relax and to enter into direct discussions. At first we had to act

as intermediaries, or as catalysts to get the conversations going. But, when they began talking with him, you could see just how impressed they were and interested in his background and views. You could almost see these light bulbs go off in people's heads. They were fascinated. This result was repeated time and time again when we brought such people together. And the results were astounding. Many of these new relationships endured to both communities advantage. Many of the people who met across the racial barriers at our home stayed in touch.

Q: Did the black Africans bring their wives? This often is a problem.

COMRAS: On occasion. But often not. Many of the Blacks living in Kwa Matsu were there only temporarily and had left their wives back in their traditional home areas far away from Durban. Others were more established in the urban black areas around Durban. Among the educated blacks and the activist black community, both the husbands and wives were engaged in the same efforts and struggles. Many had wives that were as educated and active as they were. This latter group usually brought their wives with them. And in some cases it was the wives that brought their husbands along.

Let me regress and go back to the situation in Ibadan, Nigeria. There we had a unique neighbor, Chief T.S. Oni. He was a Yoruba Chief with many, many wives. In fact he had so many wives that he had an apartment complex beside his house in which to house them. He had so many kids that he had built his own school for them. We used to wonder whether, when we invited him to dinner, he would bring a wife and how many. Truth was he never came with a wife. Sometimes he brought a son, but never one of his wives. A very different situation than the one we found in South Africa.

Q: What about commercial and political life in Durban? Were particularly the businesspeople chafing under the rule of the Afrikaans?

COMRAS: When I was in Durban there was a general sense of prosperity and well-being among the white population, and growing frustration and discontent among the non White groups. The whites had it quite comfortable. The English South Africans liked to blame Apartheid, and its evils on the Afrikaans, but really did little or nothing to change the system. There were exceptions, of course. Some important exceptions. English South Africans who were truly opposed to Apartheid, but they were relatively few in number. There were even some Afrikaans in Durban who worked against the apartheid system. But the State was usually very harsh with them.

As a general rule, apartheid was not as strictly applied in Durban as elsewhere in South Africa. Officials in Durban seemed somewhat more tolerate of apartheid violations. They even left an area in Durban as non-rationally designated, where members of the various races could mingle. This included two or three restaurants that catered to mixed groups. The Consulate often used these restaurants to meet with non-whites or to host whites and non whites together. I don't think such an area existed in any of the other South African cities.

Also, the Port area was a non-designated area. This was to permit crews to come ashore and to

hang out in an area that remained apart from Durban city itself.

I remember that one Friday evening, when I was the officer on duty, I got a call from Durban's chief of police. I knew him well from my various consulate functions. He asked me to help him resolve a very serious and embarrassing problem - a problem that could only arise in an apartheid system.

At that time American ships called regularly at the port of Durban. These ships had mixed crews, and the crews were generally allowed ashore, but limited to the designated port area, where apartheid was generally overlooked. Well it so happened that a black American crew member went ashore and got drunk. He decided to go from Bar to bar looking to make a deal. He had some hashish, he said, and wanted to trade it for a gun. Was anybody interested? Well he fell upon a street-clothed Durban policeman. The policeman agreed to meet him at a designated spot for the trade. And when the Black American showed up with the hashish, the policeman and a colleague were ready for him, and arrested him. I guess that policeman was new to the beat!

The arrest of a Black American in the Durban Port Zone did not go down well with police headquarters. To make things worse, his ship sailed while he was in their custody. That is the last thing they wanted to happen. No matter what, the arrest risked creating a major international incident. The United States, they knew, would not stand by and allow this Black American to be tried and convicted in an apartheid court, or sentenced to an apartheid prison. They were in a real quandary. What were they going to do with him. They realized that they really didn't want this guy. They needed some way out. That's why they called me. Normally, it would have been the person arrested who contacted us first. Not the police, and certainly not the police chief.

Well, I think the chief of police was happy that he called me, for we found a solution to his problem. With a bit of discussion and negotiations I got the police chief to turn the guy over to me. He wasn't going anywhere, anyway. I also got in touch with the shipping agent. We worked it out that the Shipping agent got the fellow a ticket to fly to the United States on the next plane out of South Africa. And we accompanied him to the airport. You know, if the fellow had been white, he still would probably be in prison in South Africa.

Q: What were some of the opinions of how the thing could end? Nobody was thinking about... It didn't seem too likely at least to outsiders that you were going to end with a relatively peaceful collapse of the apartheid system.

COMRAS: No, I think the outcome was clear, even in the 1970s that the apartheid system would fall. It had to fail, that was obvious to any observer. But, what was not clear was the way in which that would come about. I think that there was a race between various forces and movements at that time. The South African government, even the staunchest apartheiders, had recognized that the apartheid, in the form that it was in, could not last. The government's approach was to find new ways to segregate the population. They developed the idea of depriving most Black South African of their South African nationality, by creating new mini-states or "bantustans" for them. Each of these mini-states, they planned, would have some form of independence but would remain dependent on white South Africa. This would leave a neater

balance between South Africa's whites and the remaining coloured and Indian residents. There was even talk of creating a coloured and an Indian "Bantustan," if necessary to preserve white power. I think a lot of the South African people knew and understood that that was not going to work, that the Africans weren't going to accept this as a solution.

Meanwhile, there was a general increasing radicalization within the non-white groups in South Africa, and increased hostility to apartheid from the international community. The Black leaders used both radicalization and the government's own Bantustan policy to give them a platform (and increased negotiating leverage) to deal with the South African government and establishment. Zulu leader Gastha Buthelezi was particularly adept at turning the Bantustan policy to his best advantage in pressing and embarrassing the South African government.

The Bantustan policy was also a tactic the South African government tried to use to fragmentize the black South African groups. They tried to get them to think as different tribes and to format competing interests and differences between them. They wanted the Blacks to fight among themselves so that they could not present a united front.

A group of liberal Afrikaners who had recognized that the Bantustan policy was going nowhere, began to advocate a new system based on a system of separate parliaments for whites, blacks, coloured and Indians that would answer to one united executive. The idea was to create some political balance between the different groups. This, they argued would buy additional time to acculturate the Blacks and bring them into a more unified system. There was also the suggestion by some, that the Indian and coloured populations could be given greater political rights and brought into the white side of apartheid in order to better balance the Blacks in South Africa. In the end, apartheid fell of its own weight. It simply was worth keeping in place. And a majority of South African whites recognized this. Considerable credit must be given to the leaders of all of South Africa's constituent for their perseverance, wisdom, moderation and leadership in bringing apartheid to a peaceful close.

Q: What about some of the personalities... Did you get a feeling for Buthelezi, about what he was doing? How was he viewed by our consul?

COMRAS: Gastha Buthelezi was one of our very good contacts. The Consulate had recognized early on that he was going to be one of the principal figures within the Zulu community and within South Africa. He quickly elevated himself into the leader of the Zulus through his traditional role as principal advisor to the Zulu tribal king. While we were greatly impressed with his objectives and political skill, we worried that he was not able to work well with other Black South African leaders, particularly those he viewed as eventual political rivals. We often had to encourage him to cooperate more closely with other such leaders. We often ended up brokering between Zulu and Xhosa to get them to work together on issues of common concern. We were concerned by the inter-tribal tensions and fighting that took place, often exacerbated by the South African government. We had enormous respect for Buthelezi as a tactician. He knew how to hold to what he wanted and how to get it. Unlike the leaders of the ANC, he chose to work from within the apartheid and Bantustan system, playing on its weaknesses and flaws, and demonstrating its absurdities. He would tell the South African government, for example, that, "If

you're going to create a Kwazulu nation, then you have to give us what is needed for a Kwazulu nation - the political power, the economic power, the economic resources, and the land that belongs to the Kwazulu nation - that is, all of Natal." He played the South African government. They thought he was someone they could deal with and manipulate to their own ends. That gave him a status and some limited power he might not otherwise have had in dealing with them. He played his cards very skillfully and in the end, helped to undermine the government's Bantustan policy. He was a brilliant man for that. He knew how to work with us, with the white community, and how to be a very traditional leader within the Kwazulu nation.

Q: How did we view the role of the ANC, and the ANC people who were mostly out of the country at that time? Was Mandela a name when you were there?

COMRAS: The ANC remained very active in South Africa, although it had gone underground. The ANC retained a substantial following. It retained great respect from among the Black South Africans of all tribes. Mandela was a hero to Black South Africans everywhere.

I remember one major incident related to Mandela, when I was there. Mandela was then imprisoned on Robin Island, near Cape town. Our ambassador at the time was John Hurd, a Texan, and Nixon. He had become friendly with South Africa's Justice Minister, and was invited to go hunting with him on Robin Island where Mandela was incarcerated. That hunting trip caused quite a stir back in the United States, and the ambassador was nearly recalled because of it. I think it was a good reminder that none of us should get too comfortable in apartheid South Africa, least we forget our values, and the important role we were assigned in encouraging and pushing for change there..

Q: Helen Suzman was a political figure of some importance.

COMRAS: Yes, Helen was a member of a small English liberal party that remained steadfast in its opposition to apartheid. She gained prominence as one of its very few elected to Parliament. The principal English party was the United Party. It was the principal opposition party to the Afrikaans controlled National party. The English community had a larger party called the United Party. The National party had sufficient votes by itself to dominate the parliament. When Apartheid began to crumble the United Party proved incapable of any real leadership and began to fade away as a political force in South Africa. More and more members of the English liberal community looked to the Liberal Party, and the Afrikaans party also developed its own liberal wing.

Q: Did Helen Suzman make a point of working with us?

COMRAS: Yes, but she was not located in Durban. Our posts in Pretoria and Cape town maintained close relations with her.

Q: Were we more active in this than the French, Germans, and British? Did they have consulates there?

COMRAS: Yes. They were not at all as active as we were. They had a more traditional attitude of non interference in the internal affairs of South Africa. The British and Germans were often interested in what we were doing, but rarely hosted any multiracial events on their own. They would come to our events, but they never really emulated us. The British were the first to change, and follow our lead. The others did so only much later.

Q: Was it just that these were traditional people not wanting to make waves?

COMRAS: There were 2 tendencies. One was the traditional diplomatic tendency of not involving yourself in the internal affairs of the country. That became a major issue for a number of countries who felt that they were putting themselves on a slippery slope if they got into this, that it would put them in an untenable position in looking after their country's interest in South Africa. Many of them did have much more important investment than the U.S. did in South Africa. Some were just traditional diplomats and didn't want to engage in internal affairs issues. Many benefited from apartheid and were very comfortable with it. A lot of these people remember their experiences elsewhere in Africa during the colonial period and felt right at home in 1970s South Africa.

Q: Were your consular colleagues saying, "Why don't you guys quiet up and play the game?"

COMRAS: We got some of that. And there was even some initial reluctance on the part of some of our consular colleagues to attend our multiracial functions. But once they saw that South African government officials were attending, they started to show more interest. They saw that our policies were allowing us to expand our contact base rather than diminish it. So, even the most reluctant slowly began joining in.

This was a time also when constituents in the United States were beginning to put a lot of pressure on American companies invested in South Africa. There was pressure on many to cut their business activities and to withdraw their investments. Some of the larger American companies in South Africa began to review their investments and policies here. General Motors was among that group. They owned a few facilities in South Africa, including an automobile assembly plant. Their management came to South Africa to take a look. They wanted to meet with members of all of South Africa's communities, including Blacks. For them, it was not just a simple issue of whether or not to pull out. It became a question of, should we stay in and argue that we're giving people jobs, employment opportunity, and open ourselves up more to the black community and through that lead the way to an economic labor change in these countries or should we pull out? This debate gave way to a number of studies and documents and to a process known as the Sullivan Principles. This involved the establishment of practices that would mirror our policy of constructive engagement. Those that adhered to the Sullivan principles would institute labor practices consistent with American values and policies, and would work for constructive change in South Africa. They would become constructive advocates for change in South Africa through empowering their non White labor force economically and in the workplace. Apartheid would be left off at the front gate.

One of the first American business leaders to come to South Africa to judge for himself was

General Motors chairman, R. C. Gerstenberg.

Gerstenberg was very desirous of hosting a major reception in South Africa to which members of various racial groups would be invited. His advance team quickly found out, however, that this would be very difficult to arrange. None of the public facilities were available for this sort of entertaining, and they were told that such entertaining at a public facility would violate South African laws. For reasons unclear, our embassy in Pretoria declined hosting a major multiracial function on their behalf. But the embassy was open to suggesting that they look to the Consulate in Durban to help them with such an event.

I was the acting Principal Officer in Durban at that time. I was very pleased to work with the GM people to arrange such a gathering. We agreed it would be held at the then vacant Consul General's residence. Gerstenberg's people insisted that the gathering be "first class" in every sense. We agreed that the best way to accomplish this would be to put my wife, Sara in charge of the details. They gave her carte blanche to put together a reception that every one would remember. She worked so very hard designing, catering, and adding her own homemade specialties for the occasion. After the event, Gerstenberg wrote a wonderful letter to Sara expressing his deep gratitude for the work and effort she had undertaken on their behalf. He called it the "finest" reception he had ever attended in his whole career."

General Motors got what they wanted. A major social occasion where South Africans of all backgrounds could mix freely, where the conversation was informative and the contacts established proved fruitful for follow-up. I believe this event helped design General Motors future policies in South Africa and helped convince them to commit themselves to the Sullivan principles.

Q: What were you and your colleagues telling the General Motors people and others? This later became part of your real life, sanctions and all that. Were you subscribing to the Sullivan Principles? Did you think this was the way to go?

COMRAS: I often questioned whether the policy of engagement was the correct one. In my view we needed to establish a balance between engagement and sanctions. Constructive Engagement could have positive effects if joined with a stick in the other hand - the stick being the application or the threat of application of non military coercive measures such as diplomatic, political and cultural isolation and measures economic sanctions. We had to South Africa under enormous pressure for constructive engagement to serve as more than an excuse for business as usual. I believed that the route for South African blacks to achieve a peaceful ending of apartheid was going to be very similar to the route chosen by the American blacks in the South - that is, through various kinds of pressure simultaneously. The most important was going to be their growing economic leverage. They didn't have the ballot box, but they had the ballot of the South African Rand. They had the ability to organize and withhold their labor. They could organize themselves to use their economic power and clout in a country that sought to be modern and needed its own internal economy to grow. They represented South Africa's largest potential market and source of labor. And as demand for skilled labor increased, there leverage increased. But this internal power needed to be supplemented by outside pressure. Constructive engagement against this

background could provide the economic growth, opportunity and training that inevitably would bring the Black Africans into the mainstream of South Africa's economy. They were the needed labor force for a country that needed to take in more trained labor if South Africa was going to grow economically and retain its competitive place in this world. And white South Africans very much wanted to retain their place in the world economy. These were the opportunities that the South African blacks had to grasp into.

So, with these factors in mind, the role for American companies was to join with these other forces, to help train the Black labor force, and to show the South African Whites just what could be done. I was a supporter of the Sullivan Principles, but joined with coercive measures to make sure that the South African continue to feel the pressure for change.

Q: Did you find the business community in the Durban area seeing things as businesspeople or were they seeing things in terms of black-white?

COMRAS: When it came to social and political issues, the business community was no different from the rest of white South Africa. They saw things very much in terms of black and white. Many of them had witnessed what had happened in the rest of Africa. Many of them in Durban had taken in large numbers of expatriate white immigrants who came out of the independent countries in black Africa, from Rhodesia, from Kenya, etc. They were scared of the blacks. They knew that the blacks outnumber them significantly. Many feared there would be a day of reckoning.

They would often say to me, "It's easy for you Americans to talk about integration and empowering your black population because even in the South they're going to be a minority. But here they're the overwhelming majority." This fear was real.

Nevertheless, South Africa's business community had strong ties to the rest of the world. They wanted to be able to travel freely and do business internationally. They were scared by sanctions and talk of disinvestment. They did not want South Africa to be a rogue State. They did not want to be isolated from the rest of the world.

A majority of the white businesspeople that I dealt with recognized that there was a moral issue, a moral problem with apartheid. Many also recognized that for South Africa to prosper it had to take advantage of its own market, resources and potential. They were worried about the future they would present to their kids. Many recognized that they had to increasingly bring the blacks into the labor market and to develop their potential as consumers. They recognized that by pushing them into Bantustans, and keeping them out of the labor and consumer market, they would condemn South Africa to a poor agrarian economy that offered little future for their kids. This would lead to increased emigration overseas.

The more liberal business people - supporters of Helen Suzman and the Liberal Party believed that the State should begin to devote increasing resources to, "make the blacks more like the whites." This meant education, training and granting political rights to allow them to integrate in an orderly manner into the mainstream of the country.

On the other hand, they recognized that if they did those things, they were dooming the apartheid system for sure. And they knew that increased expectations among the blacks could threaten their way of life. This was their dilemma. The Afrikaner response was, "Let's hold the line. Throw them into the Bantustan, keep them African. Don't give them education. Teach them in their native tongue, Preserve South Africa for the whites."

It's ironic that many of the Africans also pressed for education in their native tribal tongue. The notion of nationalism is often tied up with preserving language and culture. The National party played heavily on this notion. It served their own interests. But the situation posed in South Africa argued for a higher priority being given to pressing for cultural and language integration rather than tribal language preservation. For the Black South Africa to gain political and economic clout, he had to be proficient in English and Afrikaans. If the Black South Africa's were educated only in their own tribal language they would be foreclosed from joining in the prosperity of South Africa.

Q: Did the officers at the consulate find themselves in this type of discussion again and again?

COMRAS: Oh, yes. It was something that we often talked about, especially the younger officers. There was strong pressure in the United States to move forward. Most of us who were posted in South Africa were committed to constructive engagement as the right course of action, but willing to keep possible sanctions as a lever.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the South African government?

COMRAS: On the regional level, yes.

Q: Were these for the most part Afrikaners?

COMRAS: Most of the local government officials in Natal were of English origin. There were some Afrikaners, but Natal was predominantly British.

Q: Were they carryovers from the old colonial days?

COMRAS: Yes, many of them were carryovers. Many of them were more recent immigrants to South Africa and therefore less necessarily committed to the old apartheid system than some of those who had lived in it since the '40s.

Q: Was home in that area considered England more or less?

COMRAS: Yes. The English South Africans were very patriotic towards Britain. They were still very tied to British Royalty. The Queen's birthday was a major event in Natal. They were culturally very much attuned to a Britain - but Britain of the 1940s and 1950s.

Q: We had for the most part political ambassadors in Pretoria/Cape town. Did you get the

feeling there was much direction there or was this really sort of Washington driven?

COMRAS: Washington was the epicenter for the development of our relations with South Africa. Of course, the embassy, and our various consulates contributed to this process. However, our policies toward South Africa were driven, in large part, by a U.S. domestic agenda. This was tempered somewhat by the seasoned Africa hands that staffed our senior positions in the State Department Africa Bureau and at our embassy and consulates. These were people who knew Africa. One should note, that the Foreign Service was organized at that time largely in a Bureau-serving mode. This was before open assignments. Most Foreign Service Officers spent the vast majority of their career in the same bureau. If you served in South Africa, you'd probably also served in Nigeria or in Congo or other African states before getting there. So, these people, and some of the best of these people, ended up in the DCM and the political and economic leadership roles of our posts. I think that they did a remarkable job in advancing our policies and empowering Washington and the Department of State to know how to best deal with the conflicting pressures that it was getting from the domestic agenda. You wouldn't find many pro-apartheid people in our embassy! Most of them had served in, and they knew Africa.

Q: By '74, you must have begun to feel pretty much like an African hand.

COMRAS: I certainly did.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about in Durban?

COMRAS: One other little anecdote. There was a puzzling event that occurred in late 1973 or 1974. A scientific ship chartered by the U.S. government - The Glomar Explorer pulled into Durban harbor. We received instructions to facilitate its visit and to sign off the entire crew. A new crew would be signed on in a few days. This was only time this had happened during my stay in Durban. It is rare to sign off an entire crew in a foreign port.

The Glomar Explorer was a particularly interesting ship. It was engaged in a worldwide ocean exploration project. Before signing off the crew, we were invited aboard the ship and given a tour. It was an interesting event and a change from our routine. It took our whole weekend. We were puzzled as to why they would choose to do this in Durban. Only many years later did we read about the reported use of the Glomar Explorer to search for, and possible retrieve a Russian submarine that sunk in the Indian Ocean. I can only wonder if this was the reason that we signed on a whole new crew in Durban.

MARILYN A. MEYERS
Economic/Commercial Officer
Johannesburg (1972-1974)

Ms. Meyers was born in Virginia and obtained degrees from Southwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. A

Japanese and Burmese language officer, she served tours in Tokyo, Yokohama and Fukuoka in Japan and as Principal Officer (Chargé d'Affaires) in Rangoon. Other assignments include Johannesburg, Canberra and Washington, where she dealt primarily with economic matters. Ms. Meyers was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2005

Q: Well, at the end of several years there, you were transferred to the other end of Africa, to Johannesburg, where you were economic and commercial officer. Was this something you looked forward to or requested?

MEYERS: Yes, I did request it. One of the things that happened during the two years that I was in AF/N was a switch in my career “cone” from political to economic. Back in the early 70s -- I don't know what the setup is now -- they had what was called a “Junior Threshold.” In order to get promoted from FSO-6 to FSO-5, you had to go through another review. My career counselor was telling me that the political cone was so crowded that it really would be a good idea to switch to the econ cone because chances were I just might not make it to FSO-5. I talked to my bosses and, in particular, Jim Blake about it. And he said “Look, as you can see from AF/N, econ is where a lot of the action is. You can't separate these countries from their economic and trade interests.” So I went ahead and I switched. There were some interesting econ positions open. One that was also a possibility was Tunis, but that didn't work out. And Johannesburg sounded fine, so I was okay with going there.

Q: Who was the Consul General there?

MEYERS: When I first got there it was Larue Lutkins, Larry Lutkins. Then he and his wife left and John Foley, John and Barbara Foley, came.

Q: How large was the post?

MEYERS: Well, it was not huge. We had two American consular officers, one quite senior, with several South African staff, several meaning three-four. Then there were two officers in the econ/commercial section. I was the junior of the two Americans and we had a couple of local employees in econ as well. There was a labor officer who was based in Jo'burg. And then there was the Consul General. There was also a USIS office in a separate location with two officers. So it was about the same size as the Sydney Consulate General.

Q: And the political work was done in Pretoria, I believe.

MEYERS: The political work was done in Pretoria and in Cape Town. The political section of the embassy moved there when the South African parliament went into session. And much of the economic work was, too. We had more of a commercial focus in Jo'burg.

Q: Did the apartheid make the work there difficult?

MEYERS: Apartheid did not make the work per se difficult. But apartheid made living and

tolerating the situation in South Africa, as a human being, difficult. You always had to swallow hard and look the other way when you saw the inequities the blacks suffered. In terms of work, what made the work difficult were the policies that we adopted to show our disapproval. We decided not to promote trade – shows, missions, anything -- with South Africa. If an American businessman happened to stumble in and wanted help in marketing, we would, of course, take care of him. But there were no trade shows. Nothing like that. If an American company wanted an agent to sell their goods, we would try to find one. This was a request that came from the Commerce Department. But our posture was passive rather than active.

Q: Was this at the time when American companies were beginning to withdraw their investments in South Africa?

MEYERS: Not yet. The pressure wasn't on yet. The Sullivan principles hadn't been devised. That was still in the future. But, we had very little to do. We had a lot of time on our hands; my boss, who had just come from South Vietnam where things were always popping, was particularly frustrated.

Q: Were there any black Americans on the staff?

MEYERS: While I was there we sent out our first black officer. A man named Jim Baker was assigned to Pretoria as an economic officer.

Q: Did he get down to Jo'burg very often?

MEYERS: Once in a while he would come down. We would get together in the office; sometimes we would go out to lunch. If we were going to lunch, we had to go to a five star hotel. And we had to telephone ahead that a black was coming -- his name was Jim Baker, that he was a first secretary in the American Embassy in Pretoria and was visiting Johannesburg for the afternoon on business and he would be coming with a fellow officer so there would be two. We'd just say a "fellow officer" and when I, a white female, walked in with him, you should have seen the expressions.

One of the greatest experiences I had in South Africa, I think in my whole Foreign Service career, was the time Jim and I and a friend were able to visit a gold mine owned by Gold Fields, South Africa. We drove out to the Reef and went all the way down to the bottom of the shaft – some 5,000 feet down – to the working level of the mine. African miners, ore, trains – lots of activity. We then had lunch at the mine manager's home, all of us. Then we watched the refining of the gold bars. Just the first smelting but the bars produced were some 90 percent plus gold and very heavy. I tried to pick one up but I couldn't get very far! We also saw the housing where the miners lived -- blacks coming in from other countries and the black homelands, so called, within South Africa. They were living in squalid, crowded conditions, dormitories, etc. All in all it was quite a memorable day.

Q: There was no officer from Commerce on your staff, was there, did you have to do all the commercial work yourself?

MEYERS: No, we did it and we were both from State. Again, we're just talking '72 to '74 here.

Q: How about the relations with the Embassy. Were they cordial, workmanlike?

MEYERS: I think they were cordial. Most contact was between the CG (Consul General) and the Embassy. My boss had more contact with the economic counselor than I did. There was not a lot of back and forth. They were doing their work and analysis and we were doing ours.

Q: Were you called on to make speeches?

MEYERS: Not there. I participated in a few events. The officers that really had the challenging and exciting work were the USIS officers, because they were mandated to reach out to the minorities, well, majorities shall we say: the blacks, the Indians, the coloreds, those who were excluded from white, "proper" South African society. I do remember going along to some of their programs and events -- out to the sprawling black township, Soweto, one night and getting stopped by the South African police when they saw three white faces in a car, a couple of which were women. "Excuse me, but what are you doing out here?" When we explained, well, it was "okay," begrudgingly okay. There was a control system -- when we were going to go out to a black township, the Consulate or USIS had to notify the local government office in Jo'burg ahead as we were supposed to get "permission" to go. So we played the game of putting in an application saying we were going and we would never go pick up the permission to go. Because we felt we shouldn't have to ask in the first place. That kind of stuff.

Q: When you left Johannesburg, did you have a feeling that the apartheid system was on its way out?

MEYERS: I thought it would last a long time. I felt that the police and the system were still very much in control. As it was it lasted another twenty years or so.

Q: Did you notice any personal hostility to you as an American there?

MEYERS: At that point, not yet. We had not really started to push and attack the system yet.

DONALD PETTERSON
Political Officer
Pretoria (1972–1975)

Ambassador Donald Petterson was in California in 1930. Petterson served in the US Navy for four years before graduating from the University of California Santa Barbara. Petterson joined the Foreign Service in 1960 and has served overseas in Mexico, Tanzania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and as ambassador to Somalia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. In Washington DC Petterson served

on the Policy Planning Staff and as a deputy assistant secretary in the African Bureau. Ambassador Petterson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Lambert Heyniger in 1996.

PETTERSON: In the spring of 1972 I got a cable from African Bureau Assistant Secretary of State David Newsom asking me to accept an assignment as political counselor in Pretoria. I was unsure what to do.

John Hurd was the ambassador. He was a political appointee who was said to be close the government of South Africa, whose apartheid policies, were, of course, despised throughout the world. Hurd had gone hunting with a minister of the white government on Robin Island where Nelson Mandela was among the political prisoners. I was unsure how it would be to work for this ambassador. Moreover, I detested apartheid and preferred not to see it at first hand. So I called or cabled some friends, seeking advice. They told me to take the job. I remember that Beverly Carter, an African-American USIS (United States Information Agency) officer who had been a friend of mine in Nigeria and was now one of Newsome's deputies in AF, a very capable guy whom I liked and admired, told me that I really needed to see apartheid to understand it.

Q: Don, had you by this time, sort of, [laughter] more or less resigned yourself to being a permanent African specialist? I mean, you weren't interested in broadening yourself through service in another geographic area?

PETTERSON: No, no. I wanted to go to Latin America.

Q: Yes, still?

PETTERSON: In fact in '72, before I had gotten the call from Dave Newsom, I had put in for an assignment as Peace Corps Director in Chile. Some Foreign Service officers had been Peace Corps directors. What I didn't know, however, was that by 1972 the Nixon administration was not going to give any of those directorships to an undeserving Foreign Service officer. They were political plums. I was not really in the running. I thought I was, so did Personnel, but the assignment never came about. Nat Davis, the director general of the Foreign Service, discovered why and let me know.

Then the Newsom offer came. I really wasn't in a position to say no, even though I wasn't keen on the idea.

Q: You were of two minds about it?

PETTERSON: Right, and sought advice. I think I was just looking for reassurance. Once I had heard from my friends, of course I accepted the assignment.

Q: South Africa is an entirely different situation than Sierra Leone. You're moving from a sort of small and rather back-watered, African-ruled country into a large, relatively sophisticated, white-run country. Tell us about that transition.

PETTERSON: You're quite right. It was an entirely different situation. It was a contrast also from working in a small embassy to a relatively large one. And instead of running the embassy, I would be political counselor, which meant supervising the reporting coming from the embassy and coordinating the reporting from the consulates in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town.

The assignment gave me a fine opportunity for political reporting. There was a lot of interest in what was happening in South Africa. It was a very complex, challenging kind of an environment. People would be paying attention to what was reported. I was also told, by the way, that Ambassador Hurd did not interfere in the political reporting, whatever his views might have been. I would find when I got there that John Hurd was a very nice man. He might have sympathized to a certain extent with the white government, but he let the professionals do their job.

Q: You mentioned that he was not a career officer?

PETTERSON: No-

Q: He was a political appointee?

PETTERSON: Yes, a political appointee. He was a Californian who'd made his money in Texas in oil and ranching.

Q: So, he might have believed that his job as ambassador was to have cordial relations with the government in power, whatever government that might be.

PETTERSON: Well, sure. No matter who was ambassador, that would be part of his or her job. But Ambassador Hurd did not exercise the best of judgment in some of the things he did, such as going to Robin Island, the story of which ended up in Time magazine and other publications. Still, he was a very decent guy in many ways, and he was certainly easy to work for. The job of a DCM in Pretoria was extremely important because the DCM had to guide the ambassador, keep him out of trouble, as well as oversee the running of an embassy.

Q: And who was that?

PETTERSON: When I arrived, it was Robert P. Smith, Bob Smith. The ambassador, as political appointee, didn't know the Foreign Service, didn't know how to run an embassy necessarily. He had some skills, but he depended on his DCM to run the embassy, and also, in this case, to give him guidance on the political situation and oversee to it the reporting and analyses.

We left Freetown in July of '72 for home leave. Once again, our children and we said goodbye to our friends. It seemed to us that the kids took these moves in stride. They didn't complain, they didn't weep, but years later they told us that it was, in reality, far from easy for them to leave friends behind, go to a new place, fit into the new culture, the new school, the new environment, and then after a time, go somewhere else. They really didn't like it. When they were grown up,

they looked back upon it in a different light. They saw that they had had a very rich experience that kids who grew up in the same town in the United States would never have. So they looked back with some nostalgia, but it wasn't easy for them when they were little.

On our way back to Africa, after home leave, we stopped in Scotland, England, Romania, Turkey, and Egypt. In each place, except Egypt, we visited with friends. This is one of the advantages that we got from serving in Africa. As we traveled to and from, we always went through Europe, except the first time when we flew on Pan Am. Later, Pan Am ended its service to Africa, and there were no other American airlines flying there. Consequently, we had to go through Europe. And we always stopped off in some part of Europe, going or coming.

Q: So now you're arriving, and it isn't even Cape Town-

PETTERSON: No.

Q: Or Johannesburg, which are the two biggest cities in South Africa. It's Pretoria?

PETTERSON: Pretoria, yes.

Q: Which struck me as a bit provincial.

PETTERSON: Well, in many ways, it was, but it was the executive capital of the government of South Africa. Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State was the judicial capital, and Cape Town the legislative capital. These divisions were made when the two former Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, were joined with the British colonies of Natal and the Cape to form the Union of South Africa in 1910. Because Pretoria was the seat of the government, the embassies were located there.

We arrived there in September of...

Q: Nineteen seventy-two?

PETTERSON: Seventy-two. Prime Minister John Vorster, [pronounced "fôr'stur,"] and his Afrikaner party, the National party, ruled South Africa, and ruled it with an iron hand. In the three years that we were there, South Africa become increasingly isolated in the world, and movement for reform grew, even within the Afrikaner community itself. But the essential features of apartheid remained in place and in force. Laws, such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, the Terrorism Act, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act, all of these laws regimented how and where blacks could live and work and kept them in a state of subjugation. They were by far the majority population. South Africa's population in those days was something like 30 million, of which 25 plus million were Africans. You had about a million coloreds, half a million or so Asians, and the white population was around three million, but the whites ruled the country and controlled the economy.

Living in South Africa was a major contrast to our experiences in Zanzibar, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. For one thing, the climate was temperate, not tropical. Being in South Africa was like being in a western European country, having all the material advantages that one could want - restaurants, theaters, cinemas, bookstores, shopping centers. Juxtaposed with this bright affluence was the abject living conditions of the Africans, who were prohibited from living in the white areas. They would come into the white areas and work as domestics or in various menial jobs for the most part, but then go back to townships (black townships around the bigger cities where they lived) at the end of the working day. We enjoyed the creature comforts. It would be hypocritical to say otherwise. But it was not easy living in the apartheid society because of what we saw on a daily basis, and what we knew what was happening.

Q: I assume also, Don, that other than your international friends with other embassies to the extent that you socialized with white South Africans, they were always a little bit after you to agree with them and to tell them that the way they were living was not that bad. There's a lot of stress in this when you're trying to live with people and get along with them on the one hand, but you totally disagree with their opinions and their outlook. Were Julie and you able to find the modus vivendi?

PETTERSON: Yes. The topic of apartheid came up in every conversation. White South Africans, especially the Afrikaners, wanted to explain to you, to convince you that system was right. They were looking for some kind of sympathy. They thought their system was right and that they could explain to you and you would accept that. That wasn't the case, however. For three straight years, we heard about apartheid and we observed its effects day in and day out. After the end of the three years, as much as we had enjoyed many aspects of our life in South Africa, we were ready to leave. We had no home leave, only local leave, during those three years. South Africa was not considered a hardship post, and in non-hardship posts home leave was granted only if the assignment was for four or more years. We traveled a lot in South Africa and also visited Lesotho and Swaziland.

Q: I don't want to interrupt your train of thought. You're the political counselor.

PETTERSON: Right.

Q: You're doing a lot of talking with people and reporting back to Washington on what's going on politically in South Africa?

PETTERSON: Yes. In the political section, we followed white politics, race relations, the manifestations of apartheid, and other internal matters, South Africa's foreign affairs, and also political developments in the trust territory of South West Africa, as Namibia was called then. We had contacts with Afrikaners, people in the government, people outside the government, opponents of the government, South Africans of English stock (whose main political home was the United party in opposition to the government), and the ultraliberal Progressive party. We had contact with blacks from various walks of life and, when we were in Cape Province, with Coloreds and Asians. We reached out, as any good embassy should do, to all segments of the population so that we could understand what was going on and report accurately, and have a

solid basis for our analyses of what was going on in South Africa.

South West Africa was a fascinating place. Because the United Nations and the United States did not recognize South Africa's claim to administer this trust territory of South West Africa, Washington did not allow embassy officers to go there. However, when in 1972 there was a high-profile treason trial of several Africans in Windhoek, the capital of South West Africa, an embassy officer was sent there. After the trial was over, we made a decision to keep covering events within the territory. Only one officer was permitted to do that, and I took that portfolio (maybe a little selfishly, but I took it anyway).

Q: Well, it's interesting. It gives you a chance to travel.

PETTERSON: Yes. I went there several times a year, roamed around the territory, talked to people, and met with, for example, leaders of the various tribal components of South West Africa, including some who were outspoken critics of the South African government. I met with white opposition figures as well, and with government officials, journalists, and business people. I had a great time and saw a lot of the fascinating territory, including the Namib Desert (which is one of the few pure deserts of the world), the barren Skeleton Coast along the Atlantic, the salt pans of the north, and the massive sand dunes at Swakopmund. It was fascinating to be able to go there and associate with the people, and report on what was occurring.

Q: Let me take you back just a second. You said that on your trips to Windhoek you were able to talk with people in the opposition?

PETTERSON: Yes.

Q: Or that is to say the part of the independence people, but I gather not then, the main independence movement. But my question is, the South Africans did not object to your doing that?

PETTERSON: They didn't like it, but they were not in a position to object or to restrict my travel. They did, however, when I first started going down there, put a tail on me. Everywhere I went somebody was behind me. It was very clumsily done. One day I'd gone out to the township just outside Windhoek for a meeting with an important African. On the way back I saw that I was being tailed, and I stopped my car and got out. The car following me stopped too, and in it was sitting this guy who was intently reading a newspaper [laughter]. I went up to him and said, "What are you doing? This is so ridiculous!" I told him, "I'm going to tell your superiors about this!" So I did. I went to someone in the South African administrative authority and told him what had happened. I said that they really ought to call this whole thing off; it was silly. Well, whether they did or not, whether they removed the surveillance or not, I'm not sure, but I never saw anybody tailing me again. I took pains to be able to know whether anybody was searching my room in the hotel, and I never found any evidence of that.

As I said, living in South Africa was very comfortable. In Pretoria we had a very comfortable, large house in a section of town called Waterkloof. For the first time in our lives, we had a

swimming pool, which the kids loved, of course.

Q: Good schools for your children?

PETTERSON: We put the kids into schools. They had to go to separate schools, because the white schools were not coeducational.

Q: Day school?

PETTERSON: Day school, yes. John went to a school called Witwatersrand Preparatory School and the girls went to Loreto Convent.

Q: They all had uniforms?

PETTERSON: They all had uniforms. We had arrived in September, and in January it was time to move to Cape Town. The children had to be taken out of school, after these very few months, and go down to Cape Town. Every January the government moved to Cape Town, where the legislature had its six-month session.

Q: You went as well?

PETTERSON: Embassies varied in how they covered this. For some of them, only one person would go, the ambassador in some cases, another officer in others. Other embassies would send more personnel. For our part, the ambassador, the DCM, the political section, three secretaries, and a communicator went to Cape Town every year. This meant packing up, moving, getting into our new house, and getting the kids into schools. It was a bit disruptive.

Q: Yes, that's tough.

PETTERSON: But I tell you, living in Cape Town, which is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, was a definite bonus. Our house and surroundings in Cape Town were even better than in Pretoria. We lived in a large old house called Tembane (pronounced Timbonnie) in Claremont, a lovely suburb of the city. It was than a half-hour by train into the city. I commuted by train every day.

The political section covered the parliamentary session and race relations in Cape Province, where most of South African's Coloreds and Asians lived. The children seemed happy in their new schools. We all enjoyed the magnificent scenery - Table Mountain and the ocean.

In June of 1973, the parliamentary session ended, and we moved back to Pretoria. This time, however, we left Susan, our eldest, in boarding school in Cape Town. She didn't want to leave her school. After the next move, we would leave all three children in Cape Town. It was just too hard on them, moving back and forth, and they liked their schools in Cape Town better than the schools in Pretoria.

Q: The State Department was okay with that?

PETTERSON: Oh, yes, sure. Most children, certainly the older children, did stay in Cape Town - Bob Smith's kids, for example. We had an allowance to cover this. It was hard for Julie and me because, unlike the British, we were not accustomed to sending our children off to boarding school from time they were six, seven, or eight years of age. But it turned out that the separation wasn't for six months at a stretch because they could come back to Pretoria on school holidays. We saw them every couple of months during the separation.

Q: But that's interesting, you know. It must be one of the few situations in the world where Foreign Service people can send their children to private boarding school in the same country?

PETTERSON: Yes.

I mentioned earlier that an important part of our work in South Africa was reaching out to the African community as well as to other communities and promoting black-white association. Julie and I gave dinner parties to which we invited whites and non-whites. This could have been awkward, but invariably our guests seemed to be fascinated rather than angered or repelled or even uncomfortable. One time the wife of an Afrikaner cabinet minister told us, as she was leaving the house after a dinner, that it was the first time that she had ever sat down for a dinner with blacks, and she thanked us for arranging the dinner.

Q: That's interesting!

PETTERSON: Yes. It had been standard practice for embassy officers to visit black townships. The DCM - Bob Smith - and I decided to stop getting prior permission from the government. This had been SOP, standard operating procedure. But we decided, "Look, we have a right to roam around the country as diplomats, just as South African diplomats can roam around the country in the United States. We don't need to get this permission." So we stopped doing it. The South African government may not have been happy, but they didn't interfere.

One night Julie and I took the children with us when we went to the home of an African family in a township outside Pretoria, Gugulethu. The husband was a personnel officer of a large, white-owned company. Certainly he could be considered upper middle class in many ways. Our visit gave our children a chance to see what kind of living conditions a middle class black family had to accept under apartheid. The house, which had hardly any space for a yard, was tiny and there was no running water.

Q: Wow! I would like to ask you, you know... One of the responsibilities of the American embassy in South Africa at that time was to have as much contact as possible with blacks. Of course, there wasn't any black opposition. There were just the independence movements outside. But as political counselor, you're in charge of managing these contacts. Tell us a little bit about how you did that, and particularly whether it was easier to do it in Cape Town than it was in Pretoria.

PETTERSON: No, it wasn't easier in Cape Town than in Pretoria, as I recall. As far as managing the contacts, there was nothing for me to do, for we had capable people in our consulates who knew what to do and how to do it. This was particularly true in Johannesburg. Soweto, just outside the city, was the most populous and most important black township. The consulate had a very good program of mixing with blacks and reaching out to them, of having cultural and social affairs to bring blacks and whites together. All three consulates and the embassy did a tremendous job in this regard.

Q: It's just that my image is that Pretoria is a smaller town with somewhat stricter rules and customs, whereas Cape Town with the Cape colored population, race relations always sort of seemed easier in Cape Town.

PETTERSON: They were in a sense, but recall that not long before this time, the government had forced the Cape Coloreds out of District Six, their traditional living space in Cape Town, and moved them out to the sandy, barren Cape flats, which was very hard on them. So the government wasn't any easier on non-whites there than they were in Pretoria. There was a more liberal attitude on the part of many Cape whites toward race and toward other things, and there was a lot of criticism of the government. We enjoyed going to theaters where comedians would lampoon the government. Some of this occurred in Pretoria and Johannesburg as well, but Cape Town was a bit easier. Still the basic problem of apartheid existed there, as it existed throughout the country.

One of the things I remember was a tendency on the part of political pundits and other observers of South Africa to predict that Armageddon was just around the corner. Some people in the State Department shared this theory. We in the embassy periodically shot that down. It fell on me as the political counselor to articulate the reasons why Armageddon wasn't imminent. Which wasn't saying that apartheid would not end some day, just that we didn't believe that it would end soon and in a cataclysm of violence.

We went back to Cape Town for the next session of Parliament in January 1974. Because of the country's extreme gasoline shortage, we traveled on the Blue Train from Pretoria down to Cape Town. The Blue Train was one of the world's last luxury trains. It was a wonderful one-day trip that we were able to enjoy because there was no alternative and the Department paid our way.

Q: How come a gas shortage?

PETTERSON: We're talking about 1974. There was the widespread OPEC-induced shortage of gasoline that affected many countries, the U.S. included.

Q: Okay.

PETTERSON: Along with the overall shortage, South Africa was particularly hard hit because oil producers were blacklisting it.

Q: Yes.

PETTERSON: There were going to be parliamentary elections later that year, which meant that the parliament would reconvene again earlier than in January of '75, so we and the others from the embassy who went to Cape Town stayed there after the end of the parliamentary session in June. It was nice for us, for my family, for Julie and me to have the kids under our roof for most of that year.

In the elections the Progressive Party - which was the party of white liberals, whose only member of Parliament had been Helen Suzman - gained a significant number of seats. The Afrikaners' National Party retained its heavy majority, but the Progressives now had a bigger voice for speaking out against government policies. By contrast, the old-line opposition United Party lost seats, which foreshadowed its later demise.

An event of seminal importance to South Africa took place in 1974. In Portugal, the dictatorship of Antonio Salazar was overthrown, and soon afterward the Portuguese territories in Africa were decolonized. This removed the buffer states of Mozambique and Angola, which had provided a kind of protection for the white regimes in Southern Africa, and gave stimulus to black liberation movements. That year and the next, the international and domestic pressures for change in South Africa increased. It was becoming more isolated. Apartheid was a long way from finished, but it was unraveling.

FRANK SASSMAN
Cultural Assistant
Cape Town (1972-2001)

Mr. Sassman was born and raised in South Africa. He was educated at the University of Cape Town and the University of South Africa (UNISA). In 1972 he joined the staff of the US Embassy in Cape Town, where he worked as Cultural Assistant until 2001. During his lifetime, Mr. Sassman experienced the life of a black intellectual in South Africa in its apartheid years, with its strict racial segregation policies of segregation and humiliations. He also tells of the progress made in his country since the end of apartheid. Mr. Sassman was interviewed by Daniel F. Whitman in 2009.

Q: Share with us something about your early life. What type of South African society did you come from?

SASSMAN: If you accept the Racial Classification Act, then I was classified as so-called colored. As coloreds we never accepted that classification, but were forced by the laws of the country to fill in the forms and list ourselves as coloreds.

Q: If you filled in a form then it was of your own, this is something you wrote. What were the consequences of not putting in the term the government wanted you to put in?

SASSMAN: You could be prosecuted because it was seen as you do not accept the laws of the country.

Q: How did you think of yourself at the time? The government considered you to be colored. What was your own identity, ethnic or national or community?

SASSMAN: We did not accept the term “colored.” We saw ourselves as black. So I see myself as black. But here were many coloreds who accepted the term colored, and would not refer or call themselves black. Because the stain of the government’s policy of apartheid was divide and conquer, divide and rule. So obviously they can split the people who were not white into different ethnic classifications, the stronger the government’s policy and the more successful the policy of apartheid would be.

My first language was Afrikaans. But the educational system of the time, it was compulsory that you would do one language of the higher grade and your second language on the lower grade. So I started doing Afrikaans on the higher grade and English on the lower grade. But when I went to university, we did both languages on the higher grade.

A mystique was attached to the language. Although it was my first language, I was hesitant to use it. With a result of when I got married and I had my own family, English became our first language, and Afrikaans became the second language. That was prevalent through many of the South African ethnic groups, except for the Afrikaners, who would strongly promote the Afrikaans language. So you found that many coloreds like myself where our first language was Afrikaans in our paternal homes, but in our own family we switched to English.

I was born in Retreat. I was born in a shanty, a sort of an iron shack in Kirstenhof. Then in early ‘50s, the Nationalist Party came to power and they passed the colonial and heinous Group Areas Act, which made it definitely a threat to the lives of anybody who was not white.

I was living in a wooden iron shack which had no indoor plumbing, no electricity. There was a tap about say plus-minus twenty yards—plus-minus six meters—from the back of our house. It was a communal tap.

I come from a family of 10. My mother and father, and then there were eight children. We were six brothers and two sisters. My mother was a domestic worker, and my father was a fisherman who fished on the boat that went out daily from Kalk Bay Harbor, one of the southern suburbs of Cape Town.

Let’s say a wood and iron dwelling. We had I think there were two or three bedrooms and a kitchen and an outside toilet. There wasn’t actually a bathroom, you know. There was no kitchen sink. We would wash up in a basin. The dishes would be washed in a basin, not a sink like we have in the modern apartments.

Q: It sounds more like a commune than a family dwelling.

SASSMAN: Exactly. There were a lot of houses. The property was not ours. It was owned by a white Afrikaner Kirsten. That is why they call the area Kirstenhof. It was a community of about 80-100 families living in that area.

Q: You achieved a very high level of education. How did this start?

SASSMAN: Well it started before I became of school-going age. The Group Areas Act was passed by the Nationalist government, and we were forcibly removed. It was declared a white area for the white ethnic group. So anybody who was not white was not allowed to live in that area. The so-called colored family and our neighbors, we were all forcibly removed and settled in an area called Stuerhof, sometimes called Deep River, which was one of the southern suburbs. We had to move into a council dwelling. In other words, they were houses built and owned by the city of Cape Town, the Cape Town city council. So I was about four years old when we moved there and started my schooling at the primary school run by the Anglican Church, St. Luke's primary school.

I should stress that the building is owned by the Anglican Church. Teachers are appointed by the Western Cape Education Department. The education is the same as I would have gotten in any other public school.

There was the education department which was for the white ethnic group. There was the department of Indian affairs. There was the department of Bantu affairs, which was for black African education. With each of these education departments, the education offered was inferior. The top one would be the white. The one for colored and Indians would be comparable. The worst one was the one for Bantu education, for the black Africans. Bantu education brought about the school riots in 1976 which brought about the change in the country. So the lesson that came out of that, they wanted to make the main medium of instruction in Bantu education Afrikaans. The Black Africans, as I prefer to call them, detested that language. The lesson that I learned out of that is, don't mess with a person's language. It is very important. It was so important that it brought about the change in this country.

Because of the Group Areas Act the whole country is divided, so an area would be for people of the colored ethnic group only. Another area would be for the Indian ethnic group. Another area would be for black Africans only. Another area would be for whites only. So the whole country was divided into group areas. So you would find that the best areas obviously would be given to the white ethnic group. There they wouldn't make distinction between the Afrikaans-speaking white and the English-speaking white. So then of course by virtue of the fact that if I live now in that particular area in Stuerhof, it was a very large pocket where this municipal housing scheme was there would only be coloreds. But then normally it was a railway track or a major road that would be the boundary.

Then on the other side of the tracks would be white. So we were surrounded by whites but we never socialized with them. And to a certain extent the legislation prevented socialization across color lines. It was actually laws that would prosecute you. For instance you couldn't dance with a

white. Coloreds and Africans and Indians can dance together but not the white. They couldn't because of the Immorality Act, I could not have a relationship with a white woman.

Q: Tell me about the Immorality Act. Was that from the same period, '40s-'50s?

SASSMAN: The Immorality Act was also in the '40s and '60s, when the state actually had white inspectors who would monitor people who were having relationships across the color line. These people would normally—when things really got serious—go and resettle in countries like Swaziland, Botswana. They were like principalities or whatever you want to call it, within South Africa, but they had individual sovereign rights. So if these inspectors if they know you are having a relationship with a white woman as a black Indian or colored, they would hide in the bedroom, you know, in the cupboard, and when things really got serious.

Q: It sounds like a Peter Sellers movie. So there is this inspector under the bed or in the closet?

SASSMAN: In the closet, under the bed, but mostly in the closet.

Q: People know this. Didn't they check under the bed?

SASSMAN: They didn't suspect, you know. They didn't know that the authorities knew about them. Or sometimes you would have informers who would inform the appropriate authorities that X and Y is having a racial relationship across color lines.

Q: So the penalty once detained or once identified, you say that one of the people could be resettled to a distant country.

SASSMAN: No, what would happen is you could be charged under the Immorality Act. In most cases there would be a fine. In other cases the one person would be prosecuted and sentenced.

Q: Sentenced to what?

SASSMAN: Maybe two months, three months. It has happened. Travel was possible, but there was control over the passport being issued. A passport at that time was not a right; it was a privilege.

Q: A passport permitting exit from the country.

SASSMAN: Yeah traveling out of the country.

Q: Similar to the Soviet travel passport.

SASSMAN: I would say so because you see, like the first passport I got was to travel to the United States. I was going to the United States, so when I applied for the passport it said I could only travel to the United States and to Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana. I didn't get all countries like you get today. So they controlled where you could go, and you would never get

a passport to go to any of the African countries.

Q: But the U.S. was permitted.

SASSMAN: In '76, I went to the United States working for the U.S. government. It was my first time on an airplane. It was my first time outside the country. So people didn't travel a lot, and it wasn't easy to travel for various reasons.

I just want to tell you a little more about the Group Areas Act. The Group Areas Act was passed to create an infrastructure conducive to the Nationalist government's apartheid policy. The Group Areas Act made sure that in every sphere of South African life and society we were separate. It called for separate schools. It called for separate transport systems. We couldn't travel on a bus together, on a train, taxi. Everything was separated under the group. Sports: special sports for African, colored, Indian. You couldn't find a colored, a time like now which would have mixed races in the team. Everything was separate. Schooling was separate, seven separate education departments.

Even our universities, let me tell you what happened with the universities under the Group Areas Act. The universities were like UCT [University of Cape Town] and Wits [University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg] and the other major universities. They allowed people of different ethnic groups to study at the university, and that is after standard 10 or grade 12, when you would start your first year at the university. But when the University Extension Act was passed, this called for separate universities for the separate ethnic groups. So what happened, UCT was closed to people other than white. Those of us like myself who were studying at UCT under the system...

So they told us, "Listen. When you are finished with your degree you cannot just come back. It is not automatic. You have got to go through the permit system."

Q: Then the University Extension Act was passed.

SASSMAN: Then Wits became a university for whites in the Eastern Cape. But the language thing then suffers because predominately English-speaking whites, the university catered for them, Rhodes University. So they then established a university for the Afrikaans-speaking group, and that was the University of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. But they catered for about plus or minus six thousand learners, students to attend that university for the Afrikaner group. They only managed to muster plus or minus two thousand at the time.

Q: Were the professors all white?

SASSMAN: I would say at that time plus-minus 80 percent of the professors were white. But the bad thing about that was they would go and they would get into these faculties and discover, "This is not what I wanted to do." So the dropout rate was exacerbated tremendously. Also, if you look at courses like architecture or medicine, they are seven-year courses. It was too long and many of these kids because the educational system was also inferior. Like you take a guy coming

from say a rural black high school, coming to a school like UCT, of course there were no bridging programs at that time because of the inferiority of the...

Q: So they were set up for failure.

SASSMAN: Failure, yeah, and the dropout rate was tremendously high. I was at the University of Cape Town. Now I was in my final year so I graduated. I was allowed to graduate, but I was not allowed to re-register. Communications and sociology were my two majors. That was offered at The University of the Western Cape.

Q: The "bush" college.

SASSMAN: The bush college. So I wouldn't go there. I didn't want to do it at that time. Now of course the bush college is internationally recognized. The guys turned the tables on the government with UWC, but at that time, it was a bush college, and I wasn't going to go for an inferior education. So what I did then, I did my second degree in communications. That is when I joined USIS. I did my second degree with a major in communications and diplomacy. I did that, communication and sociology were my two majors. So I did that through UNISA, the University of South Africa.

Q: Tell us about the library where you worked.

SASSMAN: I worked for different libraries under the municipality of Cape Town in colored areas. So the clientele were all colored. Whites weren't allowed to come there.

Q: So you worked in more than one library.

SASSMAN: I became a senior librarian and ended up training the young librarians going into my place. But I had a library. Well, I was assigned as librarian in charge at different libraries. All of the main colored libraries I served as librarian there because they would move you around. They don't leave you all the time, 14 years, at one. But I would go around, and at my library where I was the librarian in charge there I would train colored librarians and African librarians going to the colored and African libraries.

We were assigned to a particular library. Then say after three or four years you would go to another library. But throughout the time that I was working there, I would be sort of seen as a senior librarian training young librarians coming in. Now while I worked for the city libraries, I didn't agree with all their policies you know. The one thing I thought was that the library shouldn't just be a place where people come to borrow books and leave. I thought that it would be a cultural center where I could invite guest speakers to come and do talks. Then that was also the time when there was the U.S. moon exploration programs. Then I got Rupert Early, who was the specialist monitoring astronaut activities from the U.S. side, and I invited Rupert Early to come and do a talk, and I started a borrowers association, library borrowers association.

Q: Rupert Early was someone in the States?

SASSMAN: No, he was a South African who monitored and was involved with the astronaut program. Then I did this and one of the other extra little projects I organized was I discovered there were a lot of artists, painters living as part of my clientele I was serving. Then I arranged a big art exhibition for members of my clientele who were involved in art. Some of these were international artists like Peter Clark, Kenneth Baker. Then the city librarian did not agree with this. I founded them on my own. But then I used Albert Green, who was the art critic at the *Argus*, as the critic.

The *Argus*, the evening English language newspaper. I then used Albert Green as the person to critique the art exhibition. There was a lot of coverage in the local newspapers, in the local radio, and then the city librarian wanted to be part of the act now. I said, "No, I am not going to lie to you because when I came to you for money, I couldn't have any money." But then Bob Gosende saw this in the paper, and he was the big shot at the USIS Cape Town. He called me in and said, "Frank, I have a librarian here, but she is not doing what I want her to do. You are the type of guy I want to come and run my library." That is how I joined the USIS [United States Information Service] in 1972. Bob Gosende was my director. I served about three years as librarian and then Bob says, "No, I want you to be the public affairs assistant."

Q: This all happened very quickly.

SASSMAN: Yeah. He said, "No, I want you, and you have the potential." So Bob is the guy who got me into USIS in that way. When I started, Bob put me in as person in charge of all programming, exchanges and programming, and his assistant you know. Then I said to Bob, "I don't have the qualifications in diplomacy or whatever. Can I register with UNISA and do a degree in communications and sociology but specializing in diplomacy and public relations?" So Bob then spoke to USIS in Pretoria, and USIS paid for my studies to qualify with UNISA in communications with a specialization in diplomacy.

Q: UNISA was distance learning so you were working full time.

SASSMAN: I was working full time. So if you joined UNISA you get study guides.

Q: So you were a full time employee and you were also doing an advanced degree.

SASSMAN: I was doing my second degree with UNISA. USIS paid for my studies and my books, and I could get a lot of the books in the USIS library so I did my studies. Anybody who wanted to study to upgrade themselves was allowed to do so.

Q: A classification team came from Washington...

SASSMAN: From Washington. It was a classification team looking at upgrading salaries. Then we also got a car allowance which was unique. But we negotiated this with the team. And we also got a food allowance because they said there were too few in Cape Town to give a cafeteria. So I said to them, "Well, if there are too few, we can do something else." They said, "Well, what

can we do?” I said, “Look, why don’t you go to Cal Tech, the American multinational which has cafeterias, and see how they subsidize them?” They said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Look, go to Cal Tech or to 3-M or one of the companies, and say to them, ‘How do you subsidize?’”

So at that time, the multinational corporations’ cafeterias would serve plates of curry and rice for two rand. They only paid two rand, right. So it was subsidized. So but how do we do that? I said, “Well, you go to 3-M or to Cal Tech and ask them to give you a plate of food. Then you go to a takeaway and ask them how much they sell that plate of food for. So they took that and the takeaway guy said, “We sell it for 12 rand.” So I said to them, “Okay, seeing as those guys only paid two rand, you give us 10 rand food subsidy, and then we pay the two rand so we can buy.” The inspectors laughed and said, “No, that is good Frank, we can give you a food allowance.” So we successfully negotiated an education allowance, a 60 percent housing subsidy repayment bond and the food subsidy.

Q: Do you think this would be possible today in these days of cost cutting?

SASSMAN: Well, I think—you can check this out with the embassy—but I think these subsidies are still in operation. But you see then the Sullivan Principles came out in the U.S. and the embassy. Their policy was they should upgrade the living standards and life style of their employees.

Q: Let’s explain here about the Sullivan Principles.

SASSMAN: Leon Sullivan was a minister of religion in the U.S. He was at that time the Ford Motor Company and multinationals were pressurized to do something for the black employees in South Africa, They came out with the Principles in which way the living standards must be upgraded. Leon Sullivan was the mover behind that. He then insisted that these Principles must be at the UN.

Q: There was some controversy about the Sullivan Principles. Some people said that if you incrementally improve the system, it would be impossible to end the system. So there was some controversy about that.

SASSMAN: The thing is that is why as FSNs we insisted this is going to help, it should be for all who are underprivileged, whether they were a white group. We did not do it for blacks only. So it was possible.

Q: So this was not strictly tied to the Sullivan Principles, but the Sullivan Principles were the rationale that the U.S. government used to make this possible.

SASSMAN: The Sullivan Principles did that. They should enhance the quality of life of the employees. This enabled us to buy houses once the Group Areas Act was abolished in the former white areas. So it vastly improved the standard of housing, and resultantly the standard of living. But as I say, it wasn’t exclusive to blacks. It was to all employees who qualified.

Q: So I sense we are in the '70s here. As an employee of the U.S. government you were able to effect a type of change that was not possible outside of the U.S. embassy community I think, and yet you were permitted to move into an area. It sounds as if the changes that happened in South Africa were gradual.

SASSMAN: It was gradual. And one thing you must take cognizance of: the U.S. government conditions of employment in South Africa. Every year a team would come out from Washington to conduct wage surveys. It was not just wages, but, more importantly, conditions of service. So they would go and select about 10 or 20 U.S. corporations in South Africa and do a survey of conditions of employment. That is why they approved the housing subsidy: because most U.S. companies were paying housing subsidies to the employees. They paid education.

Q: So the embassy matched the private sector.

SASSMAN: Right, and we suggested this to the classification team that came. They with the wage surveys said, "We must give this to our employees because it is being offered by the American companies in South Africa."

The wage survey team, this was also supported by the American ambassador in South Africa, who was actually behind us, seeing this wage classification team and first speaking to them. Now what is interesting about this, the U.S. government or the people assigned by the U.S. government to consider the subsidies we were asking declined. They rejected on the very grounds you are mentioning. "How can we give this to South Africa when we are not going to give this to any other FSNs?"

Q: Defined by the bureaucracy in Washington you mean?

SASSMAN: The bureaucracy in Washington and the reasoning was exactly what you brought up now. "Can we give it to South Africans now and make them unique getting this where nowhere else in the world is this offered?" So then the ambassador called me and said, "Frank, are you accepting this?" He called me and so I said, "No, I am not accepting this." "Well, you have got to substantiate." I said, "I can't substantiate. Mr. Ambassador, you should go back to Washington and tell them the reason I feel this should be given to South Africans if it is unique because my argument is, nowhere else in the world is pigmentation a criteria for granting a bond, subsidy to South Africa. That makes us unique. But it is a violation of our rights."

The Ambassador went in and he came back and said, "Fine, they will approve." You see what I am saying is, I couldn't blame the U.S. because any rational, independent-thinking person would come up as you did with the point you raised. Then when I countered, the Ambassador said, "Frank, I like that."

Q: Let's dwell a moment on Bart Rousseve, an African American from New Orleans who worked in New York and in Washington with various organizations.

SASSMAN: *Operation Crossroads Africa was the main one. He and Jerry Vogel.*

Q: And later the International Institute of Education, the African American Institute. He came to South Africa, I believe that the South African government gave him a visa each time he came. He was an honorary white because I think Black citizens from other countries had restrictions on were not welcome.

SASSMAN: These participants in Operation Crossroads Africa they were young professionals. They were just starting on their careers. They were very competent people, but they were maybe community workers. They were maybe government officials. But as a result of the Operation Crossroads experience, they developed international contacts, especially contacts with their counterparts in Africa which was nonexistent.

That Operation Crossroads Africa program was unique in the sense that it got groups of young African professionals from all countries in Africa together so they had both the U.S. and the African experience, which made it a very unique program. A couple of weeks back I spoke to a guy who says he still has contacts that he got out of that program. This guy in Ghana, he is now the surrogate father of this guy's children. And the guys come to you and say, "Frank, thanks for printing that." You know South Africa was isolated. We had no entrée to Africa. They had to go six or ten thousand miles to meet their African counterparts.

Bart raised the belief that you mentioned that most of the participants on the Operation Crossroads Africa were recommended or selected by their respective governments. These participants when they met with the South Africans just assumed that their South African participants were also selected and recommended by their government, right. So then I said to Bart, "We must talk." We explained to him that in South Africa, the South African government is in no way involved in the selection program.

Our U.S. officers in South Africa used to take a long night off the program, and FSNs and an American officer would make up a panel, which would select the respective South Africans to go. So there was no government involvement. So we said to Bart, "It is important that at the orientation in the U.S. that you make this point with the participants: Operation Crossroads Africa participants from other countries, although they were recommended and selected by their government, because of the apartheid programs and because of the status of the South African government, they were not involved in the operations." Bart said that, and it helped out tremendously.

Let me mention something else that will shock you. I with debriefing, we would always send him a report how these South Africans found it. One guy from Port Elizabeth was a participant. He mentioned something very significant. He said they had a discussion on a ferry going around the Statue of Liberty or somewhere in New York where the Operation Crossroads Africa. When he came back, he was... as was always the case, many of the South African security police divisions detained our grantees when they returned and interrogated them. What this guy said to me, he said, "Frank, if I didn't hear this myself, and I had to pinch myself to see if I was not dreaming. One of the security police officials could recite virtually verbatim a discussion that this guy Ernie had with other participants on the ferry around." So what you guys didn't know, I didn't mention

this to our BPAO at the time that they had infiltrated. They were so scared of us taking these young blacks, and they couldn't refuse them passports or traveling facilities, so they put a police informer on them.

Q: Well this is mind boggling. Informers would be ethnically the same, that is to say majority population, African or colored who were working for the police. Now you say that the South African government had nothing to do with the selection. Were they able to bribe participants after the selection?

SASSMAN: I later found out there were informers, blacks you know.

Q: So these would be people with a certain presence but clandestinely working with the South African police and then went to inform on the others. Now you said the South African government could not refuse to give passports. I thought they could refuse.

SASSMAN: Let me explain and elaborate on that. You see, if you as a black apply for a passport, as I say, it is a privilege, not a right. Now because he gets a letter from the U.S. ambassador inviting now this is the OCA participant, inviting him or her to go on this program to the United States, it is more difficult for them to refuse that passport application.

Q: Why? Are they afraid of the American embassy?

SASSMAN: Well yeah. It is because the U.S. government is inviting him. It is going to put them in a bad light. They don't want to give this person the right to go on the program. But then they reconsider when you approach them and now they don't say no. They just delay it. Now it is maybe two or three weeks before departure.

Like we nominated a guy who was going into community policing to go on Operation Crossroads Africa to interact with his peer group in the U.S. They kept on, and in the end, it was two weeks before departure. So I had to call the guy who happened to be a so-called colored guy who was in this position to approve the leave for this person and permission to go. He made all kinds of excuses. I must now rattle your cage. So I said to him, "Look, I cannot tell you how to do your job. As the senior brigadier in the police, it is your right to grant him leave or not. But all I want to tell you, the U.S. government has obligated 10,000 dollars for this program and you know fiscal policies within government, if that money is not utilized," I lied to him and said, "They want to get it from somebody because they are going to lose that money. I don't know if they are going to get you as the person who refused the leave to get the money back." He said, "Okay, let me think about it."

Q: So you bluffed...

SASSMAN: Yeah, I bluffed. I said I wasn't sure: "I can't say they are going to, but what if they now hold you liable because you refused this guy going and notice is too short to find another person? So I am just saying to you that if that happens then they are going to see you as the person liable for this person not going." So he called me back that afternoon and he said, "Look,

I have told Ike to pack his bags and he is going.” So this is how you play and you have to challenge, but always, because it is the U.S. government inviting the person, they would give the passport to that person to travel whereas the average person just going on his own, and they would use delaying tactics and then at the last minute they would.

Q: Which is what the South African...

SASSMAN: That is what they wanted. They came up with another ploy. When they saw now that they had to give passports, South African Passports to these guys to refuse the passports so they cannot travel. So what they did when they created the homeland policy, you know the homeland policy was although you lived in Guguletu, Kyelitsha or in the Cape Town urban area, if you were born in a homeland you would not be a South African citizen. You would get a transcribed passport.

Q: We should say these passports were recognized nowhere in the world except in South Africa.

SASSMAN: Right. So now say you were a student and they can trace you back to the Ciskei. You would get a Ciskei passport. You have got a Fulbright grant to go and do a masters or a Ph.D. The U.S. does not recognize a Ciskei passport so they say, “Sorry, you can’t get the grant.” So what I was one of the people in a meeting with the embassy officials where we came up with this and I suggested, and simultaneously an American officer also suggested it. I said, “Why don’t we do this, we accept that passport, right, but we do not put a visa in the passport? We let the person who is a Ciskei citizen submit two photographs, three photographs. Then the one photograph we put on a piece of paper. We stamp the visa on a piece of paper and then we attach it to the passport. That person then travels to the U.S. on a Ciskei passport. When he enters the entry is stamped on the page that is attached to the passport with his photograph. When he leaves they rip it out. So he can’t prove that the U.S. accepted his passport.” So that worked. So we then took the guys on the homeland passports.

Q: I cannot imagine the Department of Homeland Security accepting such a thing now. In those days was there a closer connection between the consular services? How did you persuade the U.S. government in the port of Kennedy Airport in New York City to accept a Ciskei passport?

SASSMAN: We had a meeting in Cape Town. It was the political officer; a decision came out of that meeting. I was one of the people who suggested that...

Q: The decision was made in Cape Town.

SASSMAN: In Cape Town and then sent to Washington. In order to get the officials at Kennedy or Reagan to accept this, it had to go through Washington or through the agency.

Q: The INS—the Immigration and Naturalization Service—they cooperated?

SASSMAN: They cooperated because we then accepted, as I say they had to give an extra photograph, and this was put on a separate sheet of paper that was attached to the passport. So

the passport had no visa stamp in it. The passport had no entry or exit stamp in it.

I remember also that the American diplomats at one time had to travel with two passports if they traveled to Africa, especially if they had a South African connection. So there was flexibility, and I know we had that meeting. It was conveyed to Washington, to the appropriate people in Washington, and the immigration people accepted that. Because you see they said it was unfair to deprive the black South African or the black African in South Africa of studying or visiting the U.S. because of the South African government's policy. That homeland policy was obviously designed to prevent blacks from traveling.

Q: The U.S. government was receiving a lot of criticism for being easy on the apartheid system. In fact, at least the INS and the embassy consulate were working perfectly harmoniously with those who had ideas on how to get around the rules.

SASSMAN: Definitely that was the case because in the initial reaction of the consulate and immigration was, "The guy has a Ciskei passport; he can't go. We do not recognize that." But at this meeting we discussed this, and said, "It is unfair. We are depriving that."

Q: I understand the argument in South Africa. What is amazing to me is that it was accepted by the authorities in Washington. How long did it take to persuade them, weeks, months?

SASSMAN: Months. It wasn't very long. But you must admit that it wouldn't have worked if Washington hadn't approved it.

Q: Who convinced Washington, was it the ambassador do you think?

SASSMAN: Could be. The ambassador as head of the mission had to be involved in this, and maybe with the Secretary of State for African Affairs, which was Chester Crocker.

Q: Yes, and Hank Cohen. Again just for the record Chester Crocker, the author of constructive engagement, was under enormous criticism from the left wing in the United States as being a sellout, as being too friendly. And so many paradoxes in the American intelligentsia, Chet Crocker at the time was very controversial. Frank, as a South African, and from your perspective, it seems that some measures were taken which in fact were pretty helpful to the social advancement...

SASSMAN: Yeah, in South Africa we had tremendous problems with constructive engagement. You had South African leadership refusing to come to some of our programs, refusing to participate on our programs. What I found was that I understand why they opted for constructive engagement. They started from the premise at first to challenge the South Africans, of course not wanting to change, isolating them, embargoes, whatever. Then they saw, "Look, why not try and show them we are their friend and want to try to help them?" So they came with constructive engagement. constructive engagement was my worst time as a black South African working for the embassy. You can imagine the flak I got from my contacts.

Q: Tell me more. You are talking about the politically aware, the intelligentsia considering you to be too friendly with an evil process.

SASSMAN: Yeah. Look, I always, to survive and for my credibility to transcend political ideologies, I never during my time with USIS publicly declared my political ideologies. I was a professional. I took the job and I knew I couldn't only work with guys who have the same political ideologies I had. I had to work with guys who support the apartheid structure, the CP, the Freedom Front. As a professional, I had to give them the same service as I give the guy from the PAC. So I took a leave. I read the Book of Tutu. Tutu has never publicly declared his political ideology.

So I find for me the worst time as a South African, and to convince my contacts and to retain my credibility, was the constructive engagement. The other thing about engagement even the guys like at that time the PFP, the Progressive Federal Party of what is now the DA (Democratic Alliance). This is Colin Eglin. They refused to even come to the Fourth of July one year because of this closeness, and they actually asked Piet Koornhof, a minister at that time of home affairs, to be the guest speaker at the Fourth of July, and that was the year that Piet Koornhof gave the order for the authorities to demolish the temporary housing in winter, the temporary housing of squatters in crossroads, to go in and break down the shelters. And at night, the people during the day would break down the shelters. They buried it, and at night they put up the shacks as shelters again.

Q: The name of this man?

SASSMAN: Dr. Piet Koornhof. Now he was the minister of home affairs at the time. No, minister of community development.

Q: And his version of development was to demolish the housing?

SASSMAN: Yeah, and they, the PFP guys, this is the Progressive Freedom Party, which was the chief opposition. They said, "Is this the U.S. government's reward to Piet Koornhof? To address the Fourth of July function by virtue of the fact that he demolished the shacks?" So you see that is what we had to live with. It was a bad time, and we as FSNs were also tarnished with the same brush. A lot of guys refused U.S. government grants on the grounds of that if you are close with the South African government, it means that you are supporting apartheid. You know, all kinds of interpretations.

Q: This is an enormously important principle. If you are trying to change a system that has it wrong, you can confront; you can engage constructively. You can ignore; you can turn to violence as some people did. What was your moral compass at that time? Not to be flattering, how were you so smart as to know that not revealing a personal ideology enhanced your personal credibility? How did you understand that?

SASSMAN: Look, it would be mostly on one-on-one issues, and it would be in a room in this guy's office or it would be in a room say at USIS where you get the two of them to meet over

coffee and chat. So I wouldn't say it was in public per se.

Q: Now you say you took this from Tutu. I am sure you discussed this with your American colleagues.

SASSMAN: They never asked me and I never discussed it with them.

Q: They never asked and you never discussed.

SASSMAN: Not unless they knew what my leanings were, but we never discussed this. This is a viable strategy.

Q: This was an enormous guiding principle in doing the work that you do.

SASSMAN: They never asked me, and that was a survival strategy with me. Could you imagine if I even shouted my political activities, you know? I remember we had an incident where the police arrested seven, no eight high school students. They were going to make an example of them because these kids were at a political rally, and the security police chased them and they caught these eight kids. They charged them with terrorist activities for going to this rally. The one kid, before he was sentenced, skipped the country, but the other seven... my niece happened to be one of them. That is why I got involved. So then these were 17- or 18-year-olds. They had the trial and some of them were sentenced to five years, some of them were sentenced to three years, and some of them were sentenced to one year in prison, political prisoners.

Q: What was the nature of the gathering?

SASSMAN: It was a political rally where you know, say undercover ANC leadership and black politicians were speaking. In any case...

Q: So they were accused of terrorism. For attending a political discussion.

SASSMAN: Yeah. So they chased and they just randomly caught these eight kids. So these kids were going to prison, and the sentencing was political, but they weren't treated as political criminals. They were going to be thrown in with thieves, murderers etc. You know what would happen to kids that age in prison. So I then went clandestinely. I didn't even tell the Americans, and that time these guys didn't know about press conferences. But my American experience made me unique.

Even the ANC domestic wing contacted me to find out how you do press conferences. In any case, I did a press conference, and I said to the guys, "We must have a press conference to focus international attention to the plight of these kids. Here are 17- or 18-year-olds who are going to prison. They are going to be thrown in with common prisoners. What is going to happen to these kids?" I went to a meeting of the Weinberg crisis committee, and couldn't convince everybody that we should have this press conference.

Q: Were they afraid?

SASSMAN: No, they were two groups. There were guys who went out that were ANC and then guys who were the Unity Movement. Only the new Unity Movement is an old political movement, but at that time they were swimming against the mainstream. The guys were very eloquent and were more vocal than the other guys. So I said to the guy who was Chairman at the time, "Listen, these guys although they are the most vocal, they are in the minority. So let's pass two motions and vote on it. If we vote, the majority is going to vote in favor of the press conference." He said, "Frank, that is excellent." This guy is now the chief legal advisor to the South African government.

So we then got another guy to pass the first motion that we must have the press conference. Another guy passed the second motion that we shouldn't have it. So then when we voted to pick the one you favor. They were more vocal, but they were in the minority. So we had the press conference. I tell you then I did a press release. I sent it through SAPA [South African Press Agency]. The guy at SAPA said to me, "No, we can get onto the wires." They sent it to all the media outlets, and then I could contact all these foreign media correspondents because parliament is in Cape Town. And I worked with them.

So we had ABC, we had Columbia; we had the Germans; we had the Swiss. The television cameras were all there. You know I heard afterwards, this was in the annex of St. George's Cathedral. Because you know with the media you have to go where they are, to be convenient for them. We had it over lunch time. The place was surrounded by security police. But I wasn't at the table. I briefed the guy who was chairing on how to handle a press conference.

Then we had every paper, international, they all covered this. Here was kid, 17 or 18, who is now going to be made an example for other students. We had the thing; man, it was such a success.

Q: Well this is very delicate. You were working for the U.S. government.

SASSMAN: I put my neck out there. You are the first one to tell this. But I mean I don't care. I am out.

Q: But it is very admirable what you did. Again the risks that you took. First of all, the security people were there and bad things could have happened. Second, the Americans, what you did might have fit into the American strategy or not. So you were dealing at the time as an individual.

SASSMAN: Yeah, they wouldn't have supported me on this one.

Q: They wouldn't have?

SASSMAN: Yeah. Because you see the reason I did it then. I knew the risk involved. It was my sister's daughter who was being used by the security police to get a message across, and it was a risk and I knew. You know they arrested my son to scare me. At that time it was job-related.

These things were job-related, and I went to the ambassador and I told him they interrogated my son and I then with this guy was no legal advisor for the government. He was my attorney. We turned the case around and my son was acquitted. I will tell you later how that happened. So I went to the ambassador to tell him what happened with my son. They arrested my son to scare me and all that.

So the ambassador said to me, "Frank, if anything is officially job-related, and you have any problems with the security police, you come and see me." The ambassador said that if it is an assignment they gave me and because of that I get into disfavor with the security police, then they will bat for me as far as they can go. I don't know what he meant by that.

Q: The same thing you meant. If you go and rob a bank you will not...

SASSMAN: Exactly. Say he gives me an assignment and I carry out the assignment which is an official duties, then he says they will, and he even said, "If it means getting you and the family..." if it is so bad they must get me out of the country, they will still try and support. He didn't say how far they would go, but he said he was doing, because look. I was discussed in parliament at one time about activities in the Eastern Cape. This was a hotbed for South African activities. He said to me, "Now look, you do..."

And I told him about the security police guys from the dockyard where my brother worked for the South African navy. This guy called me and he asked me and he said he was with the navy security, and asked if he can come and speak to me because my brother and myself would meet at social functions, and my brother in the navy might tell me secrets. I said, "Listen, the last thing we talk about is the shop or job. We talk about family issues. As a family we get together." I said, "Are you sure you are not the security police?" He said, "No, don't think that. We are not. But we would like to meet with you."

I said, "Well, let me discuss this with the ambassador. I am not involved in any subversive activities. I am working for the embassy, as you know, but I would like my ambassador to be there at this meeting." He said, "No, I want to see you at your home." I said, "No, you are not coming to my home. You come to the embassy, and if it is legit that you are concerned about naval security issues, you come and talk to me in front of the ambassador, and he will concur and vouch for what I am telling you."

I never heard from them again. So I knew they were concerned and wanted to know what I am involved in, so that is why I went to the ambassador and told him.

Q: Well you had a personal connection with your niece.

SASSMAN: Yeah, if anything had to happen, and I understand that then, that it would have been my neck. They would have said, "Look..." because the embassy in no uncertain terms told us, "Don't get involved in that type of thing." Well, this is now BPAO, who was a very apolitical guy, but that is what he told me when there were marches and things like that. He said, "If you guys go to these things," and I was beaten up at two marches, but he said, "You are on your own."

You can get into trouble.” I believe that was his policy or it was embassy policy, but I just assumed that it wouldn’t be good for me as an employee of the embassy to get involved. And many of us did that. We were involved, but very subtly.

Q: Well you were smart enough to get something to happen that you might have been the leader yourself in public because of your professional capacity it was smarter to get someone else to actually get the work. And they did not know how to run a press conference.

SASSMAN: But I briefed them. With my American experience, I could say the embassy helped. And you know that thing was so successful that I heard later that the Brigadier at Pollsmoor Prison called the warders and guys together and said, “Listen, no matter what happens, nothing must happen to these seven kids in prison. They must be given VIP treatment, and even if it means they can walk freely in the corridors,” which happened. “They must be treated like VIPs in this place.”

When I came to the U.S. in ’87, the newspaper interviewed me about all this. I don’t know how they knew that I was involved in this, but they interviewed me. It was a front page article. But then you see those kids were not scared because we had psychologists counseling them before they went in. They were given VIP treatment.

Q: Did the sentences hold? One, three, and five years?

SASSMAN: Yeah, one, three, and five years. I think the kid who had five years was the eighth one who skipped the country. But you don’t serve three years. You serve about less than a year if you are sentenced to three years. But they all were sentenced, and they were not scared. I stuck my neck out there. If it had gone the wrong way... but I think I protected myself by not being visible. Nobody could point a finger at Frank Sassman being at the press conference, that all was packed. You had all the local journalists. You had the international media representatives were there.

Q: The strategy of not being visible, any more thoughts about that? Let’s say you did represent the government and you were instructed by your peers to do something and be invisible, would you have the same enthusiasm for that as the circumstances where you were a person not comparable?

SASSMAN: No, I don’t think it is comparable because I did this primarily because of my niece being involved, you know. My sister’s daughter. I must stress that these were trumped up charges. These kids were not involved in terrorism. It was just taking eight school kids. They must have been told, “Take these kids,” and, “We want to show other learners that you are going to prison or you go to these rallies.” So I think it wouldn’t have been the same had I been given. For instance, when the Truth Commission came, the BPAO and the political officer came to me, and they said they wanted me to go and be at these hearings and report back. Now that was an official assignment, understand. But I think if I say the way I did it, I just took it for myself that the embassy would not be happy with me arranging that press conference.

Q: The notion of brinkmanship: you had a confrontation between two governments working and sometimes with the same goals and sometimes with opposite goals. If you were smart enough, you could use strategies. There was this marvelous ploy that you mentioned of a person not giving a passport might be financially reliable, which is a total bluff. But there was some point of leverage where the South African officials you tell this, they feared they had doubts. You had the ability, or you developed the ability to find the weak points of the apartheid people, the individuals. Any general comments at this time?

SASSMAN: Yeah. Let me try and answer that. You see I had this thing even before Bob Gosende contacted me. I had a British guy whom I knew who was a diplomat. I wanted to make diplomacy my career, but I had many problems with that. If I had to go and be a South African diplomat, I had to go abroad and defend apartheid, which my political ideology and would never allow me to do. But then I said, "No, I want to be a diplomat, I mustn't let that deter me from achieving my career goal."

So I had a choice. I had to go and work for the British foreign service or work for the Americans. But I never explored it. Very fortuitously for me my career actions got Bob Gosende to give me a call, and Bob made me an offer. And I told Bob, "Bob, look as now that fate has gone my way. I would have liked to be a diplomat, but there was no way I could work for my country, and I had to put it on the back burner." So I said, "Bob, this is not an easy decision for me because I am newly married." I got married in '62 so I was married 10 years. My kids were young. I said, "I must do a lot of thinking about this because if I make the wrong decision my family is going to suffer."

So he said, "Frank, okay, I will give you two weeks to think about it. You come back to me." I looked at the two societies, the British society, and the American society. I saw the many parallels. Granted there are differences, but the many parallels I can draw between the South African and the American society. I read about Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, and said, "I would like to work for the Americans," and then I accepted.

Q: Was there a choice?

SASSMAN: My credibility as a result of being in diplomatic circles has made me a unique individual in this country. Guys who were cabinet now, I can pick up the phone and say, "Listen, it is payback time. I opened that door for you. I need to lay open guidance." So it made me a very unique individual in my family, immediate family, in my extended family, and also in South Africa. I can go anywhere in the country and I will run up against people for whom I have opened the door. I always say to them, "I didn't get you the grant. You did things which I noticed, and I felt that you should benefit from this, so I merely nominated you."

I did an electronic dialogue with Hank Cohen, who was the Assistant Secretary of State. I did this dialogue. We had Cape Town linked up with the South African parliamentarians, linked up with the media in three other centers in Africa to talk about change in Africa.

Hank Cohen made a statement in that particular electronic dialogue that I will never forget, but

very apt. He said especially to the South African media, he said, "Listen, you guys are being very negative towards change in South Africa. You always are talking about the problems, but you are not offering solutions to the problems. Start focusing on how you are going to resolve the situation. I want to tell you this, the time for change is much nearer than you think. Don't get caught with your pants down," were his last words.

You know I had a call from a guy the ANC brought into Western to organize the Western Cape. Mass media, mass democratic movement in the Western Cape. He called me. He said, "Frank, you know, that electronic dialogue set us thinking. Can you bring, can you link us up with three specialists in the United States, who are specialists in electoral processes? Because after what Cohen said, we thought, 'We didn't even focus on what the electoral process we are going to use.'" I went to my director, at the time my countrymen didn't know who it was. I said to him, "Listen, we must help these guys." This is now we looking at '92, the early '90s where there was the change. They were now talking.

They were talking about electoral processes now and are having discussions with the South African government. This guy, he said no. They cannot, this is too short. "We can't get these guys." I said, "Man, these guys are not going to stop with you." They are going to go to the political office, they are going to go to the ambassador. I went behind his back. I called Kent Obie.

Q: The director of the Africa bureau at USIA.

SASSMAN: At that time Kent was PAO. But he became the head. So Ken at least saw, I said to Kent, "Look, I know the time is short. I concur with that. They wanted to go within two weeks." So I said, "But can't we do an electronic dialup?" He said, "Excellent, Frank, we are going to look at this." They lined up Andre Lypot, who was at the University of California, Sam Huntington, and another guy.

Q: Sam Huntington. Another electronic...

SASSMAN: Yeah, yeah. Guys like the ANC now... this was the shadow ANC, Kader Asmal, Albie Sachs. Albie Sachs came to me and he said "What about this horse and pony show that you arranging?" They didn't know about electronic dialogue. They were having a conference in Stellenbosch. I said, "Okay, we are going now." They lined up those guys and they had the electronic dialogue. Kader Asmal, Dullah Omar, they were all there. So we had this, and you know, we booked an hour. Within the first half an hour, Albie, Kader, and Dullah came to me and said, "Frank, we must apologize. We were taunting you about the horse and pony show. We didn't know about the electronic dialogue. But the guys want to know if you can give us an extra half an hour."

Q: Ha, ha, ha!

SASSMAN: And we had it, and there they discussed. Then these guys came to me and said to me, "Frank, we are not disrespecting you, but we know the trouble you had going direct to the

ambassador. We want a dedication to go in to act further with these guys.” So you see then this is why I was helping my government through my job. I was doing my job but very subtly, I was helping, and I wasn’t doing anything wrong, understand. Because that is the idea. You wanted to share the U.S. experience with host country nationals. So many times I did my mission, but in a beneficial way.

Q: Frank, I have known you long enough to know you were always a troublemaker and will always be a troublemaker, but always the trouble gave good results.

SASSMAN: Gave a benefit. So I tell you that to me was a highlight, and the fact that these guys would pick up the phone and call, they would say, “Frank, we are coming to you.” They could have gone to the ambassador, but they came to me.

Q: You mean the Albie Sachs people.

SASSMAN: Yeah, they respected me, and then when we started sending them and the approach to the U.S. government changed, and they knew they had to draw on the expertise of the U.S. models, they came, and they came to me.

Q: These were people who were ideologically suspicious of the United States. But who came to understand through your guidance that the models in the United States existed and they needed those models.

SASSMAN: Look, why reinvent the wheel? The thing is, as I say, I was honored then in the sense that I was at the branch office [Cape Town]. I wasn’t at the head office. They could have called someone in Pretoria but they called me. I thought my BPAO at that time wouldn’t want to act. I said, “No, I am going to call Kent.” And Kent will see it the way I see it. We had a good working relationship. If I didn’t get the support from Pretoria, you know how it works. It goes into the waste bin.

That is why I value having you guys up there. That I admired about you guys. You always showed an interest outside of your portfolio, you know, wanting to know this or wanting to know that.

But I don’t get any invitations for embassy functions. I understand why, if I am there, the guys all know me, the contacts are going to come to me because we were not just professional contacts; we were friends. That may be good for the mission. So I don’t know if that is the reason.

Q: You are a very difficult person.

SASSMAN: Yeah. And you know, I know that I became a friend of these guys as opposed to just a contact because on many occasions, the ambassador or the BPAO would ask another colleague to call and make an appointment. And when a big guy comes from Washington, the ambassador would contact me and say “Frank, can you try?” And then I will get the appointment. Again I won’t share this with anybody, but I can mention in my interview, I had my contact cards for all

this computer technology, I had little contact cards. I will say, “My contact is Dan Whitman.” The most important point I would put after I would put Dan Whitman’s details is the name of your personal assistant or secretary.

Q: For access.

SASSMAN: Then they would say to you, “Hi Jenny, can I owe you?” You know they told me so many times, “Frank, you are the only person who makes us visible. Everybody just calls: ‘Hello, can I speak to Dan Whitman?’” That got me the entrée, or if I speak to Jenny, “Hi, how is the family?” “Ah my little boy broke his leg,” and all that. I know that. Next time I call, I say, “How’s John? How is his leg?” “Oh Frank, you impress me again.” I always like Jakes, said to me once, “Are you having an affair with Cathy?” Cathy was the secretary. I said, “Why do you say that?” He says, “When you call, you are the only one, and you are making a time to make an appointment. Cathy comes and pleads with me to say, ‘Why don’t you do it over breakfast? Frank has got something important!’”

The guys could never figure out, but that was my little secret. That I had this card and I would always put these things down. That is why I could get an appointment, even the mayor of Cape. She would say, “Joyce came there, Joyce says. ‘Please, you must go. Frank has been calling.’” So it was my way, just my personality that interested in people, and I am a people person. That is what I would do, and I would never, I mean I am outing it now.

Q: I have to tell you at the Foreign Service Institute, people take courses in how to get access to important people—be nice to the subordinate—but most people never learn the lesson. And this you came on all by yourself.

SASSMAN: This focused very heavily on the Group Areas Act, which called for the countries to be divided into geographic regions, or housing areas, for the different ethnic groups. Before they could do that, they had to assign a racial classification to every citizen in the country. Now this took various forms, and I will try to put into context and try to explain to you how it was done. If in the case the child would always get the race of the mother. Except where the father and the mother is not of the same race. If you take a white female, if she is married to a white person, the child would be classified as white. If there has been sex across the color line, and the mother is white but the father happens to be colored, African, or Indian, that child would be classified as colored. In the case of the colored woman, the child would always be classified as colored, whether the father is white, colored, African or Indian.

If a person comes and he claims that he is colored because it is better to be colored than African because you have more privileges, you know, economic privileges, job privileges etc. So that person will come and he will say that he is colored; he is not African. But he has the features of the African. Now the Afrikaner guy interviewing that person will use different things. The first thing they would use is what they call the “pencil test.” They will take a pencil and the person has short peppercorn hair, they will put the pencil. If the pencil sticks, he is African. If the pen goes through, he is colored. Then it got around because he is very wise, he shaved his head so they couldn’t use the pencil test.

Then they had other tests that were cultural tests. The person interviewing the person who is very dark of complexion, has short hair, and looks African, but claims to be colored. They will then get him to say certain phrases which the colored and the African will say differently, different pronunciations or whatever. They would have the one, there is a word you all know: "jackal," which is a small animal. They will say to him, "Say that word in Afrikaans." Now the Afrikaans word for "jackal" is "jakkals." "Jakkals" is the Afrikaans word for "jackal." The colored if he is colored he will say "jakkals." If he is African, the African has difficulty. He will say "jackolas." If he says "jackolas," he is classified as African. If he says "jakkals," then he is colored.

Then there is another phrase: "I catch the ghost in the dark." Now that is English. You understand that. But then in Afrikaans that would be "*Ek vang die spoek in die donker.*" Now that guy who claims to be colored but he looks African. The Afrikaner will ask him to say that. The colored, if they have him classified as colored will say, "*Ek vang a' spoek in e donker.*" The African, the way he speaks and the cultural difference, will say "*Ek vang hom die spoek in die donker.*" So that is the difference and on that phrase, they also used this.

Then there was another cultural difference, and that was the person interviewing the person who claims he is colored and not African, he would say to them in English or Afrikaans, "How tall were you when you were 16 years old?" You understand how tall. The African because he grew up mostly in the rural environment, and the way they measure horses... He will say, "I was so high," and he would show with his hands that way. The colored and the white will show like this.

Q: Ah with the hand flat.

SASSMAN: Now you see that with a horse, they always say a horse is 20 hands high. Coloreds and whites would show the hand horizontal to show the height. And that is another way they would. There was another phrase that sounds a bit complicated. There is a phrase in Afrikaans, "Eighty-eight small potatoes." In Afrikaans you would say, "agt en tagtig ard appels." That is potatoes. "Agt en tagtig klein ard appelkis." Now the African has trouble saying this. The colored would say, "Agt en tagtig ard appelkis." But the African cannot say that. He has problems, so he would say, "tagentagtag." You see the difference. So in that the race will be decided.

Q: Now there must have been people who knew this and were able to fake it.

SASSMAN: Yeah, but it was very difficult where you have a culture that you say something in one way, and it was say it fast, you know. Then he catches you up.

There were some really interesting incidents. I will give you one incident in Dansani. That is the black town near to East London. This family lived in East London, but during some time when the classification took place, the family was struggling. This was a colored family, and they sent the one daughter to live with her mother's sister. This daughter was young, and she lived many years with the mother's sister. Then the mother's sister married a black African guy. So she was classified as African. They reclassified her as black African.

Q: Even though these were not her biological parents.

SASSMAN: The mother's sister was married to an African, and she had herself reclassified as African, but she had the colored daughter of her sister who should have been classified as colored. But they didn't want to say, "You are living in an African village," so they classified the daughter. When they did the general classifications, they classified the daughter as African.

Q: So they could live together.

SASSMAN: Right. She was in an African area. So this daughter, when the mother's situation changed, she went back to live with her mother in this area in East London. Of course, everybody carried an identity document. White, coloreds, and Indians had an identity document, the ID. So when the authorities came around, and they asked them for their identity documents, it turned out that the daughter was African, and she is living in an area designated for coloreds.

Q: So she had to re-designate.

SASSMAN: No, so they said this daughter cannot live with you. She must get out of the area. She is an African, and she is living in a colored area by virtue of this thing that happened.

Q: So once you are "demoted," colored to African, you cannot go back.

SASSMAN: At that time, you must now get out. So then the mother and father went to consult an attorney, and the attorney said to her, "The only way you can get your daughter to live with you as an African is to build a servant's quarters in the back of your yard, and employ her as your domestic servant." Then a colored domestic servant can live in a colored area by virtue of the fact that she is working for a colored family as a domestic servant.

Q: Did you ever meet Helen Suzman?

SASSMAN: Yes, I met Helen of course. Parliament was part of my portfolio, and she was at one time the only female member of parliament. And the only opposition member also. So I had contact with her. When I was studying at the University of California in San Diego, they were showing, like they do. They show to the students at the universities new releases of the movies, so they can go advertise what the films are like. So they showed *Cry Freedom*. My involvement in *Cry Freedom* was that I was involved in the beginnings and the gathering of information to make the movie. I had a call from Donald Woods, who was the editor of the daily dispatch, who skipped the country in the '70s or early '80s, I think. He was banned with Steve Biko. He called me and said, "Frank, Sir Richard Attenborough wants to make a movie on South Africa." He didn't know if it was going to be on Steve Biko, but he said he needed to get somebody to get him around. I then told my director and he said, "Oh Frank, it is an honor if you can help Sir Richard, so you can go." I introduced Sir Richard to contemporaries of Steve Biko.

Q: Steve Biko was killed in the '70s.

SASSMAN: Yeah. Steve Biko was the father of Black Consciousness in this country. He was a medical student who was expelled and... I met Sir Richard, so he said to me in Cape Town, "I am not here on my real name. I am using a pseudonym."

Because the cinemas were segregated under the Group Areas Act, he didn't want to accept because he was not happy with segregation of audiences. This is his year to make a film, and he doesn't want the authorities to know, so he was here as "Mr. Green." I took him around. I took him to Crossroads. I took him to the Eastern Cape. He took stills, you know, and he said to me, "Frank, thank you very much. I have got enough background; I can make this fall any way I want. Even if they don't allow me back in the country." When I took him to Peter Jones—he was a colored who was the closest friend of Steve Biko—to his office in Stellenbosch, we didn't know the office was bugged. Peter then called him "Sir Richard." The next morning the *Burger*... you know the story of the *Burger*.

Q: The Afrikaans morning newspaper.

SASSMAN: The daily paper. It was the mouth organ of the Nationalist Party. They picked up the security police listening in to our conversations. The next morning the *Burger* has a story headlines, "Sir Richard Attenborough is in South Africa to make a film on the life of Steve Biko." Sir Richard told me he also wanted to meet Winnie Mandela because Nelson Mandela was still in prison. This was in the early '80s. So he told me he was going up to Brantford. Now Brantford is a small African village in the Free State.

Q: This is after you knew that the Burger had run the story.

SASSMAN: Yeah, after we knew. So then he went up and he was speaking. Now Winnie being a banned person, you cannot meet, you cannot be two people to get her simultaneously. You need more than two people to get her simultaneously. Two people are allowed, but three or more you violate the banning order. So he met with Winnie, and there was a journalist, according to Sir Richard. standing approximately 20 yards away from where Sir Richard was talking to Winnie Mandela. A journalist with a conservative white newspaper said he overheard Sir Richard planning, with Winnie Mandela, the overthrow of the South African government. Now you tell me, 20 yards away and obviously speaking softly and...

Q: Yes and using listening devices or lying, one or the other.

SASSMAN: Then, of course, Sir Richard left. Then when I heard the film was being released in San Diego, I had to see this film because I knew it was going to be banned in our country. Now we were under the prohibition laws. And they would have a foolscap-sized loose-leaf, like an encyclopedia on all the banned material. It would be one-liners, title and order. It would have about plus-minus 800 pages printed with one line for each. It showed you how many books were banned. Sometimes the censor board would reset a second week and list all the literature.

Calendars would be banned. Films would be banned under the prohibition. These things would

be banned and all libraries had to have list of what is called Jacobson's, a list of objectionable literature. The libraries have got to check that list against their book stock to make sure that they don't have banned books on the shelves. If you are caught with a banned book, and I am talking about the '70s and '80s, you would be fined about 800 rand, about 80 dollars. People would fall into the sense of order and object. Sometimes they would look purely at titles. At one time they banned *Black Beauty* by Ann Sorrel, the story about the horse. They banned it because they saw the word "black" in the title. The books were banned primarily for political content, for pornography and a lot of sex in the novel and that kind of thing.

Q: Right, let's go back to the Attenborough film in Los Angeles.

SASSMAN: Yeah, so I was sitting and watching this film because I assumed it would be banned. I heard someone say, "Frank, what are you doing in Los Angeles?" George Allen's sister. She went to university in the east to do a memorial, annual memorial lecture. Then she came to the University of California in San Diego to do the memorial lecture at the San Diego. So I said, "I see I am here for the same reason as you. You won't be able to see this movie in South Africa because of the banning laws." The other thing I remember about Helen Suzman was one of the speeches in parliament. She was addressing parliament and one of the national party MPs got up and said, "I don't agree with what you are saying. If I can bring the statistics in it will prove otherwise." So Helen Suzman laughed and she said, "Let me tell you something about statistics. Statistics is like a woman's bikini. It hides and covers up the vital parts and reveals the ephemeral unimportant parts."

Q: She said that right in parliament?

SASSMAN: Right. So she was a person, a real fighter. Very feisty. She was the only opposition MP.

Q: She was white, which is how I guess she was able to survive. But politically how did she survive? She was all alone in that room.

SASSMAN: I will give you my personal opinion. You see, if any country, as South Africa claims to be a Western country, is a one party state, and it has no opposition, it is very bad. It is bad for investment in the country, you see. So the top businesspeople were Anglo-American. They found a sponsor. So I think, at that time, it was purely to give credibility to the white Nationalist Party. They have an opposition, but it's only one person.

Q: So they permitted an opposition as a safety valve to give the impression of being pluralistic.

SASSMAN: It is good and it is democratic. There is an opposition. One person.

Q: But they were confident that everyone would ignore her.

SASSMAN: Yeah, and what is she going to do, one person against them? But by the end, of course, the thing grew, and at that time, it was the Progressive Federal Party.

Q: Was it a coincidence that you were in Los Angeles at the time of the premier of the Attenborough film?

SASSMAN: I was doing research at the University of California at San Diego.

Q: Now you had worked on this movie. It was very important for you to see this movie. You knew it would be banned in South Africa, and there was Helen Suzman sitting near you.

SASSMAN: Yeah, and for the same reason she was also there. It happened that the movie was released at the time when she came to give this memorial lecture. So that was quite an experience, and Sir Richard thanked me personally for taking him around and getting... But I must say the fact that office was bugged, Sir Richard obviously was informed back then by Donald Woods, because Donald Woods had a lot of problems with the security police. He was very paranoid about places being bugged. But when I started speaking to him at the hotel, the Turner's Hotel, he showed me, "Let's go outside." We spoke outside.

Attenborough was very paranoid about bugging. The next day we are in Peter Jones' office, nobody knowing when he spoke there that the place was bugged. That is how the *Burger*, the security police told the *Burger* to publish the story.

Q: After the story came out, how long was Attenborough able to stay in the country?

SASSMAN: After the story, I think after he met with Winnie, he ended what he wanted to do, so he left. But he wrote to Donald, who was living in exile in the UK because he was banned, and Donald called me to say, "Sir Richard said to say, 'Thank you very much.' He has got enough stills and material, so he can make that film anywhere in the world." He wasn't allowed back into South Africa to make the film. He made it in Harare, in Zimbabwe.

Q: Which is the same terrain.

SASSMAN: Yeah.

Q: Do you know whether he ever returned to South Africa later?

SASSMAN: No

Q: But he had the material thanks to Frank Sassman.

SASSMAN: And he gave me a credit on the fold, under the fold. So it was a very interesting period.

Q: Now you have mentioned Steve Biko as being the father of Black Consciousness. Any other comments about Steve Biko before we leave that subject?

SASSMAN: Yeah. The South African authorities were really scared of Steve Biko because he was a very eloquent speaker, very articulate and not scared. You know, very assertive in putting his point across. He started from the premise of Black Consciousness that we cannot have normality in South African society unless we level the playing fields where blacks are equal to whites in this country. So his organization, which was AZAPO, he was first AZAPO and then he went to the Black People's Congress, then Black Consciousness.

Q: AZAPO is an acronym.

SASSMAN: Yeah. Azanian People's Organization.

Q: Would you say this was the precursor to the ANC?

SASSMAN: Oh, they are to the left of the ANC.

Q: All of these movements seen as radically left by the regime?

SASSMAN: Yeah. They were banned. They were all banned. A directive was given to the security police that Steve Biko was a prominent fugitive African leader, and he must be taken out. In other words, they must kill him. Then he was on his way to a rally in the Eastern Cape outside Grahamstown, you know where the old university is in the Eastern Cape. The security police stopped the vehicle and arrested Biko and Peter Jones, who was the Secretary of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Q: Do you know the year?

SASSMAN: In the late '70s. Then Peter Jones was released and he was banned, and also threatened because he was in the cell next to Biko. And they beat up Steve Biko, and then they put him in the back of a buggy, this is a small van.

They drove from Grahamstown to Pretoria, which is 1,500 kilometers, about 800-900 miles. Just naked in this buggy. They drove with him, and he died in Pretoria. It eventually came out that the police beat him to death. Just one incident that I always remember about Steve Biko and his assertiveness and being prepared to speak out irrespective of who he was talking to: he was being tried at the Supreme Court at that time for his political activities. The magistrate at one point in the trial said to him, "Mr. Biko, why do you keep referring to yourself as black when you are actually dark brown?"

Now the Black Consciousness, they did not accept the term "native" or "colored" or whatever. They just saw black and white. So Black Consciousness was black. He smiled and said, "Your Honor, with all due respect, why do you refer to yourself as white when you are actually pink?" It just brought the roof down in the court. But that was Steve. He says it as it is, you know.

Q: I guess that doesn't make things any easier for him.

SASSMAN: No, he was sentenced.

Q: Meanwhile you are back from California, is that correct?

SASSMAN: Yeah.

Q: Working with USIS again, and thinking back to that period.

SASSMAN: Yeah, now the next thing that happened. I told you before I went to the U.S. I was with the Weinberg crisis, it was an NGO nonprofit. I was involved with that to help the seven kids who were sentenced to various imprisonments.

Q: While you were employed by USIS. Extracurricular activities.

SASSMAN: Yeah, extracurricular. I didn't tell them about that. I did everything behind the scenes. I briefed people but didn't actually participate in the thing. Then when I came back, it was in '87, I came back. What happened after that? The next significant thing that happened in my life was when, because of the grapevine and my connections with the ANC, I heard on the grapevine two days before about the release of Mandela. I went to the ambassador and informed him that Mandela would be released in two days' time. The ambassador was very impressed, and he said to me, "Frank if you can go back and ask the ANC leadership who will be planning the release, if they can take it to a venue where President Bush Sr. can be the first international statesman to call him and congratulate him on his release, it would be a major coup for the embassy." So Bill Swing was the ambassador. You must know him. So Bill said to me, "Frank, if you can do that, it is a major thing."

I went back to the University of the Western Cape where they were planning all of this and spoke to him *sub rosa*, spoke to Dullah Omar, explained to them what the ambassador's wish was. So they said, "Frank, this would be good." And they are going to make it happen. They in turn asked me if the embassy would lend a bullet proof vehicle to drive Mandela around in the country. I said to them, "I cannot answer, but I will take your request to the ambassador," which I did. I didn't hear anything.

The ambassador then asked me to get the telephone number. So I went back to them and got the telephone number where they were taking Mandela, and President Bush called him. That happened. The telephone call happened. They took him to Dullah's house before he spoke to the crowd.

Q: Dullah Omar, later minister of justice.

SASSMAN: He became minister of justice. So this is the way it was described to me by guys who were at the event when he was at Dullah's house. The phone rang, and Dullah's daughter, who is now an advocate, ran to the phone. She came back and she said, "Daddy, there is a man on the telephone. He says he is the president of the United States, and he wants to speak to Mandela."

Now you must know Dullah and Kadar Asmal. They all laughed thinking it is Dan Whitman playing a joke on them. Dullah went to the phone and it was President Bush. Mandela mentions the incident in his book *Long Walk to Freedom*. He doesn't mention any names, but he mentions that it was at Dullah's house. He says he valued this phone call because Bush placed him on his list of 27 people that he regularly informs or briefs on international incidents. He valued that because, remember, he was incarcerated for 27 years and he was out of touch with a lot of things.

Q: Well this is enormous.

SASSMAN: That is the one thing. The other thing he said was that he had a great respect for Bush. He was a man that you can debate with. Bush always took cognizance of the feelings of the person he was interacting with, and that you can leave after the debate or the discussion and still respect him. Those are the two things. I actually have the page number. I think it is 699, but I can look that up in *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Q. Now a couple of questions about this. You say you learned two days before. Was there a general sense that this was imminent?

SASSMAN: Yeah, there was. Look at what had happened. You see you can't have a person incarcerated for 27 years just released into society. So what they did is they allowed him privileges on Robben Island. Then I don't know if they had a special house built in Victor Verster Prison in Paal. They didn't release him immediately into society. They first took him from Robben Island to Victor Verster where he was allowed more privileges. He had visitors and all that. Then the release was done from Victor Verster Prison.

Q: So everybody knew this would be coming soon.

SASSMAN: No, at the time when I heard it, people knew they were going to release him at some time, but nobody knew when. So it was very good news to the embassy because they knew two days before it was going to happen by virtue of me having heard it from senior aides.

Q: Now it was the ambassador's decision that it would be a good thing for the president to be the first one to call. Do we know whether President Bush had an opinion about this, or did he just follow the advice of the ambassador?

SASSMAN: I think when I did this through my BPAO, Bill Swing said, "Look, this is good news," when he met with his political officers. Then he said, "If Frank can go and get the ANC echelons to get Mandela to a telephone where President Bush can call him to be the first international statesman to congratulate him, it would be a major coup for the embassy in South Africa."

Q: We really don't know what the attitude was in Washington, but the upshot was that they followed the ambassador's advice.

SASSMAN: They agreed, and that is what happened. And as I say, it happened, and Mandela mentioned it in his book, and I also heard it from ANC guys.

Q: My gosh. Now the perception in the majority population of South Africa toward the U.S. administrations, the various ones, was mixed, I think. That is majority population black, colored, those in the anti-apartheid struggle had mixed feelings, I think, about the U.S. policy. Now do you think that President Bush and the release of Mandela made a very rapid change in people's opinions about the United States and its policy towards South Africa?

SASSMAN: You see, I think that the feelings were mixed with regard to the U.S. There were many people who saw the U.S. as the savior that was going to get them out of the position they were in. There were many people who saw the U.S. with your Sullivan Principles, your embargoes, whatever you did. Most of the people in South Africa saw the Sullivan Principles and the embargoes as good things that they said, "At least the U.S...." The more radical ones, the AZAPO guys, maybe some guys in the ANC, because to the left of the ANC, it [the United States] was still an imperialist country. "Are they genuine? What are they doing?" You know, that type of thing. So you had mixed feelings. The other thing that was more important to me was how Mandela saw this. He valued the opportunity that Bush placed him on the list of the 27 people that he [Bush] briefed regularly on international incidents. Mandela just coming out of prison for 27 years, you can think what this meant the top Western leader is now going to be calling him and discussing important issues with him. That to me is more important.

Q: Now you have a man who has been a prisoner for 27 years, a U.S. president who apparently was very nimble and able to change very quickly. Bush had to be playing within a delicate position I guess because there was constructive engagement. There were those in the U.S. who wanted much harsher treatment of the apartheid regime. It appears that in a very short amount of time, President Bush Sr. quickly adapted to the idea of Mandela being the leader.

SASSMAN: Yes, let me answer that. If you remember, the ANC was the main liberation struggle movement, right? Then there was a split in the ANC, and the PAC, the Pan Africanist Congress, moved to the left of the ANC when that organization was formed. Now you had two liberation movements. ANC, where they are moving in condo, and MKZ [Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC]. Then you have the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) with APLA, the African People's Liberation Army, as the armed struggle. Both of them operated from Tanzania.

Q: This is the PAC.

SASSMAN: The PAC, more socialist than the ANC. So the U.S. chose to identify Mandela as the leader that they will deal with.

Q: Seen as more moderate by the American administration.

SASSMAN: More moderate by the U.S., and the U.S. actually made Mandela. Let's put it that way.

Q: That is a pretty strong statement.

SASSMAN: Yeah, because they accepted him, and they pushed him as the future leader of South Africa you know. There had to be change and the oppression had to end. They identified Mandela as the leader above all the other guys.

Q: This could not have happened overnight. At what point did the process accelerate?

SASSMAN: It was there all the time. Look, the primary objective of the U.S. and the West was to get the South African government to change. They tried various things. They tried constructive engagement and different strategies. But when it came to them getting to the South African, Botha actually started it, the predecessor of De Klerk, this African leader. He started this by talking. But Botha was very dogmatic and very opinionated, and things didn't go. But De Klerk was the brave one who took the stand. Now I heard, I don't know how true it is. It makes sense to me, but I don't know if there is truth in this. When the talking started, and they get to have the big *indaba* in the center area where the ANC in South Africa started talking and working out the new thing.

Now I heard from somebody that the U.S. and the Soviet Union and others had to force the hand of the South Africa government to force them to start talking to the ANC. As I said, I cannot prove this but I just heard people talking about this. And then they said that they came with sanctions, they came with Sullivan Principles, all these things leading up to it.

Q: The U.S. working with the USSR?

SASSMAN: Yeah, this is what I heard. Let me explain this. What I heard was that they then say they must break or hurt the economy of South Africa because economics rules politics. You see, our economy is pegged against gold. It was all the years. So I heard that the U.S. and some of the Western powers got together and said, "If we flood the market with gold, and the U.S. has all its gold..." It doesn't produce that much, so they said if they make an abundance of gold available, gold will drop in value. And it dropped in value and they said the guys flooded the market, and the value of the rand was 22 U.S. cents at that time. You know you can talk until you are blue in the face, but if the economy suffers... I think what Mandela and [Walter] Sisulu told them when they were talking, as I told you earlier, "If you do not negotiate with our age group in the ANC, you are going to face the youth, and the youth wants an eye for an eye and blood."

Q: Did the U.S. see this is a potent threat to devaluing the South African currency? Was there ever an overt link to this?

SASSMAN: That is what I say, I didn't hear that, and this is what I heard and it makes sense to me. And immediately when the economy dropped 22 U.S. cents, the whole thing flowed, you know, and the talk for change came about. To me, it made sense that if you want to hurt somebody, and South Africa was always warned that pegging everything against gold in dangerous.

Q: So they had a false sense of security because South Africa did produce gold. But South Africa was not the main holder of gold.

SASSMAN: If you look at Fort Knox. So I don't know. It makes sense to me that if there is an abundance, the price will drop.

Q: What we can substantiate is that De Klerk was an international visitor under the USIA system. Tell us about that because he is quoted as saying that his mind was completely changed about race relations. Not to be simplistic; not bad, good, but just different. The whole equation was different for him after he was an official visitor of the U.S. Information Agency.

SASSMAN: He didn't go as president. But it can be sort of the fact that he eventually ended up as president and that visit was important.

Q: Now you were selecting IVs [International Visitors] at that time. Do you remember the year?

SASSMAN: I think that he was nominated by a political officer. It could be the political officer in Cape Town, then that would be embassy nomination. It wouldn't be a USIS nomination. But I worked on his program. I worked on that. Because there was Barend du Plessis; he was minister of finance.

Q: Well, what you worked on... can you tell us more what your job was?

SASSMAN: Sometimes I have to do the nomination with the political officer being the nominee. Sometimes the political officer would do the nomination himself. Sometimes I would have to go with the political officer and the BPAO to deliver the letter. Then I would write up the program suggestions by consulting the political officer, if he was a MP who nominated him.

Q: Did you interview De Klerk before he left for the U.S.?

SASSMAN: I can remember the process of the visa. For program suggestions, I had to contact the political officer at the time to get that and write it up because he would send whatever, and we would do the cable.

Q: And you are in the early '80s. How many IVs would there be per year from South Africa?

SASSMAN: About 30, plus or minus.

Q: De Klerk. We are sitting here with the man who processed De Klerk's nomination, which changed the world. Do other individuals come to mind as key or interesting international visitors from that period?

SASSMAN: Well, I worked on Barend du Plessis, who was minister of finance. I worked on his IV. I worked on the IV of Willem Heath, the guy who became the head of the Heath Investigative Unit into corruption in government.

Q: IVs were not the only thing you were doing. You were planning public meetings in Cape Town. You were dealing with Fulbrights, I think.

SASSMAN: In the early '80s, I was doing the Amparts [American Participants—expert speakers brought from the U.S. to South Africa]. I was doing Fulbright. I was doing the IVs, the exchange programs, and Ron Hendrickse was the full librarian. It was in the late '80s, and Ron was promoted from full librarian to cultural programs. Then we were sort of sharing it. It was very haphazard. Then with one BPAO he said no, he wants to separate the cultural program. The programmer and the other one would do the cultural exchanges. So then he said, "Look, what we do is we take one person in charge with the end part of the programming," and that was me. And then Ron was in charge of the exchanges. Each programmer had sort of a portfolio, like I did social involvement and politics and government. Now I would do all the programming on the overall responsibility for the programming, but my personal responsibility would be falling in social involvement in politics and government. Ron would be overall responsible for the cultural exchanges. In other words, coordinating that like I did the programming. But his area of specialty would be academia and labor.

Q: Now in those days programming of Amparts generally did not involve very large audiences. They used to be meeting with ministers and academics.

SASSMAN: One-on-one appointments.

Q: So what was your strategy then to have this have an impact on the country? Such a small number of people were involved. This was before iPods and Facebook and all that.

SASSMAN: The way it worked, we had campus-wide lectures, where the Ampart would go to UCT and have a campus-wide lecture. We would go to the SRC and say, "Do you want...?" Most of our programs were seminars, roundtable discussions, and symposia. The other way we would use Amparts is, for example, if the lawyers for human rights had an international conference on human rights. So they would contact me and say, "Frank we are doing this, is there a good person you could bring from the U.S. to speak on your model for human rights at this international conference?" That is another way to get the message of the model, the U.S. model, across. Then we would have one-on-one appointments like I did with Deval Patrick, who came out as an Ampart. We got him to meet with the minister of justice to have a one-on-one with his key guys in the ministry of justice.

So those are the ways: a permutation of seminars, roundtable discussions. Even if we couldn't get a speaker out here, we would opt for electronic dialogue. Again we would get the parliamentary portfolio committee on justice to speak about legislation pertaining to asset forfeiture, with specialists in the U.S.

Q: We are now in 2009. Hillary Clinton is Secretary of State, and she has made it clear to the world that she believes in mass communication with as many people simultaneously as possible. This is a very new approach. Thinking back to the '80s and early '90s even where many of the

discussions were with select audiences, it was one-on-one meetings. Did you feel that the purpose of these, on the part of the U.S. government, was to convince South Africans about an American point of view, or was the purpose to work together for some common goal? Or were both things part of the program?

SASSMAN: It was the target rifle approach, as opposed to the shotgun, where we would get the appropriate person or people who can be influential in using that particular U.S. model to get legislation here. It would be a more targeted approach. Like I said, take for instance the portfolio committee on justice. We would get them to speak or interact with a person on asset forfeiture and they would speak directly to those two or three using electronic dialogue first. Then the whole committee would interact with their peer group in there; there were 22 members of that committee. So it was more that kind of approach as to the large audience, so it was smaller but more high-powered.

Q: So this was a unique historic opportunity because you were really into nation building even before 1994. You had institutions being built. You had laws actually transforming the society so that this would not be possible without the historic opportunity that you had.

SASSMAN: I had really enjoyed my work with USIS in the late '80s and early '90s. I will tell you why: because I was doing my job as an employee of the U.S. government and simultaneously, I was doing significant work for my own government. Say when the new government came into power. The Constitutional Assembly was established. Now the Constituent Assembly was the 400 members of the House of Assembly and the Senate. At that time, we still had the Senate. You know, the Senate was abolished and the National Council of Provinces was established. But while we had the Senate and the National House of Assembly, it became very important that these two bodies became the Constituent Assembly

Q: We are in the early '90s at this point.

SASSMAN: So I am talking about '94 now. But before that even, let's even go back a little into the late '80s. There change was, people were talking about change, but they don't know when it was going to happen.

Look, there was freedom of expression, but it was limited. I will give you an example. Oliver Tambo was in exile in the UK. Tony Heard was the editor of the *Cape Times*. I am talking now about the late '70s, early '80s. He went and he did an interview with Oliver Tambo in London. His mother had to have an operation and he went there. And then Donald Woods arranged for him to do this interview. Tony came back, consulted with people, and at that time the law said you could not quote a banned person in any newspaper, literature. They would ban the book if he was quoted in there. So Tony knew what the situation was. A very brave thing he did. When he came back two days later, he published the whole question-answer interview verbatim. In the *Cape Times*. The English morning daily newspaper.

He knew that he is going to be in trouble, and he knew under the law there was freedom of expression, but let's say limited freedom of expression. The next day, the security police came to

interrogate him, and Tony was arrested and he was kicked out of the paper because you know the editorial board of the owners were still very conservative. And he as an editor was a protégé of Donald Woods, who was very liberal. But he knew what he was doing.

Q: Is that the worst thing that happened to him?

SASSMAN: Yes. Because he had to freelance to survive.

Q: So he has a wife and lost his job. Steve Biko was beaten to death. There is a difference there.

SASSMAN: So and then he came back. So he became the speechwriter for Kader Asmal, who was the minister of education, and then Kader became minister of water affairs, and he took Tony over with him.

Q: This was after Mandela became president?

SASSMAN: Yeah, in the new regime.

Q: Kader Asmal, an important name that we'll be referring to because he had various portfolios.

SASSMAN: Yeah, he was Chairman of the National Executive Committee of the ANC which was crucial as far as governing and deciding policy.

Q: At the early stage, but later became a member of government.

SASSMAN: He was a minister of education and a member of parliament, then he became minister of water affairs. He is also a constitutional expert.

Q: Deval Patrick came in about '96, when he was working as a Clinton prosecutor.

SASSMAN: Deputy Attorney General. I first thought of Deval Patrick in I think the mid-'90s. It was during a time when we were preparing for a Black History Month program. I normally, as part of the Black History Month program, through electronic dialogue with an appropriate specialist in the United States... I saw Time Magazine, and I think Deval was on the cover of Time Magazine. I had no knowledge of him. When I read about the man, I thought I would like to include him through USIA as a panelist on the U.S. side for this electronic dialogue. I successfully recruited Deval Patrick through USIA for the February Black History Month program. He was our panelist for the U.S. side.

Q: Electronic.

SASSMAN: Yeah. And his presentation really impressed not only me, but also my American counterparts and South Africans. Immediately myself and the BPAO spoke and I said, "Look, I would like to include him as an American Participant to physically come out to South Africa." My branch public affairs officer at USIS agreed, and we contacted our Pretoria officer, who also

agreed. Deval Patrick came out as an American Participant. I programmed him to do a roundtable discussion. It was on civil right legislation. One of my one-on-one appointments that I set up for him was with the minister of justice.

Q: Dullah Omar.

SASSMAN: Minister Dullah Omar, in 120 Plein Street, which is the parliamentary building housing all the ministers for the various portfolios. The minister of justice was very impressed with Deval, who had the experience of monitoring and seeing to the implementation of civil rights legislation in the Americans with Disabilities Act in the office of the attorney general at that time. When Deval Patrick left the room to tend to something, while he was gone, the minister of justice gave a nod and said, "We need this guy, and you guys must try and bring him out here again." We came back, and the minister was then telling Deval Patrick that with the change from the white government to a black government, the white government at the time was scared that the black minister of justice was now going to get at people implemented by their policies.

Q: Retribution.

SASSMAN: Yeah. So he said to Deval, "We have to put in place a mechanism that will prevent this before the change of the new government, the ANC government."

We had four provinces and each province had a white attorney general. The old regime, the Nationalist Party regime, gave *carte blanche* powers to these four attorneys general to decide who has to be prosecuted. So they had yea or nay as far as prosecution.

Q: These were white attorneys general from the previous regime.

SASSMAN: From the previous regime, who headed the four provinces that we had at that time. So the minister of justice's problem was, he said that if these four attorneys general refused to prosecute a particular person, hypothetically let's say a person who was involved in the apartheid regime, then Dullah, if he wanted that person prosecuted, had to overrule and interfere. Then they accused the minister of interfering in the autonomy of the judiciary.

So Dullah said to Deval, "That is my problem. I don't want to interfere." So Deval said to him, "That can be overcome. Why don't you make a political appointee and appoint a super attorney general who can overrule these four attorneys general? You as minister won't have to interfere." That is how the National Prosecuting Authority came into power. Dullah asked Deval, "Will you help us with the legislation?" Deval said, "It is dependent on Frank's organization." I went in and, through my Cape Town office and Pretoria, requested that we bring out Deval Patrick to help the minister of justice with this legislation for the super attorney general, now called the National Prosecuting Authority. Then I did a program for....

Q: Was this an administrative change in the ministry, or was it a judicial change, the creation of this post?

SASSMAN: No, it was the minister of justice asking or drafting legislation to be tabled in parliament that we now create an office. He saw it as a way of taking the *carte blanche* powers away from the attorneys general. You don't even hear about them now. It is just the National Prosecuting Authority. So then we went in and requested through Cape Town, USIS, and Pretoria, and it was arranged that Deval was coming out. In the interim, I was called by Barney Pityana, who was at that time Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission.

Q: And Barney Pityana stepped in.

SASSMAN: And then Barney Pityana must have heard from Dullah, so he called me and asked if they could also meet with the Human Rights Commission to look at drafting anti-discrimination legislation, which he agreed to. So he [Deval Patrick] came out for two or three weeks to work with the minister of justice, to also work with the Human Rights Commission, and I think there was another body that they worked with. That was Deval Patrick's contribution to anti-discrimination legislation, and also the creation of the National Prosecuting Authority position.

Q: He created it? Or the thought of the idea?

SASSMAN: He worked it out. He actually suggested that.

Q: Okay, there was the super attorney general, there was the anti discrimination legislation, Barney Pityana, Human Rights Commission, disability legislation, and there may have been other things. Okay and continuing, Deval Patrick worked on another area in addition to anti-discrimination legislation. He also drafted his version of what he thought should be an affirmative action plan. Now what came of that?

SASSMAN: Now with Terror ["Terror" because of his skills in football/soccer offense] Lekota, the former minister of defense, breaking away from the ANC and forming a new organization, COPE, Congress of the People, which has become the significant opposition to the ANC. The ANC will still win the election, but they are going to lose a lot of votes to COPE.

SASSMAN: Right, and what is significant about Terror Lekota is he is agreeing with what Deval said in that paper or what he wrote on affirmative action, his suggestions on affirmative action. Terror Lekota in actual fact is agreeing with that, and he is saying that the implementation of our present affirmative action program, he questions that. He says that it is not only the blacks who have been disadvantaged; there are other minority groups that have been disadvantaged, and they should have another look at the affirmative action program. I think it is important that Deval should know about this.

Q: What was it about Deval's plan which Lekota believes has been set aside? Deval made some proposals to the ANC in about 1996 or 1997, something like that. The ANC took part but not all of his suggestions. Now Lekota is saying the ANC has put the emphasis on the wrong side.

SASSMAN: Yeah. Lekota is saying that the affirmative action is too black. That thing of quotas, which Deval also challenged in his suggestions. I think it is important that maybe Deval should

get in touch with Terror.

Q: Deval is a little busy these days, as he is governor of Massachusetts.

SASSMAN: And Terror is equally busy as head of his party.

Q: We could arrange an electronic dialogue.

SASSMAN: Exactly, why don't we do it? Let's do some programming right now. You know, Dan, I say I could see a program miles away. But my wife always checked me. I was too busy. Because I couldn't help it. As I worked I could just see programs.

Q: That is like seeing ghosts or hallucinations that are just there. That is something marvelous. Now what do you think are the chances of COPE?

SASSMAN: COPE is not going to oust the ANC, but they are setting people thinking. Terror is heating this thing on the high moral ground. I mean they chose the guy who was the president of the Methodist Church in South Africa, a clean guy coming with no baggage to be president, the elected president of COPE. He is also saying that if anybody messes up, does something wrong, "Go clear yourself in the court. We are not going to protect you as COPE because you are a COPE member," like the ANC is doing all the time, right? Like look at this young ANC Youth League guy [Julius Malema] saying the courts mustn't do the wrong thing with the President Zuma. Now this is not respecting...

Q: Political interference in the judicial process. Tell me about that.

SASSMAN: Yeah, there is a lot of that by the Zuma camp. They sort of interfered. It was political interference where the Chairperson of the National Prosecuting Authority, Pikoli.

Q: Now the super...

SASSMAN: Well, he is the suspended director of the National Prosecuting Authority. He is adamant that Zuma, the president of the ANC, should be prosecuted for corruption charges. Because of that they suspended him. They found trumped up charges against him and suspended him.

Q: The party.

SASSMAN: The party, the ANC.

Q: Wait. How can a party displace the head of a judicial system?

SASSMAN: Wait, let me explain to you. At the time this came up, the acting president of the ANC was [Kgalema] Motlanthe. Then he became president. According to him, which Pikoli and the NPA challenges, Motlanthe says he has got the right to sack Pikoli. Pikoli says he doesn't

have that right.

Q: So Motlanthe did this.

SASSMAN: Motlanthe suspended him. And he is saying to Motlanthe, “Before you sack me, postpone the appointment of the new NPA director. Give me a chance to prove my innocence.” The process was that parliament appointed a commission of inquiry into the suspension of the National Prosecuting Authority’s director, Pikoli. So Frene Ginwala, I think you remember, she was the speaker of parliament. Frene was the chair of that commission, and she recommended that she didn’t see this man doing anything wrong, and his job should be given back. So then Motlanthe overruled them. I believe that as president, he has the right to overrule the verdict of a commission of inquiry appointed by parliament.

Q: But he did so.

SASSMAN: He did that. So now he is on the verge of Pikoli being sacked, and he is going to appoint a new director. Now if he appoints the new director, it is going to be a Zuma man. What if he drops the charges? Can you imagine what the Western world is going to say? Because there are about 17 or 20 charges of corruption against Zuma.

Q: And rape. I don’t know if that had been settled.

SASSMAN: Well the rape thing, he was acquitted on that.

Q: So what you are saying really is that Motlanthe is a Zuma person.

SASSMAN: Yeah, his deputy. You see Zuma chose him because Zuma is not an intellectual. Motlanthe is the brains. That is why Zuma is very shrewd. He gave Motlanthe the caretaker position so he can have time to focus on his corruption charges.

Q: This is the new head of the ANC after the tumultuous meetings of a year ago. And then he appointed Motlanthe president.

SASSMAN: Yeah, he appointed him as president of the country because he wanted time to get his corruption charges sorted out. Also, if Motlanthe is president, caretaker president now, it is obvious Zuma will become the president for the full election term.

Q: Okay, now this is all possible because Mbeki resigned.

SASSMAN: They kicked him out; he didn’t resign. They forced the issue.

Q: Okay, leaving a vacuum which was filled with the Zuma-Motlanthe group.

SASSMAN: Yeah, so Motlanthe is now president, but only for eight months because there is an election. April 22 is the election. So then his term expires.

Q: But meanwhile Zuma has been able to get Motlanthe to suspend a judge who was going after Zuma.

SASSMAN: No, to suspend the director of the National Prosecuting Authority.

Q: You said to repeat the importance of Deval Patrick's legacy in the COPE program.

SASSMAN: Yeah, when Deval Patrick was asked to suggest legislation referring to affirmative action, he made suggestions on that. He was not happy with the way it was implemented: what they finally came up with, what the ANC and the government finally came up with. Now, at the moment, the deputy head of COPE is also not happy with the implementation of the affirmative action program policies.

Q: Okay, now I take it that he has reached this conclusion independently.

SASSMAN: Yeah, the program is in operation now for how many years? Plus-minus 10 years. He is saying, no, he is not happy, because the black is not the only minority group or disadvantaged group in this country. There are other minorities who are also disadvantaged and should be part of the affirmative action program. He includes the white Afrikaner who is also a minority. I was quite impressed, and seeing he and Deval Patrick as maybe seeing eye to eye. They are both in opposition to the current policy as implemented on affirmative action. And Mbeki saying maybe they should get together. Because Terror is saying very interesting things. He says, "Freedom songs: why do we only have Xhosa freedom songs? The diversity of our societal structure must be reflected in our freedom songs. This should be a free country. We have 11 official languages." This is why the white Afrikaners are liking Terror.

You see the ANC, every time something as the COPE does something, the ANC challenges, or they have got to find a way to try to stop it. Now if COPE is not a threat to them, why are they going this route? Terror is saying things which people who are not black-black want to hear. And now he has got Boesak, okay, Allan Boesak. His name was tarnished by the fraud charges again. What happened with Boesak, Boesak was head of the Institute for Social Justice, right? Boesak got a lot of money from the Danes, the Scandinavians, to fight political trials of activists.

Q: Back in the Struggle period.

SASSMAN: In the Struggle period. Now when he did that, that was the time when the South African government wanted to pause the foreign funding. It was when most of the money for that kind of activity came from outside the country. And the government wanted to control this by saying that money should come through them. Now I was with an organization at that time, the Weinberg Crisis. We couldn't have a banking account because we also helped with political trials, and the money came and you couldn't put it in the bank. When I took the chair then I got scared of this. I would say, "How do you vindicate yourself when it comes to accounting? Because you haven't got a bank account to put the money in the bank because you don't want the government..." Now I know what we did and what Allan must have done is, if he gives money

for the trial of Dan Whitman, who is a political activist...

Q: Guilty!

SASSMAN: No, he gives the money and what happens? He puts down that he bought curtains for the offices. You understand. That will pass with the government. But he can't say 25,000 went for the defense of Dan Whitman, a political activist who was accused. So that is what they called "Struggle bookkeeping."

I got scared when I was chair because we kept the money for our organization in the safe of one of the executive members of Weinberg Crisis, who was the owner of the Laxerama Cinemas in Weinberg. The money was just put in it. It just disappeared. Now you get worried, you know, do you want to be involved in that? I am not saying Allan is as pure as silk, you know. But I am saying you have got to take cognizance of those things, you know. It was a time of struggle.

Then there were other problems. The other problem was, because the overseas funders were concerned, "Is my money going to reach the intended destination?" What they did again was they assigned conduits in South Africa. The conduit's role was, like Mavis Taylor who was in theater, she was an icon in theater. They would send the money to Mavis Taylor. They would send a check for 500,000. In another correspondence they would say, "Mavis, 500,000 is coming. Or 100,000 for X organization. B must get 10,000."

Q: Pass-through organization.

SASSMAN: Right. Now some people who were conduits were playing the waiting game, saying, "The check is in the post." If they get that money, they couldn't put it into a bank account because it is a check for 500,000, but it has got to go to eight or ten organizations. Now if they leave that 500,000 in the bank for three months.

Q: To get interest.

SASSMAN: It is a lot of money. What happens to the interest? It is all question marks. Then you find every time you say, "I am still waiting for the check." Then when you finally pay out the 500,000, what happens to the interest?

Q: You keep it.

SASSMAN: You know, I am just saying that is not an easy cut and dry thing. Now Allan also did something that I wouldn't see as fraud, but in economic circles it is seen as fraud. I am a donor, and I give you half a million to buy tapes for voting education. Now if you want to do something else with that money, you owe it to me as a donor to come to me and say, "Frank, I had a rethink. I think it is better if we buy a couple of video cameras and we make tapes. The money will go much further, and I set up a little studio, you know."

Q: It is called reprogramming.

SASSMAN: Right. Now, without consulting the donor, it can be seen as fraud by people. Allan did that with voting education. Apparently it was something his wife was running, the studio. In other words, he still used the money for that, but it was not as originally intended. So that is the kind of thing. So I say the thing with Allan, he served his time. He was pardoned. I take that with a pinch of salt. So now Allan spoke at the Ashley Kriel Lecture at the University of the Western Cape. This was the other Allan, who is actually to the left of the ANC now. And there Allan made his comeback. He criticized and tore the ANC to pieces. And COPE included him as their main candidate for the premiership in the Western Cape. Every province had a premier. Allan is a damn good orator. He can sway an audience. Who is the ANC going to put up against Allan Boesak in the Western Cape?

Q: Okay, so Boesak went through this difficult period. You say he was judged and went to jail.

SASSMAN: Went to jail. He finished the sentence and then he got a pardon from the ministry of justice.

Q: He got a pardon retroactively?

SASSMAN: Yeah, cleared his name. They took the charge away. He is out to make a point with the ANC because he feels the ANC deserted him when he needed them. So this is a strong point in COPE's favor. You see, the ANC has never won the Western Cape in an election. As I told you, the government scared the coloreds with the communists.

Q: What was it that the old government did to convince Cape coloreds to vote against the ANC?

SASSMAN: The surprise of the first democratic election in the country, with regard to the results of the election in the Western Cape, was that the majority of the colored—the colored is in the majority ethnic group in the Western Cape—voted for the oppressor, the former oppressor, the Nationalist Party. I tried to figure out what was it that brought this about. In trying to analyze this, I realized that the Nationalist Party knew the colored voter, or the colored person, much better than anybody else. And they knew that with the so-called colored, the religion was crucial in their lives. The poorer the person, the closer the person lives to that where his religion is.

When the Nationalist Party studied the less proportional representation less for the ANC, they saw that the first 50 members were members of the Communist Party, or had communist leanings. In their campaign speaking to the coloreds, they said, "Do you know that the first 50 members of the ANC proportional list are either communist or have strong communist leanings? Do you know what is going to happen to your church? The communists are not religious or churchgoing." This, I think, was the thing that swung the colored voters to vote for the former oppressor. I can't think of anything else.

Q: Could you also explain the importance of these lists, because it is a different system from the one we know in the U.S.: the proportional lists.

SASSMAN: With a proportional representation voting process, what happens is each party gives a list in priority order, like in the case of the national vote for the National Assembly. There are 400 members in the National Assembly. Each party will submit a list of 400 members that if they win the election, then they look at what percentage of the electorate voted for that particular party. If it happens to be the ANC and 60 percent of the electorate voted for the ANC, 60 percent of the 400 members for the National Assembly in parliament will be ANC members.

Q: This would be determined by their priority ranking. As determined by the party, not by the voters.

SASSMAN: Yeah. The party will draw up the list and the party will do the ranking.

Q: That is why the Nationalist strategy of actually truthfully saying that the top 50 people on the list. This would have been in 1994 I believe.

SASSMAN: Yeah, will go into parliament.

Q: Would be the type of political ideology that would not favor the church? Now building on that then: COPE. Do I understand that you are saying COPE can actually have a chance of ruling the Western Cape in the next election because the ANC never did?

SASSMAN: Yeah, you see the ANC never won the majority vote in the provincial vote. There are three votes, the local government, the provincial, and the national. Now in the provincial vote, they never won the Western Cape. That is why the smaller parties, the DA is the main opposition, Freedom Front, all the other parties, they form an alliance. And because the ANC did not get an overwhelming majority, as they got in the other provinces, when the opposition formed an alliance, they were the majority. So they were...

Q: Now getting back to Boesak. You are saying that COPE has recognized in Boesak an orator, a person of star appeal. His name has been cleared, and it is COPE who went after Boesak to say, "Will you be our candidate for the Western Cape?"

SASSMAN: COPE put the suggestion to him, and a day or two ago, he accepted that he will run. He will be their candidate.

Q: So this is going to be very interesting.

SASSMAN: If COPE got enough votes, and they formed an alliance, then they have more votes than the ANC and they become the government of the day.

Q: You could have Boesak as a major political leader in this part of the country.

SASSMAN: Yeah, he will be premier.

Q: Taking with him the ideas about affirmative action that seem to coincide with speaker Deval

Patrick.

SASSMAN: Yeah, look, if COPE becomes the main force in the alliance, then Terror is going to come with his policy on affirmative action, which is contrary to the ANC's national policy. The other thing, you know, like the BEE, Black Economic Empowerment. Now that is another affirmative action program where you empower blacks economically. Now they say you can form BEE companies, but if you form a BEE company, it is going to be shared and open. People own shares. The idea of BEE is to empower the black person in the street to hold shares in a fairly large company. Now with BEE policy what should be done, they say that 50 percent of the shareholders in a BEE company should be the person in the street who has two, five, or six thousand he wants to invest in shares.

Q: Small investors.

SASSMAN: 80 percent of them should be small investors, the person in the street.

Q: Is there any rule about this?

SASSMAN: This is the policy. Twenty percent can be the guys who can put in 41 million. The big guys, but only 20 percent, so that the small shareholder controls the company. Now they found that it is the other way around. The Franklin Sonns, the big guys who have the money, they hold 80 percent of the shares and only 20 percent are owned by small investors. So the big guys are controlling the company. There is now the Chapman's Peak plaza, the tall gates. That is owned by a BEE company where the majority of the shares are owned by the big guys. The small investor only owns 40 or 50 percent. So the law is one thing, but the implementation or the practical side of business is different.

This is also something that Terror is speaking about. So there are a lot of things that he is saying that are... And you know the Afrikaners in the rural areas are packing COPE meetings, okay. Terror is saying things that they want to hear all the time.

Q: So Lekota is saying that the ANC has turned away from the original ANC principles.

SASSMAN: Yeah. That is a problem with the proportional representation system. First of all, the people are not involved in the election of the president. And that is so. You vote for a party; you don't vote for an individual in both national and provincial legislatures. There is not "Dan Whitman, candidate for ward 10." The only place that is taking place is in local government elections where you have some of the candidates being elected on the party system and most being elected on the ward candidacy. Now Terror is challenging that. He is saying that you must vote for a candidate, not a party. So, in other words, he is saying that the proportional representational system must be constituency-linked. Because what happens with proportional representation is that you vote for a party. You don't vote for a candidate.

Q: So he is talking about major constitutional change.

SASSMAN: There has got to be constitutional change because, you see, if you vote for the party, then who wins? The members are in parliament, the list has been submitted, and those 200 or 300 or 100 members. Then the party sets and the party says, "Okay, now Dan Whitman lives in Pretoria, but he can be the party for Wooster. Nobody knows Dan Whitman."

Q: We have been talking about the South African system. We have gone way away from the activities of the consulate and U.S. Information Agency, which is great. We have an analysis of today's South Africa. I mean today. We are talking about something that happened two or three days ago in February 2009. So we are looking again retrospectively at the context. We still want to talk about you.

SASSMAN: Okay, things that I did with USIS in my last years of employment were primarily to use the exchange programs of USIS from the U.S. to South Africa, to use that to share the U.S. experience with appropriate South African institutions. That involved primarily working with the various parliamentary portfolio committees. Of course, under the new administration, in parliament, the portfolio committees became the engine of parliament. The National Assembly was merely an institution where they rubber stamped issues. But the real fighting took place in the portfolio committees, and that is where you had consociational democracy. Each portfolio committee was comprised of 22 members of parliament from the different parties, depending on the percentage vote that party obtained in the election. Say for instance the ANC obtained 60 percent, then 60 percent of that particular portfolio committee's members would be ANC members. The DA obtained 20 percent, then 20 percent of the 22 members of that portfolio committee would be DA. Before that bill was being tabled... now in South African terms, if you talk about the bill being tabled, the bill is submitted into parliament. I think in the American sense, when you talk about the bill being tabled, that is put somewhere.

Q: The analogy in the U.S. would be a bill going to committee where the details are worked out, and then it goes to the vote. Whereas the discussion is less lengthy.

SASSMAN: The bill goes to the portfolio committee, if it is bill on justice it will go to the portfolio committee on justice, and that is where the real fighting and horse trading takes place. Because it is based on consensual consociational democracy, there has got to be consensus before it goes to the National Assembly, where it is rubber stamped.

Q: We are talking about the PPC, parliamentary portfolio committee.

SASSMAN: Yeah, it has got to go through the Council of Provinces, which used to be the old Senate. Now those are the provincial legislatures debating that particular bill. So I did a lot with those committees where I would bring American Participants and other specialists to work with the portfolio committees and in parliament to assist in the drafting of legislation for our constitution.

Q: And of course parliament being in Cape Town and the executive branch being in Pretoria, that is oversimplifying it, but the importance of Cape Town is the parliament.

SASSMAN: It is the only place where also all the media representatives of all the media outlets internationally will be. You will find everybody in Cape Town at one time. Because of parliament being here, we have all the MPs together in one spot and we have all the media representatives together in one spot.

Q: Now, so your work with these parliamentary portfolio committees was very formative in resulting in the system as it is now in 2009. A lot of it was actually created in the 1990s when you were right there.

SASSMAN: Look, since I was the programmer with USIS Cape Town working with parliament, I would all the time be programming. I can mention, as I mentioned to Dan, when the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Arts, Culture, Science and Technology was grappling with legislation pertaining to intellectual property rights, they had nobody to guide them. They didn't have anybody with expertise in the field. Our agency in Washington, USIA, sent us a cable offering us an import who was a specialist in intellectual property rights, who did extensive work with the indigenous people in the Amazon jungle and South America. I think my director in Cape Town requested that.

I contacted the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology, whose portfolio had been to draft legislation in that field of intellectual property rights. I went to consult the chairperson, and he said, "Man that is gold; bring him. Bring him for two weeks." I went to Washington and they successfully recruited this person to come, and for two weeks he worked with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology, and successfully drafted the legislation for intellectual property rights. It is not only these fields, but also many other fields, like public administration. We successfully recruited a specialist to come in and speak to the U.S. government's public administration program. Because we recruited somebody who was both a practitioner and an academic in the field, he turned out to be the best contributor. They wanted him back to work with the provinces.

Q: So you saw a number of times somebody would come either through an electronic dialogue or physically come and then the people who needed this information implored you to bring the person back –

SASSMAN: Implored me through my office in Pretoria to bring the person back. That is important. I couldn't decide to bring him back alone. But they really appreciated it.

Q: Think of some other areas where you spent time. You said IPR, public administration. I am sure there are many others, public health maybe?

SASSMAN: Yeah, wait. Forensic nursing. I don't know if you remember exactly, and I was involved with that.

Remember Deval Patrick called me and said, "Frank, I have got 12 law graduates, and they have done their law degree at Harvard and they want to do something for South Africa. Is there

anything you can do, that you can link them up with?” So I said, “Deval, as you know our legislators do not have staff at that time, and they don’t have money to pay for the staff.” So he said, “No, they don’t want to be remunerated. They will come at their cost.” So I went to the chair and the deputy chair of the parliamentary portfolio committee. Both of them had met Deval because he met with their committee.

I said to them, “Look, Deval has got 12 students that he wants to bring out here to do research for legislators in South Africa.” Willie Hoffmeyer, who is now head of the Asset Forfeiture Unit, was the Deputy Chair. He said, “Bring them.” I said, “You must find accommodations for them.” He said, “No problem.” They brought them out, the 12 graduates. These young people saw that Willie Hoffmeyer, and then the committee, was grappling with legislation to fight organized crime. So they made the suggestion to Willie and said, “Look, used tax evasion as an excuse because that is how we got Al Capone.”

Q: The students.

SASSMAN: And then they went around and there they had the asset forfeiture legislation, where if you were found to be doing illegal things, they confiscate your assets and they sell them and use it to fight crime. So then when that program ended, Willie came to me and he said, “Frank, ask Deval if he can get more.” And they brought the second batch out. A lot of people don’t know this, but you concur with me that Deval did a lot for this country.

Q: You had this rich network of Americans who come here and had done things thanks to your logistics and knowledge of contacts. So you benefited from this.

SASSMAN: Yeah, it is a network bar none that you have in the States. You know, I started a tour of Cape Town but it was a flip side of the tourist elite. Everybody who came wanted to know about the Group Areas. They wanted to know about the different levels of housing in the Western Cape. I designed a tour about an hour or hour and a half. I can move it to an hour or I can take it to an hour and a half. I could then take people. The embassy would call me and it became a must see.

Q: So you did this on the side?

SASSMAN: What I did was I showed people the different Group Areas and the inequalities within those Group Areas. Blacks have the worst, colored slightly better, Indians better, and whites the best. On the other side of the tracks, there was the colored or black area. When I finished they said, “Man, now I understand the Group Areas,” because I showed them the different levels of housing: shack dweller, the municipal rented cottage, the spec housing and then the elite, such as Bishop’s Corner and those areas. I showed them the Indian areas, the colored areas, and the black areas.

That tour became so popular that I had a call from Walter Cronkite. I was still at USIS. I said, “Hello,” and my director, I don’t know who it was at the time, was in the office with me. I said, “Yes, Mr. Cronkite.” He said, “Which Cronkite? The only Cronkite I know is Walter Cronkite.”

“This is the man,” I said. And he said, “Frank, you are beautiful.” He starts talking. So he said that a Congressman who I had taken on the tour with a Congressional Delegation told him, “If you ever get to Cape Town, get to Frank Sassman. This man spoke so highly that I must get to you. Can you do the tour?” “For you, I will do it any time.” I took him, you know, and he said, “Frank, you are going to get a lot of Americans coming here, because I am going to start talking about this tour that shows the draconic and heinousness of this stupid policy.”

Q: Cronkite said this?

SASSMAN: Yeah, Cronkite said this.

Q: Was he here on business, on vacation?

SASSMAN: They were going to open up an office here. They were going to put a rep here. Then he came to negotiate with the government. This person, the Congressman, told him about me, and then he said he must get to Cape Town. So I took many. I took Congressional delegations on this. They just raved about it. So many people that my one director said, “Frank, you must stop doing these tours. It is taking up too much of your time.” So I said, “No. What was I doing, when was I talked to about this?” He says, “Talk to the ambassador.” I said, “Then what if he asks who told me to speak to you?” “Don’t tell him I said so.” I said, “No, can I go make decisions myself?” “No, you are going to talk to the ambassador. So I think you just better continue.” “How can I tell the boss of the mission that, ‘No, I don’t want to do it?’”

Q: In other words, the Ambassador of course had a high interest in CODELs [Congressional delegations] and VIP visitors, and he knew that you were showing these VIPs the things that they wanted to see.

SASSMAN: And you don’t see that on the tours of the tourist organization.

Q: So for the PAO, looking at his time management, it didn’t make sense. But coming from the ambassador himself, the priority was clear that we needed Frank Sassman to show things.

SASSMAN: I said to him, “I have got to listen to the ambassador. He rules over you.” You know the ambassador would come and he’d say, “Frank, what are you doing today? Are you free at lunchtime?” I say, “Why?” He said, “For lunch.” I would tap my brain, you see, for an instant. Now I can’t tell the man no. I go to lunch. Now he goes out about 75 kilometers outside of town, and he sits and we chat, and I get back to the office about quarter to four. Oh he’s mad. “Look Frank. I am not hitting at you but this thing must stop. I cannot afford the ambassador’s...” I said, “Are you going to tell him?” I always put that. He said, “No, Frank, you got to.” I say, “I can’t tell the man that. He is the boss of the mission. You must talk to him.” And that is the end of the story. But they know if you know your area and you can advise them on things, then they come back to you every time.

Q: What sorts of things did the Ambassador want to know from you?

SASSMAN: Well, it was like there was a time when the leader of the opposition and his main deputy, this is Van Zyl Slabbert, who was the head of the PFP at the time, and Alex Boraine, you know. Alex Boraine was number two on the Truth Commission. They resigned from parliament and they started IDASA, the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa. When Van Zyl spoke to say why he left parliament, he says, "The last four major pieces of legislation were passed outside parliament. So the National Assembly has become a rubber stamp, and politics is all extra-parliamentary. I am leaving because I think I can be more effective with an organization like IDASA than I am in parliament now." If you look at IDASA, it was IDASA who brought the ANC together with the South African government.

Q: It was a secret meeting.

SASSMAN: And before that, the ANC was seen as murderers and terrorists. It was the image the South African government was portraying, communist, you know, of the ANC leadership.

Q: So this is a tribute to IDASA that ...

SASSMAN: Yeah. And you see they are not getting the credit for their contribution to social change in this country.

Q: In fact, IDASA had something to do with peace in Northern Ireland, I think. Now the point was, "Oh, so this is the type of information that you received." You were the early warning system for the embassy. You knew Slabbert; you know Boraine. Some ambassadors were smart enough to come to you to get their information.

SASSMAN: Yeah that happens; they come and tap your brain. What is the rationale behind this type of thing? Then I can tell them what I told you, that these guys say IDASA is moving extra-parliamentary, and they feel more effective, as was proven, by being extra-parliamentary and playing the role they played with IDASA.

Q: Now this puts you in an awkward situation because you had ambassadors, the highest level of U.S. diplomatic presence, coming to you directly, going around the DCM, around the political officer, around the public affairs officer, and people have egos.

SASSMAN: Yeah, and sometimes it would happen where they would do it to the BPAO, but sometimes like DCMs, he would just walk into my office and start talking, you know.

Q: Did this cause any problem?

SASSMAN: Somebody told me twice that I must say no. But I put it back in his court by saying, "If you tell me to tell him, I will tell you no I am not telling him. No, I won't, and I can't speak to the man". But not all of them like the political appointees. I never had that kind of contact. But it was the career officers, Princeton Lyman, Bill Edmonson, these guys and Ed Perkins.

You see, so there was a closer link because I know that your career officers, they knew what role

the FSN plays in the mission. They always use that. But I will tell you about one political officer. I am not going to mention his name. I was at UCT, we had a seminar there with a Congressperson. We were having press men on this junket. Then press would always come to me and say, "Frank, who is that?" Then guys would come and consult me. This person, I can't remember his name but in any case.

Q: Just as well.

SASSMAN: He comes to a friend of mine who is an academic that he knew, David Wells, and he says to David, "Who is this guy everybody is consulting with?" So David said, "You don't know him? He is your senior South African." That guy's face, David said, he could have dropped dead there.

Q: The ambassador did not even know who you were.

SASSMAN: No, and he was there a couple of months. He wasn't new. He was there a couple of months, but he didn't know I was the senior USIS guy that he should be consulting.

Q: So would you say that in general or all the time, professional ambassadors consulted you; political ambassadors tended not to?

SASSMAN: Very seldom. I would say some not at all, others very seldom, but the consultation was stronger with the Princeton Lyman the Bill Edmonsons, the Ed Perkins you know, who even today extend where they sometimes want me to look at guest lists that they have to seat at dinners. I was on leave I remember, and I came back, and at that time Jimmy was the minister of justice. The guy was famous for saying, "Because death leaves me cold." He was the minister who detained Biko, and in whose era he was killed. Biko is dead.

Now then the ambassador at that time, I think it was Bill Edmonson, he sent over the guest list that I must look at it the way they have seated people. It was a dinner for him. There was a community activist, Ronald Roberts, who was detained without trial for 85 days by Jimmy Krueger, the minister of justice. They had Ronald sitting opposite Krueger at the dinner table. I told the ambassador this. He called in the protocol person and said, "Why was this thing not sent to Frank? I just heard he is back from leave and just sent it over. Can you think how Ronald would have walked out? I mean this is the man who detained him for nonsense for 85 days!" That time it was 90 days for detention without trial. So before bringing him to court, they can keep him for 90 days. Then they must charge him. So things like that, that is why I found the career officers of the professional ambassadors really knew what role the FSNs were playing.

Q: South Africa is unique in so many ways. One of the unique things is that you will always have a political ambassador to France, to the UK, maybe Germany, not always. But in South Africa it can go either way. This is almost 50-50. You never can tell.

SASSMAN: No, as I said, there was consultation, but the most consultation was with the career officers. But the political ones some. A fair amount, most of them minimal. That is what I

experienced.

Q: Now some of these people who took these positions were international visitors nominated by you Frank. Can you give us just a sampling of who some of these people are?

SASSMAN: Yeah, the prominent ones that come to mind are Phumzile Mlambo-Ncguka. Phumzile I met in the '80s when she was a community worker with the Western Province Council of Churches.

Q: I believe there is a community worker in the United States who is now our president. So this is a position of great importance.

SASSMAN: Great importance, yeah. So it has developed into that. In the 2000s, she became the deputy president of South Africa to Thabo Mbeki. Another person who comes to mind is Membathisi Mdladlana. He was the head of SADTU. That stands for South African Democratic Teacher's Union, a trade union for teachers. He was nominated when he was head of SADTU. When he came back, he was appointed as minister of labor. But before that, President Mandela approached him to sort out the drafting of the constitution for the chapter of the bill of rights in our constitution. He is still today the minister of labor. Another person that comes to mind is Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge. When I met her, she was the deputy minister of defense in the South African cabinet. I nominated her, and she went on a high leave. When she came back, she became the deputy minister of health and subsequent to that her position, which she holds now, was the deputy speaker of parliament.

The other person that comes to mind is Naledi Pandor. When I first met her in the '80s, she was the number two in charge of the bridging program at the University of Cape Town. Now they needed this bridging program because, as you know, in the apartheid years, we had seven departments of education, separate departments of education, and they were not, the one was not equal to the other. Bantu education which was the worse one was the one that needed bridging programs to bring them to the level of the education at this white university.

Q: And many dozens of others. This gives a sense. Now when you say you met them, tell us a bit what was the type of connection you had? You made yesterday the distinction between friend and contact.

SASSMAN: Well you know, as programmers, we would always be accompanying our American counterparts, going out to programs in the townships, in the community. It would be a matter of meeting them out in their environment where they are operating, or it can be where we invite them to programs we set up at the American Center. They would then come, and in that way, it would be a new contact and we would meet. And by interacting with them, that is the way we get to know this person and identify their leadership qualities and then nominate them for the U.S. government ...

Q: Tell me about the difference in the quality of this contact between an FSN and an American officer with this type of contact.

SASSMAN: Well, the FSN would always, in eight out of ten cases, know this person, might also even be a friend, not just a professional contact, whereas the American would be dependent on the FSN introducing him or her to this particular contact. We have to exercise the judgment and decision making if this is someone we might groom or get to know better, so that we can nominate them for the exchange program.

Q: Isn't there also a factor of when you live here you know a person for many years, whereas if you are assigned here for three years there is a limit to the amount of time?

SASSMAN: Yeah, and the other big thing is that as the FSN, you knew the corporate memory and you provide the continuity. The other thing that I always said to people in my case: I worked for 29 years for the U.S. Information Service, and in that 29 years I worked maybe with say nine BPAOs. So in time you find that I have the expertise of nine individuals, and when I am working with the BPAO, he has only his own expertise. So you have got to do a very light shuffle, you know, when you sort of play this game. Some American officers would capitalize on that saying, "You move, I decide on policy. You can do the work." Others would try and be above you, and they could never do that.

Q: Different styles. You have seen them all. Now yesterday, Frank, we were talking about your strategy. Your daily survival tactics when apartheid was still the system. How you went about the country. Officially it did not have access because in your documents you were not white. So tell us about your survival tactics.

SASSMAN: Survival strategies, yeah. Maybe I should first start off by saying the most heinous and draconian apartheid legislation, piece of legislation was the Group Areas Act. It required that, in every sphere of South African life, ethnic groups must be separated. Now if you think, for instance, we get a lot of American Participants coming here, and we have to get hotel accommodations for them So we can start there. People of different ethnic groups couldn't stay in the same hotel. Most hotels were for whites only. There were very, I would say, not-so-good hotels that were for people who were not white.

But now I had a strategy where if I book the hotel, I just do a booking for Sassman and the American Participants. But when we actually go and take up the accommodation, I have to be very subtle. If I say to the person behind the counter, "Can I stay at this hotel?" They by law have to tell me, "No, this hotel is for whites only." I will have a problem. So my strategy was I would just go up to the counter, the reception desk, and say, "You have a booking for Whitman and Sassman." Now it is more difficult because I pass the onus to the person behind the desk to now tell me, "You are not allowed to stay here." The stance of most hotel managers on this was, "I am a businessman. I am not a politician to interpret laws." So if I just say, "You have a reservation for Sassman," I would get in. And in 29 years where I would have to move around with white American Participants, I was never put out of a hotel or refused admission to stay at a hotel, where others have had this happen to them. You know, you make the mistake of going up and saying, "Am I allowed to stay here?" That is one thing.

The other thing that was also a strategy was if a person who is not a black African goes into an African township, under the apartheid legislation, you needed a permit.

Q: Does this imply that white South Africans had a touch of indifference to the Group Areas Act? What is your sense? Interpret if you can what was the prevailing sense. Did whites just look the other way and hope to ignore the whole situation or did they believe in the law, or did they actually find the law an annoyance?

SASSMAN: I think the law gave them privileges that they wouldn't normally have, so they benefited from this because when the change came, we found it strange that there was no white that supported apartheid.

Q: Ha, ha, ha. They all disappeared.

SASSMAN: They would say, "Oh, I never!" But they took advantage. If you take something like job reservation. Under apartheid, we also had job reservation. Take for example a situation with the public transport. 60 percent of the bus drivers had to be white. Only 40 percent can be people of color. So say for instance now, the situation was always the 40 percent would be fully filled for colored, African, or Indian drivers, but the 60 percent was never filled. So you had a situation that in maybe 20 percent of the 60 percent, there were vacancies. But you could not employ a black African or colored or Indian to drive in a vacancy that is reserved for the white.

Q: So the potential labor pool of the non-whites was much greater, but the greater share of positions was reserved for the minority whites.

SASSMAN: You see now there under the influx control laws, Group Areas Act and all that, anybody who is not white who wanted to, no. Anybody who was not black African and wanted to go into a black township needed a permit. Now this went against the principles of many people, especially American visitors. Now why do I need a permit, and if I apply for a permit it means I accept the principle of apartheid? So we have to be very subtle.

I would like to tell you about a particular incident. Myself and one of my deputy directors, as we call them ABPAO, and a black African lawyer from the Eastern Cape. We were shown, there was a funeral, and there was a massacre of the mourners where the police just opened up and shot them. Boy Majodina, who was a black African advocate, said he wanted to go and show us. He wanted to show us where this massacre took place. So obviously we had to apply. The embassy didn't apply for permits, so 50 of us went. At that time, the security police, whenever we as embassy officials visited the area, I don't know how they know, but there would always be a little Volkswagen following us to make sure, and look after us to make sure we do the right things. And as we enter the township, the Volkswagen came and they stopped us. The policeman came out and said, "You are now in a black African township, which is Kwanabuhle." So this was a black African township, and we needed a permit to be there. He then said to us, "Can you show me your permit?" So the deputy BPAO said, "We do not apply for permits, so we do not have a permit." So then the policeman said, "Well, we have to detain you and subsequently arrest you because you're in a black African township without a permit."

Q: No diplomatic immunity.

SASSMAN: Wait, he didn't know at that time we were diplomats. So then he spoke to Russell, the ABPAO, and said, "You are not a South African." I said, "No." So Russell said, "We are from the embassy." Then I knew that my strategy for that kind of a situation was that I do not speak Afrikaans, which is one of the official languages. If I speak Afrikaans then they will know I am a South African, and not an American. So that was the strategy I used. I would speak English, but I would never speak in a situation like that. So if he doesn't hear my accent, he will assume that, working for the embassy, I would be an American, and that would give me some kind of immunity.

So Russell raised the question about diplomatic immunity. He said, "No." Now he has got a problem, the policeman. He goes and he gets on the phone. Now he is speaking in Afrikaans to the brigadier to say, "Brigadier, we have three American diplomats here and also the black African advocate," also diplomatic status now. He doesn't need a permit because he is a black African and he doesn't need a permit to be in that area. So then I understood what he said, and I could then interpret and tell my American officer.

Q: What did he say word for word?

SASSMAN: He said in Afrikaans, "Brigadier..." so what he said was in English, "Brigadier, there is big shit here." In other words, he has now detained three diplomats and he doesn't know what to do now. So then the Brigadier told me, and this is what he relayed to us, that the brigadier says, "Look..." And Russell the American officer then told him, "Look, why must we get permits in South Africa? Your diplomats in the United States do not have to apply for permits. You can go anywhere you want to." He said, "Well, that is America. This is South Africa." Russell said, "We do not apply for permits, so you will have to do what you deem appropriate."

Q: Approximately what year?

SASSMAN: This was the '80s. So we stood there now. So the Brigadier said, "Well, you can take these people around without a permit and let them see whatever they want to see, and then make sure they get out of the black township." So Russell said, "Well, we have already seen what we wanted to see, so can we go now?" So he says, "Yeah, you can go." We got into our car, and that Volkswagen followed us from Kwanabuhle right to Port Elizabeth airport to make sure we got on the plane to go back to Cape Town. So that distance that they followed us was plus-minus 80 kilometers. Say about 40 miles. I also took Congressional delegations with the consul general to a black African squatter camp where we require a permit.

Now one particular incident happened, also in the early '80s. As we went into the squatter camp, the security police stopped us and said, "Where is your permit?" So the consul general explained to him, "We cannot apply for permits, so we do not have a permit, but we wanted to show the Congressmen what is happening here." So he said, "Well, you will have to get a permit." So the

consul general said, “Well, I am not prepared to apply for a permit.”

Q: It was the policy of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. government.

SASSMAN: Yeah, the U.S. government did not apply for permits. Under South African law, if you are in a squatter camp or shantytown or any township for black Africans and you do not have a permit, you can be prosecuted. They have already arrested and they acquitted again a white member of the South African Parliament for being in an area without a permit.

Q: Prosecuted for what type of penalty?

SASSMAN: Well, it is a fine and just a warning. But the law says you can be arrested. They also arrested the leader of the opposition for being in possession of a banned book, and he was fined a certain amount of rand. So then when the consul general insisted that he is going to go in, this policeman became aggressive and says, “Look, if you bring these congressmen into this camp, I have the right to baton and charge you.” You know you call it the baton, where they have the baton the policeperson carries, and would beat us up you know. So I said to the consul general, “No, we make as if we are leaving. I will take you to the other side. There is a road or whatever and there is a hill. That area is not a black area. It is a colored area. So we do not need a permit. And if we go to the top of the hill we have an overview of what is happening there.” Because you see what they were doing. At the moment, they were demolishing the temporary structures that the squatters were putting up there.

It was going to rain that evening. That is what we wanted to see. So then before they realized it, we were on the hill on the other side. Then the policeman came, it was security police, and he came to the consul general, and I was standing next to the consul general. He said, “Look, you have to leave.” So I said to him, in Afrikaans to make him know that I am a South African because the consul general is now there, I said to him, “No, we do not need a permit here. Is this a black African area?” He said, “No, it is a colored area.” “Then we don’t need a permit.” He looked at me and he said, “You are too clever. You must watch yourself.”

So we could see and the congressmen walked around there. So that was the kind of thing that wasn’t just like in any other society where you just do the job. There was a threat to your life. I remember there was also a time when in parliament they discussed the activities of the USIS officers in the country. They accused the USIS officers of being involved in subversive activities. You know it came out in the Eastern Cape area, one of the constituencies in the Eastern Cape. He brought this to the attention of parliament. That time the whole question of U.S. foreign investment versus disinvestment or divestment was very prominent.

We had a videotape on the program that was on the U.S. in the early ‘80s, *The Advocates*, where they would take the topic and they would then debate the topic. This was disinvestment of American companies in South Africa. I remember Chester Crocker was still an academic at the time. He was not Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. He wasn’t in that position yet. Alex Boraine, who became the number two to Desmond Tutu for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, they were with Jennifer Davis, a South African economist who was living in the

United States, and Dennis Brutus, who was a South African professor who was living in exile in the U.S. They then debated, and we showed this tape in East London. We showed the tape in Gravestown, and we showed it in Port Elizabeth. The security police followed us from East London down to Port Elizabeth which was plus-minus 600 kilometers, say about 300 miles. Then they reported to parliament that the American Embassy was there showing subversive materials. So this was the kind of thing you had to counter all the time. It wasn't just like in a normal society where you can just do these things.

Q: So you were showing this video in various places and the police physically followed you?

SASSMAN: Yeah, and they were in the audience also. They would come in because we wouldn't know it was police.

Q: And they had friends in the parliament and they went straight to them.

SASSMAN: Well, they reported to their member of parliament because they raised this in parliament. In other words, to do something to the American Embassy.

Q: Did parliament ever do anything?

SASSMAN: No, they never did anything.

Q: But they debated the question.

SASSMAN: I got the *Hansard*, you know, Americans are familiar with *Hansard*. This is the publication that publishes verbatim what happens in parliament. Both he and my director, the BPAO at the time and myself, our names were mentioned in *Hansard*.

Q: Wow, which is okay for Bob Heath because he can leave the country, but you live here. You had to live with this.

SASSMAN: I can't speak for other FSNs, but for me in particular, because I was very active in these things with my American counterparts, they would try and intimidate me. I will give you some examples. There was one incident where I had a call from this person, and he claimed he was a security officer with the South African navy, the Simonson dockyard is the headquarters of the South African navy.

I said, "Are you with the Security Police to clear that?" He said, "No, I am not with the Security Police. I am with security at the navy." I said, "Why are you calling me?" "You are working for the American Embassy." I said, "Yes." He says, "Your brother is working for the South African navy." I said, "Yes." He said, "Now, we are concerned that when you and your brother meet, that he might be telling you secrets about the South African Navy." I said, "No, the last thing we speak about is the work. We talk about family issues and all kinds of things." So he said, "We want to come and visit you, and find out exactly what you are doing." I said, "No, if you want to find out what I am doing, you have got to come to my work place. I do not make policy. I am not

involved in embassy policy, so if you are coming, and I have no problem. I have got nothing to hide. Then I would like my ambassador to be present. But I don't want you at my home and I don't want to meet with you anywhere else."

He said, "Okay, I will come back to you," and he never came back to me. So it was obvious that it was the security police trying to intimidate me. It was another incident where they saw they couldn't get at me because the embassy was always there for me, and the ambassador told me that anything job-related and I have problems with it, the embassy would support me.

So then they tried getting at me through my youngest son. They arrested him at a demonstration when somebody that we knew in the community was going to be imprisoned for 10 years, and he was going to jail that day, and they had a church service. He stood there with a poster with the words of "We Shall Overcome," the hymn that was sung in the American south.

Somebody called me to say that my son has been arrested. I called my lawyer, who subsequently in the new democracy became minister of justice, Dullah Omar. I said, "Look my son has just been arrested, and please you have got to help me!" He said, "Okay, go out there and find the details of who is interrogating him and who arrested him, and then get back to me." I went to the Weinberg Court, and I spoke to the person in charge. He said, "No, look. Your son isn't actually being arrested. They took him because he had this offensive poster. The security police are busy interrogating him. You can check with me in an hour's time. If they feel that he wasn't involved in anything subversive, they will release him." I said, "Fine."

A friend of mine who is a Supreme Court judge—we have known each other for years—he called me and said, "Listen, if there is anything I can do, give me a call, but you must get your son out of there from the clutches of those guys."

So then I went back to the court after the hour and saw this person, and he said to me, "What do you associate with this? Is this a subversive song or what?" I said, "Well, as far as I know, it was a hymn that was sung in the South in America. I don't see anything wrong." He said, "You are too smart." So I then said to him, "Now, look, you said when you finish interrogating my son that you will release him." He said, "No, I changed my mind. Because a judge called here, and Dullah Omar, who is a top political lawyer, called here asking about your son, so I think you must be involved." I said, "But if you mean involved, I am doing a job like you are doing a job. I work for the American Embassy, and if you guys are not happy with that, your fight is with the chief of mission, my ambassador. It is not with me. I just carry out instructions like you carry out."

He said, "No, I don't want to talk to you."

I then called Dullah again and Dullah said, "Look, we must get him out of there, so go to a magistrate and get him to arrange bail." So then the banks are closed, and I find I didn't have 300 rand bail. So I had to find the money. Then another guy said he has got some money in his safe. We went and I said, "I will get the money back to you." So then we got him out. My son appeared. They said the law under which they are arresting him is that you cannot demonstrate within 500 meters of a court of law against a case. You cannot demonstrate within 500 meters of

a court of law. So he appeared the first time. They said, “No, the detective handling the case is still gathering evidence.” Second time again.

Third time when we appeared, I said to the lawyer that Dullah assigned to me—this lawyer is today the chief legal advisor to the South African government—I said to him, “Look, can we look at this act, this law? What is it saying?” So we looked at the law, and what the law actually said was that you cannot demonstrate within 500 meters of a court of law *against a case that is currently being tried*. “This guy was sentenced two years ago, so he was going to prison now, so it has got nothing to do. So let’s go see the magistrate. This law is not applicable.” So we sent to the magistrate.

The magistrate looked at the law and said, “No.” “So why is that case?” I said, “No, that case was tried two years ago. This man was going to prison; there was a church service, and he was just supporting.” So the magistrate called the detective, and he reprimanded him in front of my lawyer and me, saying, “Look, you are wasting the court’s time. This law is not applicable in that particular case.” And they acquitted my son. I went a long way just to show you just how meticulous and how they trump up charges, you know.

Q: Tell me about the attitude towards the law. It is called Dutch Roman Law. It is a funny paradox because the law was an instrument of oppression, and yet there was a tremendous respect I think for the text of the law.

SASSMAN: The laws under apartheid were intentionally very vaguely written. They were not very specific, which then allowed subjectivity to come into it, your personal interpretation. In other words, if the two of us looked at a particular law, then your interpretation might differ because of the vagueness of the law and because of the subjectivity. It would depend on the political ideology of that person who is interpreting. This was always the case. But if they see that like in my particular case, now on a technicality, we said to them, “This doesn’t apply.” They had no alternative but to back away.

Q: Even though they have all the trump cards in their hands and all you had was the text of the law. They had the power, and yet the argument using the text. You say the texts were written intentionally vague, but in this case it was clear.

SASSMAN: It was clear.

Q: But although they could have done anything they wanted. Apparently they retreated not from you, but from the way that the law was written.

SASSMAN: They did, but the other thing. That is why a lot of black lawyers or lawyers who were not white strongly argued this point, saying, let’s take rape. Now it is the same crime. The circumstances can be exactly the same. But in the one case, if it is a white perpetrator raping a black woman, he would maybe get a fine or he would be acquitted, or he would be sentenced to one or two months. You get the same situation with a black man rapes a white woman, at that time we had the death penalty. He could be sentenced to death. He could get imprisonment of

five or ten years. So those would be the two. For the same crime the same circumstances, but the sentencing, you see the subjectivity there, the sentence would be totally different.

Q: So the sentencing was not codified and this was left up to the discretion of the judge?

SASSMAN: The judge or the magistrate. So as I say it is the same circumstances, same crime, but look at the severity of the sentence on the one hand or on the other hand.

Q: The subjectivity of the judge determining our view.

SASSMAN: Yeah, then another thing that was part of my job, and sometimes the political section, my director would ask us, “We have a judge, we have a lawyer, take them out to the pass law courts.” People would sit there for about two or three minutes, and then they say, “No, I want to go.” I must first explain to you the influx control law. In the case of a person who is not a black African, you have an identity document. The police would never ask you to produce that document in the street. You would produce that to prove that you are Dan Whitman. You would show the bank, the post office over here. But the pass, or the “don’t pass,” as they call it: every person who was black African had to carry a pass. Under the influx control laws, Africans were kept out of the urban areas unless you were born in an urban area. Now there is flexibility within that. But Africans were not allowed to be in the urban area without their pass being endorsed accordingly.

So under the influx control laws, where it was used to keep the Africans out of the urban area, they had to be in the rural area. Under that law, a person will be arrested if you are found in Central Cape Town and your pass is not endorsed for you to be in Cape Town.

Q: Which you are if you’re a domestic worker. Is that correct? How did they deal with the domestic worker?

SASSMAN: No, you could be under building trade, you could work on the building trade. But if, say, I am a white person and I have a domestic person working for me, I have to go to the authorities and have her pass endorsed to say that she is allowed to work for Frank Sassman in this particular area, and it is stamped by the Bantu administration. Bantu at that time was the classification they used with the person who was black African. So then they would then arrest that person, and those people would appear in the pass law courts out on the townships. Like there was one in Langa, there was one in Guguletu, and there was one in Nyanga. So then that person would appear. That is where I used to take to show the American visitor, you know, whether it is an American government official, or whether it is an academic coming as an Ampart.

The Congressional delegations always wanted to see how the influx control laws worked. So then I would take them there, and we would sit there, and they would have a retired magistrate. Normally an Afrikaner, but an English Afrikaner. He would then—and it would be one or two minute court cases—come in and get into the dock. The magistrate will say to him, “I understand you were found in Cape Town” or “You were found in Weinberg and you were there, and when

asked to produce your pass, your pass was not endorsed for you to be in that area. So you are guilty under the influx control laws, so that is 200 rand or 40 days in prison.” The man obviously does not want to go to prison, so he pays it. It was a money-making thing.

Then one day I went and I had the Ambassador with me. I didn't like going there because to me, it was inhumane. The people I took always said to me, “Frank, I know you had to bring me here to see this. But I know you don't like bringing me.” I said, “No, you are right, but it is my job. You must know this part of life in South Africa.” So this particular day the Black Sash, which started as the wives of members of parliament. They got together and formed this organization. They helped the disadvantaged people, like if they had to appear in court, they would get representation. The women each wore a black sash. They were the wives of members of parliament from different opposition parties. They would always be there to help the disadvantaged communities. So Moyra Henderson, she was a friend of mine, she was president of the Black Sash. So she said something very interesting on this occasion when I took some congressmen and the ambassador. She said in front of him, “You know, Mr. Ambassador, we are very happy when Frank comes here with foreign visitors.”

So the ambassador said to her, “Why are you happy? Frank as he tells it doesn't like coming here.”

She said, “No, the magistrate knows Frank, and they know that he is bringing foreigners. So the morning Frank is here, everybody is acquitted.” So she said, “Mr. Ambassador, we wish you could assign Frank just to be here all the time.” Then my attitude changed. My attitude changed toward this, and I said, “Look, whenever I go, I go with a smile now, because I feel I am helping my fellow black South Africans to at least not be prosecuted with this silly law.”

Q: So the magistrate didn't care about you. He cared about the international visitors you brought.

SASSMAN: Yeah, he knew I was associated with the embassy, and so he knew, “Look, he has got foreigners here with him, and we don't want them to see how stupid the system is,” I suppose, so then they would acquit the guys. But once I am gone, then it is the same thing, 200 rand or whatever. But you know what they did then? The police would take that guy who paid the 200 rand, they would take him and put him on the next train to the homelands. That guy, because he knows there is no work in the homelands, the next station he gets off and comes back. But he takes that chance. So this was just things that we had to learn how to use our status with the embassy and whatever to survive and do our job. Then with marches, we had marches. I marched; it was a march to free Mandela. It was a symbolic march. There was no way we could get him out. He was at that time at Victor Frestair. There was no way we could get him out of prison, but again, just to demonstrate. So we went...

Q: Was this within the work or outside of the work?

SASSMAN: No, this was in my personal capacity because I couldn't not be part of my community, even though I worked for the embassy. I know they didn't look lightly at this. So, in

any case, I went. We came to the venue where the march was banned. In other words, the police said this was an illegal march, but people were there. So they changed the venue from Cliff Fontaine Road to Hewitt. We went there. When we came there, there were thousands of people. They said, "Look, the march has been banned, but we will have this illegal march. And as we walk, we will get to the bridge, and when we get there, we will just disperse and then make our demand to the police, who are obviously following us."

So we marched and as we marched, more people came in. By the time we came to the bridge, the railway bridge, there were about 10,000 people in this march. There were the police cordoning off. We couldn't go any further. Then the Brigadier came with his loud hailer and said, "Look, this is an illegal march, and we give you two minutes to disperse."

Now can you imagine, two minutes to disperse 10,000 people? Then the religious leaders, Tutu and other guys who always led the marches said, "Look, we are just going to kneel and pray, and then we will disperse."

Q: Was Tutu there that day?

SASSMAN: Yeah. It was a big march. It was to free Mandela, which was just symbolic. It was a lot of ministers from the different congregations. As we are praying we could just feel the whips of the police across the back. They beat us up. I was...

Q: They beat 10,000 people?

SASSMAN: Well, they couldn't beat everybody, but they came from the front. They beat me; they got Monica Joyi. There was a baton. I found her lying there in the gutter bleeding. So of course I couldn't find my one son, who was also in the march. I found him in the college, which they used almost like a hospital because then they used buckshot to also shoot people. They used rubber bullets. Now the rubber bullet, you know the torch battery, are you familiar with it?

Q: Yes.

SASSMAN: It is the size of the big torch battery, not the small but the big.

Q: That is big. The AA battery.

SASSMAN: Now they use that, and it is like a hard rubber, like a plastic. They shoot that out of a gun. It will take off people's little finger. Takes out your eye, and that is what they used to disperse us. I actually brought it. I have a rubber bullet that I own.

Okay, but I must tell you this to show what happens in a normal society with marchers. I was in San Diego, I told you, when I studied at the University of California in San Diego. So then there was a street there. The citizens wanted that street's name changed to Martin Luther King Drive, and they were now marching, you know. Just to voice the opinion or make a point about it. So then the guy who was at the university with me said, "Frank, are you going with?" So first I said

to him, "Will it be safe?" He said, "Why are you asking that, 'Will it be safe?'" I realized, "I am not in South Africa now, I am in America." So I explained it to him. He said, "No, the police are here protecting us. The police are not beating us up as in your country, as you explained to me."

Then I was honored to be in this march and see the other side of marches in a democracy. When ours was not a democracy, it was a threat to your life if you were to go. If that rubber bullet hit you at the wrong place, you can be killed. So that was an experience to me. I thought I was in South Africa. I said to the guy, "Will it be safe for me to go in the march?" This was, I am glad to say, it is not there anymore. If we have marches now, it will be like your marches in the U.S. The police are there to protect you, not to beat you up.

Q: From the worst to the best, how many years, from the day of this march when you were beaten? When would this have been in the '80s?

SASSMAN: The mid '80s, yeah. Early '80s.

Q: So 20 years. Complete opposite. That is an important historical guiding post. Now we also were talking yesterday on another subject. The role of the FSN in a U.S. consulate or embassy. You used the example of this great coup where you advised Ambassador Swing that Mandela would be free in 48 hours. Swing very artfully converted this into a phone call from President Bush Senior. You were even able to get the phone number of Dullah Omar where Mandela was. Everybody got credit for this, but you did not. I think the expression you used yesterday was, "I will put you on a pedestal, but please make sure you drag me with you." Can you talk about the role of the FSN?

SASSMAN: Let me start by telling you the role of the FSN. When I was employed I saw that I must advise the Americans that I work with about the status quo or the social political situation in the country because I know my country. They are only here for three years, and then they leave. So they can never know my country like I know.

So one of the things was that I had to share my expertise with my American colleagues and advise them. I think sometimes they would openly ask the question, or sometimes I would just take it on myself to advise them. Also, I would never hesitate to say, "Look, because of strikes or whatever, I say we cannot go into the township because I cannot guarantee your safety, or even my own safety, and we will put ourselves at risk going in." So that was one role.

The other role was that I worked through my office, my BPAO who would then get the message to the ambassador unless he tells me to go direct. So I would say to them, for instance when I heard about the Mandela incident, that he is going to be released. It is my duty to go to the ambassador or my BPAO and say, "Look, I heard that in two says time Mandela is going to be released. I just want to share this with you, and I think it is important that you relay this to Washington through whatever channels." So he said to me, "Frank, I think we go over to the ambassador. So we went over to the ambassador, and he told me to tell him.

I told the ambassador, and the ambassador says, "Look, this is a very significant event. What I

would like you to do, Frank, if you can is go back and seeing as you know the organizers, the upper echelons of the ANC, who is organizing this whole thing, I want you to go there and confirm this, first of all. And secondly, find out from them if it is possible if they can take Mandela to a venue where they can give us a telephone number, and we can then arrange from the embassy side that President Bush Senior calls Mandela within hours of his release, and is the first international statesperson to congratulate Mandela on attaining his freedom.”

So I said to the ambassador, “I have to go back to UWC.” I went back to the University of the Western Cape, and spent a lot of time there trying to get to the people. They said I must come back; the person that I should speak to is one of the senior ANC officials. He will be there at about 11:00 in the evening. I went back there, but you know how it is with the activists. Time they can say it would be an hour...

Q: They are elastic.

SASSMAN: What do they say, “African people’s time,” “colored people’s time?” They have all kinds of time. In any case, Dullah Omar was there, and I spoke to him. They said, “Look, they would like to do this. They are going to put this to the hierarchy of the ANC. Then they will get back.” I said, “Look, at this point, this is the ambassador’s number. I would like to step out of this. You can go direct to the ambassador.” He said, “Yeah, they will do that.”

The ambassador then spoke directly to them, and it happened. I heard that the call happened. I thought, “When am I going to hear from my employers about being rewarded for what I did here?” It was a significant thing. I had nothing. My BPAO, I went to him. This is now, and he didn’t hear anything. Now, I am sure that he must have gotten some kind of reward. Then I started bugging management, saying, “Look, I feel I should be given a merit award for this.” It took about three years. That BPAO was gone. Others who knew me, were assigned previously, and came back again. I spoke to them, and then in the early ‘90s, I did get the award. And the award I was given, in addition to other things I achieved, I was given the FSN of the Year for the top Foreign Service National working for all the embassies on the continent of Africa.

Q: There are a couple of questions here. One is the relative position of, let’s say, the social status of the FSN within the continent. The other question is you are representing a foreign country within your country. Surely there must be issues. In fact, your loyalties have to be to two countries instead of one. That is really the more profound question. What comments do you have about this? I won’t say double loyalty, but it is a different degree of loyalty than a diplomat has.

SASSMAN: Yeah, that is why you have to virtually cut yourself in half because you have a job, and you know this job requires that you do not tarnish the mage of your employer. But I am first a South African citizen, and I have got to get involved with political issues within my country. You cannot say that I am not wearing an American hat at the moment. I am just wearing a South African hat.

Q: You can’t change back and forth.

SASSMAN: Exactly. The other thing is, working for the top Western power and being employed by the U.S. government as opposed to the South African government, your status is enhanced in your community. Everybody looks up to you that you are working for the American Embassy, and you are doing things for the American Embassy. Then there are people who are going to say, “No, why are you working for the Americans and not South Africa?” Now I could always counter that by saying, “If I had to go and work for the South African diplomatic corps, I would have to go abroad and defend apartheid. Is that right?” And then I would get out of it, you know.

Q: So the question was not, “Why are you working for the Americans?” but, “Why them rather than your own government?” It was sort of a dual question.

SASSMAN: That was more the thing because it was like even when I would get to friends of mine at that rally or so, some would say jokingly, others would be serious and say, “Here is the American spy coming.”

Q: Were you able to reconcile your personal antipathy with constructive engagement at that time when it was the policy? And yet you found some peace. You found reconciliation in yourself being pulled in both directions. You said earlier you had to cut yourself in half.

SASSMAN: Yeah, definitely. As I say, the big thing to me was I understood, and that was in line with my philosophy. Try everything. Don’t leave any stone unturned. The only thing I had against it, they tried too long. They could see it was wrecking the mission in South Africa. The Americans were losing friends. Let’s put it that way.

Q: So let me generalize and ask you now what do you think are the challenges in the Western Cape for American diplomacy at this time? With your wisdom, your hindsight, and looking back over 40 years, you have been doing this for 40 years. If you were advising American diplomats today in the Cape, what would be your priorities? What would you advise them that they must be addressing?

SASSMAN: You see, on the whole, South African society over the years that I was attached to saw America as some kind of savior. I mean, this was very evident with the fact of your first African American president. The identification especially from the black disadvantaged community, who looked still at America as that savior who can do things for them, spoke volumes. I never saw so many people sitting glued to their television set.

The other thing you must remember is that we have three or four serious problems. That is housing. I don’t know what order they should be in: lack of housing, crime, unemployment. Those are three major ones. They still look to America to do something about it, not even taking cognizance of the fact that America has its own problems. But they are still saying that, because at one they had a talk on exactly the three problems: housing, crime, and unemployment. Then they would always allude to the American model. They would say, “The minister keeps on speaking in parliament about the problem, and something must be done about the problem.” And then people at this meeting say, “But what is the problem there? We know the problem. We have identified the problem, but nobody speaks about possible solutions to the problem.” The one guy

got up.

Q: That goes to Hank Cohen's comment.

SASSMAN: Right. This one guy got up and he says, "Now, look at the American system in fighting crime, the visibility of the police. I was in America. Look at the amount of police cars I see. And that presence is definitely a deterrent," this guy said. I agree with him. I always say it myself. So but I don't know when last I saw a policeman going down my street. The point is that guy who was not a politician, who was Joe Citizen, came and referred to the American model. So people are aware of the many parallels. Granted there are differences, but there are parallels between our societies, and they take cognizance of the fact that the big difference is you only have black and white. We have black and the grey and what all is there. That is the major difference between the two societies.

The other thing: your black is in the minority, whereas here the black is not. But they still look at America as a savior. That varies from individual to individual, but generally that is a thing. That is why I found that when we were looking, like we brought out the specialists. This was in my last year before I retired. Through the cables that offered Amparts, they offered an Ampart who was a specialist on transnational crime. You know how it works. We go to organizations and we say to them, "Look, we have this person. Would you be interested if we can get this person?" And I went to organizations. I didn't go to him yet, but I get a call from Peter Gastrow, who was at one time the advisor to the president on security and strategic studies. It is an institute up on Rowland Street in Cape Town. He called me. He said, "Frank, thank you very much for focusing on this topic. This is not my area of specialization, but it is a crucial issue. I am prepared to set up a seminar of top individuals and host it if you can bring that guy. I know the guy and he is good."

That is where I learned. There are so many. We as a democracy, as a fledgling democracy, we are still battling with appropriate legislation. There are so many loopholes. You find that the international crime syndicates have taken cognizance of this. So the Colombians are here; the Russians are here; the Chinese triads. Ah, you name it, they are all here, and they are having a field day. And they came in, I mean, they came, and they started gangster-style just shooting the local gangsters. "Get out; we want the turf." You see, I mean look, here is Peter Gastrow. He is a specialist in this field. The U.S. model, bring it in. That is appropriate. We want it.

So I say there are times when America does something, and probably people get upset, which is a natural phenomenon. But they still look to you guys and they want your model. That is the way I see it over my years. And look, if it was not so, these guys would say, "Who the hell do you think the Americans are? We don't want to hear." No, Peter Gastrow called me, and he had the deputy minister of justice there. They had Minister of Safety and Security Willie Hoffmeyer, top names. I was so impressed. He had 20 or 30 people in. And he was prepared to host that. I just took the man up there and introduced him.

Q: Looking for a model as you called it appropriate legislation.

SASSMAN: Yeah, like this guy getting up there and mentioning that. Definitely, if we get more

police. Give the minister of safety and security more money to have more cars and more police and whatever. It is not going to solve the problem, but it is going to help.

Q: Well, Frank Sassman. Looking back over these 30 or 40 years of involvement, any parting thoughts?

SASSMAN: Well, I find the one thing that I am always thankful to the Americans, maybe I should start with that. Growing up in an apartheid environment, I only had two jobs in my working life. I worked for 14 years as a librarian with the local municipal service, and I worked for 29 years with the American government. So I had 43 years at just two jobs. The one thing that I am thankful to the Americans: it took me out of the cocoon of being a colored, and just associating with coloreds. You know, I was in that cocoon. When I started working I worked in the library for colored people, or different libraries, but for colored people. I never interacted with the libraries where there was a white clientele in the period I was with them. The other thing was, when I came to the American embassy, that opened other doors for me. Your clientele was a multiracial clientele.

The primary objective of the American policy at the time when I joined the embassy in 1972 was to show South Africans and demonstrate the workability of a non racial multiracial society. You bring people together of all colors, and the roof doesn't come down. And so the first thing that was a problem for me was going to the first embassy function. I will never forget that.

Now you must remember I was only within my colored cocoon. My work was with coloreds. There were whites, but we didn't actually socialize. I just knew them as colleagues, but you didn't actually get close to them. Now I am in an environment where I have to interact with a staff which is multiracial. The other thing was that the clientele coming in there was white. No matter how you tried and fight this, the seed was planted under apartheid that you are inferior to the white man or woman. The first thing I learned when I went to the embassy, and I think it was Bob Gosende, who was very sharp, he picked it up that I was having condescending conversations. I saw the white man up there or the white woman. He said something to me: "Frank, I have gotten to know you now, and you can stand up to anybody. You are not inferior to anybody. So don't let anybody speak down to you. Look them straight in the eye and you will eliminate that condescending thing."

I mean, many of you guys, you don't know it, but you taught me different things, and it developed me as an individual. For that, because if I meet guys, fellow librarians like me in the municipality, then I see how I have developed and they have remained static. They will say, I am not saying the Americans are perfect, but I mean they contributed a lot and it also opened doors for me.

The first function I went to, I remember there was Helen Suzman, Colin Eglin. They were the regulars at the embassy circles, you know. There I was standing, just at the door there. I didn't socialize because to me it was a new environment. This was in '73. How much interaction did we have with people other...? I mean like black Africans, it was the first time that I got that close and interacted. It was things like this. I just stood there and everybody like Colin would come and

say, “You are new; what do you do?” And this type of thing, and people would come to me when it was my job to go to them and get to know them and talk. And that is how I started.

But today, I can walk up to anybody, and I can talk to anybody, and I can go to—this I learned from the Americans also—I can go to a perfect stranger, and within three or four minutes, we will talk as though we know each other. That I learned from the airports. I used to pick up at the airports, and I saw the technique they employed. How to get to know somebody. Like they will start talking to Frank. “Hi, I’m so and so. Are you married?” “Yeah.” “What is your wife’s name?” “Monica.” “Have you got kids?” “Yeah, I have three kids.” “What are their names?” “Ben, Sonia, Paul.” Immediately it is, “What is Monica doing?” not, “What is your wife doing?” He said, “What is Monica doing? Then Ben, is he still at school?” Now you feel you know this guy. But if he said, “Is your youngest son still...?” These are all things that I picked up and developed myself. Today, I am a master at communicating with people, and where did I get this? I got it from my American colleagues. Not so much my South African colleagues.

So I feel that for me it was a very good thing that happened, making that change and going, and I must say my visits to America and those things helped me tremendously to develop as a person, and today my immediate family and extended family look up to me in decision making, problem solving, conflict management. That is all things I did in my job, but I could apply it in my family. So for me it was, and it wasn’t an easy decision. I didn’t apply for the job.

Q: Bob Gosende came to you.

SASSMAN: He saw in the media what I was doing and he called me. He offered me a job, you know. I said to him, “No.” At that time, I was working for the city council, one of the most progressive employers. Good salary, good pension, you know, medical aid. I said to him, “Bob, I have got to leave good conditions of employment. What can you offer me?” Immediately the man said to me, “What are you earning?” At that time, I was earning, this was in 1972, I think I was earning about 150 rand a month, which was a good salary. He said, “Look, I will give you 300.” He doubled my salary.

Now immediately I said to him, “Bob, look, this all sounds impressive, but I never make any decisions without my wife and family, without speaking to my wife, because if I make the wrong decision, they are going to suffer.” So he said, “OK, take two weeks, Frank, and then you come back to me.” So I spoke to my family and to my one brother-in-law, whom I have a great respect for. He said, “No, don’t look back. Go.” He said the same thing that Bob said to me. He was a colored businessman, and most of his clientele were white. He had to be a hard businessman, but he was very good in his job. People respected him. He said, “I never let anybody speak to me in a condescending tone. Put that behind you. You are going in there; get that thing out of your mindset. You go there as an equal, and you stand up to those people.” Two people told me that, and that has been my outlook. I will respect the next person but that person must respect me also.

So the Americans, again, I am not saying they are perfect, but I learned a lot of things. It is a different culture. There are good things and bad things, and I think it is important to take the good things. You know, so it is a question of composite cultures. I have got a South African,

British, and American culture, and I think I have done quite well in taking the strength out of each of them and making myself a composite as far as culture goes, having a composite culture.

Q: Frank Sassman, thank you for sharing with us your vast experience and thank you for your service to the United States government and people and to your own country. Thank you very much.

SASSMAN: Thank you very much Dan. I won't forget you.

NORMAN L. PRATT
Economic Counselor
Pretoria (1974-1976)

Norman L. Pratt was born in New York in 1916. He graduated from Dartmouth College with an A.B. degree in 1937. Mr. Pratt served in the U.S. Army from 1941-1946 and then joined the Foreign Service at the end of 1946. His overseas career included posts in Egypt, Libya, Germany, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, and South Africa. Mr. Pratt was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1991.

PRATT: Finally, after a year or so of that, I was transferred to Pretoria, South Africa, which was a completely new world to me. In those days apartheid was there. There was nothing much you could do about it. The most striking thing to me was the fact that there was little meeting between the various whites and the various black groups unless you met on neutral ground like an Embassy reception. Invariably when there was such a party going on - we always had blacks, of course - the black leaders were there as well as the whites. They would stare each other up and down for about ten minutes and at the end of that time they would be into the most involved political discussions. They just had no chance to get acquainted with each other.

I remember one woman who was absolutely shocked to learn that the blacks were not interested in learning the Afrikaans language and they objected to being taught it in the school. Well, this was very well known. In fact, it was one of the things that triggered the riots in Soweto in June, 1976. The SAG were making Afrikaans compulsory. The blacks saw it as a useless language in comparison to the world status of English.

Q: Did they mostly speak English as well as their own?

PRATT: In all the two and a half years I was in South Africa, I only ran across one case where English did not suffice. That was down in a small village in the heart of Afrikaner land in the Orange Free State. I wanted to get a sandwich at the drug store and no English was spoken. However, we made out all right. The old joke was that of course the man was completely bilingual, he doesn't know a word of English. "Bilingual" was a code word for an Afrikaans speaker, meaning only Afrikaners need apply.

Q: Did your work take you around the country quite a bit?

PRATT: Not as much as I would have liked to, because the situation in South Africa was that the Economic Counselor, which I was, took care of the whole Embassy operation when the Ambassador, DCM and Political Counselor went to Cape Town. It was a dual capital situation. The capital was considered to be in Cape Town and the Ministers were resident there when parliament was in session. When the parliament went out of session the Ministers came back to Pretoria, the administrative capital. Over the two and a half years I was in Pretoria, I was in charge of the office for almost two years and felt I could not travel to the extent I really wanted. I got to Cape Town a couple of times and once when the Ambassador was in Pretoria, Georgia and I went down to the annual chamber of commerce meeting south of Durban and from there continued around the countryside to the tip of South Africa along the garden route, and through the Transkei up to the ostrich farms, etc. Then on to Cape Town before returning - it was about a 1000 miles back from there.

Q: Did you find your tour interesting?

PRATT: It was interesting. It was a very relaxed sort of place. Pretoria is a town that closes at 5 in the evening. It was closed up tight, you couldn't even get a bus home past five in the afternoon. That sort of place.

Q: That is remarkable.

PRATT: Somebody said it is rather like living in Raleigh, North Carolina, but I think he was doing Raleigh a disfavor.

Q: Yes, I think you could find a cab or something after 5:30.

PRATT: There were all the things that we knew about. Separate buses, separate entrances to the post office, etc. The signs were there, but this minor, petty apartheid was gradually going away. It was being abandoned.

Q: You didn't find it a great problem?

PRATT: Why should there be a problem?

Q: I mean, did you find it a problem for them? Was it just accepted by the blacks?

PRATT: It was accepted on the outside only by the blacks. I remember at one point I was being met at the Johannesburg Station. It was the first time I had been there. The Embassy driver couldn't come in to get me because he was black. I didn't know what he looked like, what the car looked like or anything else, so we had quite a time making contact.

Q: You mean the South Africans would have the same problem? Their drivers couldn't pick them up?

PRATT: They could pick them up but they had to wait outside the station. Of course, they know their own drivers. The other aspect of it is that an American businessman from Beirut came down to visit me in South Africa. He had come from a visit to Nigeria. I picked him up one Sunday morning in Johannesburg and brought him up past Soweto. His reaction to Soweto was, "My god, these people are more fortunate than those in Nigeria."

Q: I hate to think that.

PRATT: The contrast, of course, is not between Soweto and Lagos, but between Soweto and the white sections of Johannesburg, which the black population does see.

Q: Did you find your work interesting?

PRATT: The work was mildly interesting, but there was none of the excitement I got during my nine years in Damascus and Beirut. Life moved along at a fairly slow, even pace. In South Africa, itself, we had problems outside the country. Mozambique was in the throes of getting its independence from Portugal.

We had Rhodesia to the north of us which we were forbidden to have contact with. We couldn't visit or talk to Rhodesian officials. At the end the Rhodesians began to worry about contacts with the United States. Knowing that lack of direct contact was our policy, they located an American with business interests in Rhodesia and turned him into a intermediary on the grounds, quite correctly, that I could not refuse to see an American who wanted to come in and talk with me. I tried to get all the information I could from him. He had accurate information.

Q: So, how long were you in South Africa?

PRATT: I got to South Africa the end of January, 1974 and left June, 1976.

WILLIAM B. EDMONDSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Pretoria (1974-1976)

Ambassador William B. Edmondson was born in Montana in 1927. After serving in the U.S. Army for three years, he joined the State Department in 1951. His career included positions in Zambia, Ghana, Tanganyika (Tanzania), Switzerland, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to South Africa. Ambassador Edmondson was interviewed in 1988 by Arthur Tienken and in 1995 by Tom Dunnigan.

Q: After four years in the cultural field, and it certainly gave you a wide overview of things African, you went to South Africa as the DCM. I believe you had two ambassadors in that period,

John Hurd and Bill Bowdler. Did you and the ambassador divide your duties? Did he give you certain fields he wanted you to follow? Or did you work as a tandem team there?

EDMONDSON: Essentially I worked as an alter ego, which meant that I covered all areas, though some, of course, I would watch much more closely than others, because of the issues of the moment.

I should add, with regard to going to South Africa, that since my experience had been in Black Africa, and my training in African Area Affairs, I had once felt that I would never want to serve in South Africa. I really didn't have any interest at all. In fact, the experience that I had in educational and cultural affairs, and in trying to improve particularly our programs in southern Africa, created much greater interest on my part in the issues there, and a better understanding of them. As I met many more Black South Africans I thought that it would probably be a very interesting place. When I started looking for an assignment toward the end of my period in CU, South Africa was high on the list.

Q: What was the political climate when you arrived in South Africa in 1974, and what was the attitude towards the United States?

EDMONDSON: In a sense, there was a great deal of hostility, particularly among Afrikaners, and on the part of the National Party Government. They liked to think of the United States as an ally, they liked to think of themselves as part of the West, and they constantly emphasized that and emphasized the role they had played in World War II, despite the fact that the leadership of the National Party had essentially been against South African participation, and some of them had been outright pro-Nazi. So there was that attitude.

They knew very well that the United States Government - and we constantly emphasized - the people and the Congress of the United States were not in agreement with the policy of apartheid. There was an earlier time when I think that we had been much more conservative in our approach - doing in Rome as the Romans do - but by this time we already had a much firmer policy against South African apartheid.

Q: We're talking about an era of, say, twenty years ago. Could the Embassy at that time foresee the coming changes, the changes that have now taken place?

EDMONDSON: Changes *were* obvious. They were constantly going on. To say that we could have foreseen what has taken place in that way, probably not. But our hope was that indeed there could be changes toward that end. In the long term, with lots of problems in between, that hope has been realized. But at that time there was already some movement away from some of the aspects of the apartheid that had been brought in by the National Party, after 1948, and particularly after 1950 (but one needs to go into the history of that to understand it). But there was some slight relaxation here and there that we might discuss in further detail later.

Q: How were our relations with the South African Government at that time? Would you say they were warm? Correct? Cool?

EDMONDSON: I would say they were correct... that in some regards we had a degree of cooperation. We had a missile tracking station there for some of the space activity. But that was a minor thing that involved only a couple of people, actually under contract, a civilian agency. And unlike some of the propaganda against it at the time, this was not an element of military cooperation, or anything like it. Although the South Africans, I think, would have liked to have seen more cooperation in that sense. Already we had cut off any kind of naval visits or relationships of that sort.

Q: How would you characterize the Embassy's relations with the Black and Colored leaders and their organizations?

EDMONDSON: We made a conscious effort to cultivate those leaders, particularly on the part of the substantive officers. We got out into the townships. We certainly dealt with all levels of representation in the White Parliament, including not only the National Party, but also, very obviously, the parties that were in opposition and the Progressive Party, the Progressive Reform Party, later, as it developed. But among Blacks, we were eager to make the acquaintance of different types of leaders, in the labor movement, in different student movements, and so on. That was a very important part of our effort to understand what they hoped for the future of their country and what they were trying to do.

Q: Could, and did, the ambassador entertain Blacks and Coloreds in the Residence?

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes. This had started much earlier. It started originally with invitations - and I can't tell you now which ambassador did begin it, but it went back a long time - where we held a Fourth of July reception and invited prominent Blacks. That increased constantly in number, and extended in time, before I came, to other types of representation. I made it a policy, as DCM, with support from Ambassador Hurd, to encourage officers, always, to try to have mixed functions, and to include more Africans, Coloreds, etc., in our representational efforts.

Q: What was the effect on the Embassy of the campaign to get United States companies and institutions to withdraw their funds from South Africa and to dissolve their ties there?

EDMONDSON: One has to look at this over a period of time, because it did occur over quite a long period of time. There was a great deal of criticism of the fact that the US did have investments in South Africa, and many people wanted pressure to withdraw those investments. But the pressures didn't become very, very strong until a much later period.

The US Government took a neutral policy on investments. That is, we neither discouraged nor encouraged investment. We tried to explain to potential investors the kinds of problems that they would face from possible protests or from internal problems within the country, and that above all, if they should come in, they should pursue policies that would advance the interests of black workers, that they would help with the housing, and that sort of thing. We particularly encouraged support of the Sullivan principles and had developed a lesser code that was not mandatory, but that we put forward as guidelines for business to consider if they were coming

into South Africa.

Q: Did the introduction of Black FSOs at the Embassy prove to be a problem?

EDMONDSON: No. I was very strongly in favor of that. The first Black FSO had been assigned before I came, and had left before I arrived. Ambassador Hurd, I think, had some problems of his own: he was a little uncertain of this and wasn't particularly eager to get additional [Black] officers at that time. But we did get those, particularly under Ambassador Bowdler, who enthusiastically supported a policy that I and the political section suggested, that we needed to have Black representation in our different agencies throughout. So ultimately we had Blacks in the consular section, the political section, and USIA.

Q: With no grumbling from the South African Government?

EDMONDSON: Oh, there was grumbling... but I think the Department of Foreign Affairs understood our approach. In fact, I would suggest that the Department of Foreign Affairs was somewhat more liberal than many of the other branches of government, with a few exceptions here and there. We made it clear we were going to assign such personnel. We expected no difference in treatment to any of them, and I think that by and large we had support there.

There were some specific incidences... In one case I remember an officer had been out on an outing, and actually taken some Embassy children out, and had some car problems. He was given a very cold treatment at a hotel when he tried to have the children stay there and have some refreshments. I protested that. The Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs accepted that protest, and we understand that there were some pretty firm actions taken with the hotel management.

Q: Did we get any credit for helping prevent South Africa's expulsion from the United Nations?

EDMONDSON: I'm not sure that we did. I can't recall that by the time we were involved in other issues, that it was really an important thing for us.

Q: What were the major problems that you had to deal with at that time, such as Angola, you mentioned Namibia... Portuguese Colonialism being a big issue at the time, and Rhodesia, and then the Soweto riots also, I gather...?

EDMONDSON: Well, the Soweto riots occurred while I was in South Africa; in fact, had been going on for a while just about the time that I was called back to work in the Bureau. The riots had pretty well subsided, but the issues that lay behind them were things that we had been pointing out to the South Africans for some time as problems of apartheid. So, yes, internal affairs in South Africa were a concern; however, if you put it in terms of the Secretary's priorities, I would have said Rhodesia came first. There had been earlier concern about Angola and Mozambique, particularly when it looked like South Africa might - and did for a while -

move some troops over toward Angola. That quieted, so Rhodesia and Namibia were the first two issues, and there was always concern about the problems in Angola.

Angola was a sore spot at an earlier time, because the invasion of the South Africans into southern Angola complicated matters no end. In fact, with regard to that particular issue, the role of South Africa I think changed things for the worse, because when Communist influence [began], the Russians and the Cubans (even before the Cubans, the Russians were involved), countries like Ghana and Nigeria were clearly opposed to this Communist effort in Angola, but when South Africa came in, they simply flip-flopped. Any Africanist could have predicted that would have been the effect. I think there was a division within political circles in the United States. Actually, with the wisdom of hindsight, we should have protested much more strongly and more directly the South African incursion into Angola.

Q: In that connection, were our relations with the South African Government such that our military attachés or our political officers at the Embassy had foreknowledge that the South Africans were going to move into Angola?

EDMONDSON: I don't recall that we had foreknowledge. We did have intelligence with regard to their being there very, very soon... I just don't recall. There were accusations that the United States had actually encouraged South Africa to go into Angola, and subsequently, Pieter Botha, who was at that time Minister of Defense, accused the United States of "leaving South Africa in the lurch," the argument being, from his point of view, that the US had encouraged them to go in. I have no knowledge of any such encouragement being given, overtly or covertly.

In fact, the only thing I would say is the absence of very strong protest on our part could have been perhaps misinterpreted as encouragement. Subsequently I was, as chargé at one period, authorized to deliver to the Foreign Ministry and to press sources a clear denial of any official encouragement to the South Africans to interfere in the Angolan situation.

Q: Did we believe at that time, say fifteen years or more ago, that the South Africans were working on a nuclear weapon?

EDMONDSON: We never knew for sure. We had suspicions that they were. They clearly had a nuclear program. Earlier we had had a degree of cooperation with them that we trying to use as leverage to try to get them to join the Nonproliferation Treaty. We could understand from their point of view, that they saw the possibility of enriching uranium and exporting it as a commercial advantage that they wanted to pursue. But at the same time, their degree of secrecy, their refusal to join the Nonproliferation Agreement, gave us a great deal of concern. So we watched it very closely, and we had several high-level visitors come out to negotiate with them and try to persuade them to join the Nonproliferation Agreement.

Q: Did you work on the British-American plan for the transition in Rhodesia? Did you get involved in that?

EDMONDSON: Well, involved, yes. There were, as you know, several stages, and eventually we assigned our Ambassador to Zambia, Steve Low, who is now President of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training, as a liaison with the British in their negotiations. We supported that by keeping the South Africans informed, trying to win South African cooperation.

In fact, if you go back to the Kissinger period, Kissinger felt that there was no way we were going to get a solution in South Africa without pressure on Rhodesia from South Africa. I think, indeed, the South Africans saw it - at least the South African Government - as in their interest to see come kind of settlement, because the continuation of the war in Rhodesia could only create more problems over the long run for South Africa. So, indeed, it was possible to get some cooperation. It was limited. It was at times cranky. But it was an important element. So we continued to want to keep the South Africans involved and supportive with the idea of getting a solution in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

SEJAMOTHOPO MOTAU
Student and Editor, University of South Africa
Atteridgeville (1974-1976)

Mr. Motau was born and raised in South Africa and was educated at the University of South Africa and the University of California, Berkeley. He was the recipient of an Operation Crossroads Africa grant to the United States as well as a Fulbright scholarship for study at the University of California. A newspaper editor and a reporter by profession, Mr. Motau was elected to Parliament and has since been an active member of the Opposition Party. Mr. Motau was interviewed by Daniel F. Whitman in 2010.

Q: Welcome Sej. We are sitting here in Pretoria. Can you tell us first of all Sej, about where you came from in this complex South African society? Can you tell us what your origins were, a little bit about your family, your early education and what enabled you to follow a career that transcended your community?

MOTAU: Let me start with the Sej because it is always a topical thing. People wonder how I became 'Sej'. It is actually a name we talked earlier about Andrew Drysdale. He was the editor of the Pretoria News when I first got there for a job interview and they had given me the job and then he said, "What is your byline?" and I said, "Sejamothopo." He reacted like a typical South African white here at the time and then he caught himself and said, "May I call you 'Sej'?"

I said, "Yes, on condition you say my full name correctly at least once" and amazingly he just said, "Sejamothopo" and I said, "You see? It is not difficult."

Q: When was this?

MOTAU: This was in 1977. I got to the Pretoria News in 1977 and that was in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto riots, yes. Because at that time most of the newspapers had white staff, especially on the political side and crimes and stuff like that. They had a few black reporters on the spotting side and entertainment side but on the news side, they did not have and I was one of the first, if you will beneficiaries of the Soweto uprising to be employed full time by a mainstream newspaper group. At that time it was the ARGUS Company that owned the Pretoria News.

What got me there was, as I said, the aftermath of the riots. The reason was very simple. In the black communities there were a lot of things happening since the violence started in June of '76. It just kept on going; it never stopped. There were all the police, the violence, you know, the teargas and the reports that came out were filtered because these were usually from police reports. The police reports filtered really the stories so the bad stuff that happened seldom made the papers.

I remember in our communities, certain community leaders went to the Pretoria News. That was before I worked for the paper and challenged the editor and said, "We saw in your paper the other day the reporting about a funeral", what we used to call political funerals where the police would kill somebody and there would be a funeral and there would be more killings at the funeral. "But we didn't experience it like this."

They said, "The reason this is happening is because A, you get your stories from the police and two, white journalists can't get into the black communities" because whites needed a permit to go into the black communities "so we want you to get information from the sources and the sources are black so get the black guys."

That's probably one of the reasons why I and a guy called Kenneth Lebethe who also lived in Atteridgeville were among the first two black people to be employed on the staff of the Pretoria News on a full time basis.

Q: Why you? I think we need to go back earlier.

MOTAU: Why me? It is another nice story.

At the time I was working for the municipality, the city council of Pretoria in Atteridgeville. At that time I was editing a publication called Lesedi which simply means 'light'. It was a newsletter which was produced by the municipality for the communities of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi. I was editor, I was journalist, I was photographer, and I was everything wrapped in one newspaper.

Q: We should explain to the reader who is not from South Africa that these are townships in the vicinity of Pretoria.

MOTAU: Well, Atteridgeville is from Pretoria from an American perspective eight miles west of Pretoria and Mamelodi about 10 or 12 miles east.

Q: In the previous system, the place where the authorities set aside for blacks who were not permitted to live in Pretoria.

MOTAU: That's right. We had to live in a place that was designated for black people, for colored people, so called, for Indian people and for whites. So I lived in the black township of Atteridgeville.

At that time in 1974 I had decided because of the job I was doing for the municipality editing this paper I wanted to be well informed about journalism and I wanted to go to journalism school which was at the time, Rhodes University. To do that I had to get special permission under the law and I refused to do that so I went instead to UNISA, the University of South Africa which is a correspondence college.

Q: Maybe the largest university in the world.

MOTAU: Today it is probably the largest in Africa.

Anyway, I got there and one day I was doing an assignment for a communication course which included journalism and newspapers and that kind of thing. I decided to phone the local newspaper editor and I ended up with the news editor, a guy called Dan van den Heuwel and I told him who I was, what I wanted and I told him I was a student at UNISA. I needed to know something about a journalistic term, 'own correspondent'. What does it mean when you see it in the newspaper and the byline is 'own correspondent'? And so he explained it to me and afterwards said to me, "What work do you do? And I said to him, "Well, I work for the municipality. I edit this publication called 'Lesedi'."

He said, "Do you write?"

I said, "Yes, I write."

He said, "Can you show us some of your writings?"

I said, "Yes" so I went there, showed him some of my writings and the next question was, "Would you like to work for us?"

At that time I had been in my second year at UNISA by correspondence and I said, "Well, I would like to do that but I think I need to get my university degree first."

He said, "No, no. Let's be the judge of that" and he pushed an application form in my face and it said 'application for employment'. A week later I was employed by the Pretoria News.

The reason that happened was I was working for the municipality and we were covering all these happenings during the violence and many of the stories he had seen, the examples he had asked me to give, outlined in detail some of the stories from the community.

Q: This was a conservative town and the Pretoria News was the mouth piece of. . .

MOTAU: Yes. You wouldn't call it a mouthpiece. It was say conservative newspaper of the capital city which covered the administration, the white administration so it was actually a must read for government employees and whatever. The Pretoria News would be kind of center to right. So it was actually a big step for them to have black journalists on the staff.

That helped me to complete my university degree with UNISA after two years or thereabouts.

HERMAN REBHAN
General Secretary, International Metalworkers Federation
Washington, DC (1974-1989)

Herman Rebham was born in Poland and raised in Germany. He came with his family to the United States in 1938 and settled in Cleveland, Ohio. After working in auto manufacturing plants in the Midwest, he became Administrative Assistant to United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther, and dealt with domestic and international labor matters throughout his career. In 1972 he became the United Auto Workers Director of International Affairs in Washington, D.C. Mr. Rebham died in 2006. Mr. Rebham was interviewed by James F. Shea and Don R. Kienzle in 1995.

REBHAN: Then we had South Africa. In South Africa we were active for a long time with the "colored" workers. Actually there was an Auto Workers Union. It was in Port Elizabeth mainly because Ford, Volkswagen, and the auto industry were concentrated there. We supported them, and I remember that while I was still in the UAW, we brought a guy from Port Elizabeth who was General Secretary of the union to the United States. When he came to Washington. . . -- I think the Labor Department brought him. -- I asked him, "Who do you want see? The Council of Churches?" He said, "Hell, no. I want to go back and be an officer of my union. If I see the Council of Churches, I'll never see South Africa again." I said [to myself], "That guy is smart."

Kienzle: Why would he not see South Africa again if he went?

REBHAN: Because they probably would have arrested him. To the South Africans, the Council of Churches and groups like that were subversive organizations. He wanted to see only trade unionists, and he was smart. I have to hand it to him. His stock with me went up when he said that.

And we also dealt with some "black" unions, but they were not legitimate.

Kienzle: Did you have "white" affiliates as well?

REBHAN: Yes, we also had "white" affiliates. Some of the "white" affiliates were pretty good and had "colored" unions as auxiliary unions on the side, which was one of the legal ways to operate, and some of them really were mainly white racists.

Kienzle: Did they object to your dealing with "colored" and "black" unions?

REBHAN: They didn't object, but they were very uncomfortable with some of these things. They also wanted to have these auxiliary unions because it [meant] dues and so on for them, and they didn't want them to push for independence. Later we finally expelled a couple of "white unions" actually from the IMF.

Kienzle: But they had no veto power over your policies generally?

REBHAN: No. We tried to establish a council. Those [arrangements] were always difficult, because the whites were more aggressive because they could get things done with the government and with the Labor Department and so on. So I applied for a visa for South Africa and I was turned down. I think I was turned down twice. Then the South African Government and the German companies wanted Loderer to go to South Africa, because German companies like Siemens were big there. Volkswagen had a big plant. Loderer said, "Yes, I will go to South Africa provided Herman gets a visa." They horsed around with that for a little while and I got a visa." He was good.

Kienzle: Did you accompany Loderer?

REBHAN: Yes, I went there [with him]. This was a great trip. We went to South Africa, and we started talking to our affiliates. We went to see Volkswagen, which actually was not bad in South Africa. Volkswagen trained black workers, gave them some benefits, and gave them language training so they would understand English instead of just the native languages. The [employers] had an organization, the Metal Employers Association. Then Brian Fredericks, one of our "colored" guys, traveled with us. He was an organizer for the Auto Workers Union. To us we don't know the difference between "colored" and "black." We went over to the office of the Employers' Association and we met the head of the Employers' Association, Dr. something. . . -- I don't recall his name. South Africa is like Germany. Everybody has a doctor's title. -- said, "Oh, yes. We are going to have lunch at the Rhodes Club. My Executive Committee is over there. But Mr. Rebhan, I have to tell you, we turned in all the names of the people, and the 'colored' guy is not on the list." I said, "Well, that's too bad, but he's going with us wherever we go. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get a room in a big hotel, and I'll pay for the lunch. Don't worry about. We'll meet in a big hotel if we can't meet there [at the Rhodes Club." I knew it wasn't a question of a "colored" man going to the meeting; it was a question of this guy going to the Rhodes Club. He said, "Just a minute. I'll make a telephone call." He came back and he was sweating. He was caught in between. He never expected that. He went back into the other office and made another phone call. After a few minutes he returned and with a sigh of relief said, "Everything is okay."

We went into the Rhodes Club and through the front door and there was a black elevator operator. I thought he was going to faint when he saw this black man walk in through the front

door. [Here to fore] black men only shined shoes or walked through the back door. It was a great thing. [The West German weekly magazine] Der Spiegel wrote about Loderer's trip to South Africa, and they wrote this up in a special box. We broke the color line at the Rhodes Club. The Rhodes Club existed over hundred years or something like that.

South African workers began to gather strength through their unions and began flexing their muscles. The results were a number of strikes. Each strike had its own dynamics. Let me just deal with two strikes, one against a South African company owned by Anglo-American, the Oppenheimer family trust, and the other one owned by Volkswagen of Germany.

Anglo-American and Oppenheimer pride themselves as liberal employers and to a certain degree they are more liberal than other South African companies. As soon as the strike began we received a request for assistance. In the case of a multinational [corporation] we used to pressure our country affiliates to help in a settlement. What do you do with a purely South African company and one that is a more liberal employer? We had made some personal contact with the Labor Relations Manager of Anglo-American. He always wanted to meet with us when he visited Geneva and the International Labor Organization. He always told us that Anglo-American was in favor of change.

I had the person in our office who was responsible for South Africa call the Labor Relations Manager and tell him the following: "If the company follows the practice of discharging all the strikers, we will start an international public relations campaign against Anglo-American. Every year the company places full page ads in the European papers claiming how liberal they treat their employees and how progressive they are in their labor relations. The IMF will tell the real story beginning with an ad in the *Financial Times*, a paper circulated all over the world." The Labor Relations Manager told my assistant, "Mr. Rebhan can't do this!" To which my assistant replied, "You don't know him!" This worked. The negotiations began and no one was discharged. The strike was settled within a reasonable time.

The other case was Volkswagen (VW). The strike began and we were contacted. In turn we contacted Loderer, who was President of I. G. Metall and a member of the Supervisory Board of VW and they stalled. The hid behind South African legislation and the rules of the Employers' Association. As these talks were going on, we sent one of the Assistant General Secretaries of the IMF to South Africa, who was Swiss. The Swiss were not required to obtain visas for entry into South Africa. He became the advisor to the union and eventually the chief negotiator. Being also an economist he assisted in developing a cost of living system for the negotiations. Between the pressure of the strike and the intervention of the I. G. Metall, the results were a favorable settlement.

Let me mention the Wiehahn Commission. The Wiehahn Commission came, because the government finally realized that it had to give some legitimacy to trade unions, especially to black trade unions. Wiehahn was a professor of labor and a labor arbitrator.

Kienzle: This was initiated by the South African Government?

REBHAN: The South African Government.

Shea: Who was the Labor Attaché at that time.

REBHAN: Frank Golino. This was in the late 1970s. [Anyway], Wiehahn headed the commission and came up with a report. [As a result] the Government legalized black unions, and black unions started to rise at that point. We pushed to amalgamate all the black unions into one metal workers union. We got most of them into one union called the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). Then we established a full time office with one our people there to administer the money and provide support and so on. It was a very mixed period because black workers finally felt that they could do something. We had a lot of strikes. [Employers] used to fire people, and there were all kinds of legal problems. South Africa is [modeled] on the Anglo-Saxon legal system. Everything is handled by lawyers, so we had a lot of work and it was quite successful, but also a drain on our funds..

Kienzle: Did the IMF have training programs at that time?

REBHAN: Yes, we had training programs. We had all kinds of things. And then we did something which was very unusual. The American corporations withdrew from South Africa. That was both good and bad, because we had [exerted] quite a bit of pressure on American corporations from this end. [For example], when there was a Ford strike or something like that, we could do something. When [the Americans withdrew] they said, "We're not the managers anymore. We sold the company." [Some of] the sales were maybe not completely [at arms length], but a lot were real sales. So that took away [some of our leverage].

But the Germans thought of something else. The Germans started putting pressure on German employers, who didn't want to withdraw from South Africa, and said, "You have to treat these workers just like you treat workers at home. If there's a strike, you can't fire everyone, or you are going to have trouble with us." [This was especially true] at Volkswagen. They finally got a written agreement with the overwhelming majority of German employers setting out the conditions that would exist. This was a great, great achievement.

Kienzle: Was this unusual or were there other instances like this?

REBHAN: This was highly unusual. This was the only time, and it came towards the end of this period. It didn't last long enough to be able to really analyze it, but it was a great thing when it happened, and you really have to give the German [union] I. G. Metall credit for that. They really worked at it. The Germans sent down their main lawyer; they sent down people from their office; and they really put pressure on companies at home on this thing, Siemens and so on. That was great.

Kienzle: Was the AFL-CIO active in South Africa at this point and did you interact with their policies towards South Africa?

REBHAN: The AFL-CIO was having a problem. The AFL-CIO, I think, made a mistake. They gave the George Meany Award to Gatcha Buthelezi, and that soured the people [South African blacks] towards the AFL-CIO. People who had an ax to grind, the left-wingers and so on, used that and the AFL-CIO could do very little. Also other people gave money, the Swedes and the Dutch. South Africa was a cause celebre. The ICFTU [was involved]. There was always money for South Africa.

Kienzle: Can you explain why the AFL-CIO was so far off base on this decision [to recognize Buthelezi].

REBHAN: I don't know why, but Irving Brown had something to do with it. Irving knew Africa. He couldn't get a visa to South Africa. I don't know how that happened. At one time Buthelezi resisted having a homeland officially. Mandela was in jail at that time. So Buthelezi played a role, but it soured people to give the award to Buthelezi, because to them he was a homeland [supporter]. He headed a homeland and he ran it like a fiefdom.

REBHAN: The other [experience I want to mention involved the] General Secretary of the black Metal Workers Union in South Africa. He went to England on a study trip and like a fool -- He may have been fingered by somebody in Britain. -- he took back some anti-Apartheid literature. At the airport, they opened up his luggage, and they arrested him. Boy! That was really something! What we did was to immediately start a campaign to release him. We hired a lawyer from London, who was a member of the House of Lords from the Liberal Party, not from the Labor Party. We asked him to go down to South Africa for us to observe the trial. The trial was postponed. He went down there and luckily he knew the British Ambassador very well. He had gone to school with him. So he got entree to the prosecutor and all those people [involved in the case]. He made a good case for us, but the [black labor leader] still sat in jail. The trial didn't come up. Nobody was ever freed in South Africa in one of those cases. They always got sentenced to something. But we were sure that we had saved his life. They wouldn't kill him [even though] they would beat him up.

Then Christmas came around and we started a campaign. We printed up postcards in different languages wishing him a Merry Christmas and hoping that he would get out, and we mailed about 50,000 cards like that to him at the jail. He never received them, but they piled up.

Kienzle: The jailers took notice anyway!

REBHAN: The jailers took notice. It was a good campaign. We publicized it and there was a committee in the United States for him. Finally, he was freed. He was one of the few unionists who ever got out of jail in South Africa without being sentenced. He is now a member of Parliament. Moses Mayakiso.

OWEN CYLKE
Director for East and Southern Africa, USAID
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Mr. Cylke was born and raised in New Jersey and educated at Yale University. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ethiopia, he joined USAID in 1966 and served several years in Washington, where he dealt with African matters. In 1968 he was posted to Nairobi, the first of his overseas posts, which include Kabul, Cairo and New Delhi. In all, he dealt with environmental and development matters with USAID. Following retirement Mr. Cylke continued work in his field, including holding the Presidency of the Association of Big Eight Universities, which also dealt with developmental and environmental matters in the developing world. Mr. Cylke was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1996.

CYLKE: Then there was the Southern African experience. Again, to look at my own career, I touched on some fantastic kinds of experiences, whether it's drought, the Ethiopian Revolution, which has happened in other parts of the world. Somehow, the Selassies, even though he could proceed, he couldn't make that with the rising aspirations and politicalization of the society. I was at the beginning of (inaudible due to static). (Inaudible due to static) the emergence of South Africa (inaudible due to static). The whole of South Africa really wasn't any more on our mind than (inaudible due to static). The Southern Africa strategy was imported with aid development goals because we were interested in developing those kinds of (inaudible due to static). I would say, after the Sahel, having gotten the taste of wanting to do something bigger- This was not an emergency program like the Sahel. We were not shipping in food. We were not doing things. But it was an emergency program in the sense that we wanted to do something, but it was the opportunity to have a broad (inaudible due to static).

Jerry Knoll was the office director. So, I was the office director in '75 for East and Southern Africa. I was deputy director for a year. I went and interviewed to leave the Agency at that point and go to the Peace Corps. That was an important point in my career. I had decided that I'd had enough of AID, AID was interesting. I really wanted to move on in a foreign service career and into a broader sense of engagement. I interviewed at the Peace Corps to be director in Malaysia, which I thought would be wonderful. I think I was disgusted with the Agency for one reason or another, which happens in any career, I assume. Anyhow, I didn't get the job and I was made the director of East and Southern African Affairs because Jerry had moved on to another bureau.

Q: You covered quite a range of countries then.

CYLKE: But my whole effort was Southern Africa. We undertook a major study, which you'll recall because it was just before the election and just before you came in as deputy assistant administrator. This was a monstrous kind of effort - in retrospect, probably ill-fated, but it was a study of Southern Africa, contracted to Louis Berger and Company. They hired a group of people and we did studies of however many countries there were, nine. Then there was an over-arching, drawing conclusions from the 10 studies, which was directed by Ed Hutchinson, who had been head of the Africa bureau. That was my introduction to Ed. So, I had never really worked with

him in his role as AID assistant administrator. But I worked with him in this role and he was a rather extraordinary person, I think. Another person with a development good common sense - maybe he was an economist, for all I know; I don't know what his real professional background was, but he was a development person in the broader sense and had interesting kinds of insights, I think, into what was happening in South Africa.

Q: You're speaking of-?

CYLKE: Of Ed Hutchinson in that context. I thought we did an interesting study with two major mistakes, out of lack of age and lack of understanding. One was the political side of it. You can do the best study in the world, but if you don't bring the political process along with you, you haven't brought anything along with you. It's easier to go into a room and do a study. But the fact that a study is not a study, but a political process of engaging people around ideas I don't think was as clear to me. I was more obsessed with the study than with the political process. That was one point.

The second point, from my observation, and you, if you'd been in it, you'd probably have your own observation, was the fact that (inaudible) the outside world. I was just beginning to understand. I got a taste of it in the Sahel, but I got more of a taste of it in (inaudible due to static). After all, Southern African policy was largely conceived of and brought into the public arena by outside NGO groups. The State Department resisted that movement for about 20 years perhaps. The Agency couldn't move into that area really without the State Department go-ahead, so there were a group of people outside the Agency who were as much a part of the policy process as people inside the Agency. I (inaudible) my awakening to that (inaudible due to static). (Inaudible due to static) the State Department isn't just the State Department worked in a much broader political operation (inaudible due to static). I don't think I ever had a full appreciation (inaudible due to static) domestic as well. (Inaudible) in the Sahel much more broadly here.

PETER DAVID EICHER
Political Officer
Pretoria/Cape Town (1976-1978)

Mr. Eicher, son of an American oil geologist, was born in Saudi Arabia and raised in the US and abroad. He was educated at McGill University, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of California, Los Angeles. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, Mr. Eicher became an Africa and Human Rights specialist, serving at posts in Fiji, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Switzerland as well as in Washington and at the United Nations in New York. Mr. Eicher was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: You were in South Africa as a political officer from when to when?

EICHER: From the middle of 1976 to the middle of 1978. I had one of two junior positions in the

political section. It was one of the half dozen embassy positions that moved back and forth between Pretoria and Cape Town. The main embassy was based in Pretoria but parliament met in Cape Town for six months of the year, so for those six months the ambassador, the DCM, the political counselor, myself, and a couple of secretaries and communicators would move from Pretoria to Cape Town, while the rest of the embassy would remain in Pretoria.

Q: Were you married?

EICHER: I am still married, just one wife for 39 years now.

Q: How did that work out, family wise?

EICHER: It was tough and that was one of the reasons that we stayed only two years in South Africa. We had two children when we arrived. One was school age, he must've been in about second grade or so, and we put him into one of the private English schools, English-language schools in Pretoria. Then, after six months we moved him to Cape Town, to another English language school when we moved down there, much to the distress of the headmaster of the Pretoria school. He thought well, of course, we should board him. They thought the idea of pulling him out was just horrifying because, of course, it was the English tradition that you put your kids in boarding school at age 6 and they fend for themselves. So, that must have been pretty tough on our son, Cameron, but he seemed to adapt to it all right and got along fine. Our third son was actually born in South Africa, in Cape Town, in Groote Schuur Hospital, the hospital where they did the first ever heart transplant operation. The move every six months must have been hard on my wife as well. She got a job with USIS in Cape Town, but didn't have one in Pretoria. On the positive side, Cape Town was a much nicer city than Pretoria. We liked it much better. So, there was some advantage to moving down. Having the cross-country trip every six months also enabled us to see much more of the country than we otherwise would have. The embassy had a house for us in each city, which remained vacant when we weren't there. It was very nice housing. The logistics of the move got easier after the first time, since you were moving back to the same house you had been in before and knew where you wanted to put everything and where to hang all the pictures.

Q: Okay, 1976. What was the situation in South Africa?

EICHER: The Soweto riots broke out in the summer of 1976, just two or three weeks before I was due to arrive in South Africa, which of course was a huge event.

Q: Could you explain what it was?

EICHER: All right. South Africa at the time was very much at the height of the apartheid system, officially called "separate development," but in fact a system of very strict segregation, that was vigorously enforced through a very harsh police apparatus. Apartheid affected all facets of life – where people could live, or work, or eat, or go to school or to the movies, even what public benches they could sit on. It was accompanied by a strict "pass system," under which blacks were officially not citizens of South Africa. Instead, they were assigned on a tribal basis as citizens of

small, unviable “homelands” or “Bantustans,” even if they had lived all their lives in a South African city. They weren’t permitted in “white” areas – most of the country – without a pass; if they didn’t have a pass they could be arrested and deported to a “homeland” that they might never even have visited before. There was actually a policy of giving so-called independence to the Bantustans. One, the Transkei, was already “independent” while we were there and it was off limits to official Americans. The theory behind apartheid was that if you could assign all the blacks to be citizens of these little, independent countries that would be created, then the whites would be a majority in South Africa and the blacks would have their own little countries, where they could enjoy all the same rights and privileges that whites had in South Africa. This was a pipe dream, of course.

The Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party was firmly in control of the government. It saw the policy of apartheid as a solution to the racial problem in South Africa in the sense that it would strictly divide the races, reinforce tribal divisions within the black community, and create a number of these supposedly independent countries, which would provide a façade to show the world that the blacks really had equal rights. Aside from the Bantustans, the rest of land in the country – about 80%, I think – would belong to the white population, which was maybe 20% of the overall population. There was also a so-called “colored” population, mixed race, and a quite large Indian population who also had their separate classifications. So, there was very strict segregation as part of an institutionalized social and political system at the time, and a very large and brutal security establishment to enforce it.

The Soweto riots of 1976 were the start of a very long period of serious urban unrest in South Africa in opposition to the system. It was the first sustained, widespread, black action in opposition to the regime. There had previously been race riots in Soweto around 1960, but they were very short-lived. The unrest following the 1976 Soweto riots continued for my entire tour of duty, on and off, and led to sharp crackdowns and further restrictions of civil liberty, the arrests of lots of leaders, and the banning of lots of organizations. It was a very tense period, politically. After the riots in Soweto – a suburb of Johannesburg – broke out, rioting spread to other townships, or segregated suburbs, all over South Africa.

So these riots broke out in the summer of 1976, just as I was about to head out. I remember getting a call from somebody at the State Department telling me that it was important in view of the rioting that I cut my vacation short and get out there just as soon as I possibly could. Being a young officer heading to my second tour, I took this quite seriously and cut my vacation plans short. We got ourselves to South Africa and arrived to the reaction of, “Oh my goodness. We didn’t expect to see you so soon.” And, you know, here I was, a young officer fresh off the plane, riots in the townships all over the country, and there wasn’t really very much that I could do about it, even in terms of reporting. I didn’t know anybody yet. You couldn’t actually go out and see what was going on because they were rioting and we were supposed to stay away. So, that was one more of those introductions to the Foreign Service. I learned to think very carefully before changing vacation plans again to rush to a post.

We faced a couple of other administrative problems on that transfer. Our trip was right after the Israeli raid on Entebbe airport, in Uganda. We were flying to South Africa through Nairobi, where

we took a rest stop for a day or two. When we went to board the plane from Nairobi to Johannesburg, security was so tight because of the raid on Entebbe in neighboring Uganda that they would not let us take a single item of carry-on with us on the plane. That was back in the days when airport security was generally unknown, and you got on planes much the same way you got on trains, with no special screening. So, the security measures were really something. There we were with two small kids and a long flight ahead and we weren't even allowed to take a little bag of toys or books. So it was a rough flight, although our kids always traveled well. Then, when we arrived in South Africa, we were met by the political counselor, Bob Munn, with a cable from the Department that began "Due an incredible administrative error..." It turned out they had shipped our household effects to Moscow instead of Pretoria! I think I still have the cable, signed by Kissinger, who was secretary of state at the time. We could never figure out how that mistake happened, unless South Africa and the Soviet Union were next to each other on an alphabetic list and someone entered the wrong code number. Anyway, the U.S. consulate in Goetburg, Sweden, did some fancy footwork and had our effects unloaded in Sweden before the ship entered the Soviet Union, and had them transhipped to South Africa. Still, it was many months before we saw them. We had shipped everything months early in hopes that it would be waiting for us when we arrived. So, we didn't even have a crib for the baby; he quickly learned to sleep in a bed.

One first impression of South Africa was making our way through the airport in Johannesburg and seeing lots of police armed with machine guns. That was a real eye-opener at the time and a signal of the government's siege mentality. These days, there is such tight security at airports all over the world that you don't look twice at armed security people any more. Back then, however, seeing men armed with machine guns at an airport made you do a double-take.

Q: When you got there, what was your impression about the South African government and where things were going and what the U.S. was up to?

EICHER: It was kind of a tough relationship all around. The South Africans were quite favorably inclined towards the United States but, of course, apartheid was already an issue internationally and it was not a popular policy in the United States. I went out there during the Ford Administration and relations were not bad at all, but not nearly as good as the South African government would have liked. This was still the Cold War era and the South African government was rabidly anti-communist and so they thought that they should naturally be seen as a strong and close ally by the United States and other Western countries. However, because of apartheid, they were already a bit of a pariah and there were various kinds of rather mild sanctions that were imposed on South Africa, which increased during the time I was there. The sanctions included an arms embargo, which resulted in the South Africans developing their own quite effective arms industry. They built a lot of their own armaments, and according to our military guys, it was very good. They also had good ties with Israel and others, which enabled them to get arms and technology. They even cooperated with the Chinese, I believe. There was also a sports embargo, at least an informal one, of countries refusing to invite South African teams or to visit South Africa, because South African teams were segregated. Interestingly, this seemed to bother the South Africans the most because they were a very sporting nation and couldn't stand the idea that their teams were not able to compete internationally. In fact, one of the first thing to be integrated

by the government was the international sporting teams, in hopes of getting some teams to play internationally. Occasionally, they would find an international team willing to come to South Africa and whenever they did, it was a big deal for them. I remember some confusion when the New Zealand “All Blacks” Rugby Team came to South Africa. The “All Blacks” got their name because they wore black uniforms, not because there were any black members of the team. The visit prompted many countries around the world to start boycotting New Zealand sports until there was some kind of an apology over the visit.

Q: Who were our ambassador and DCM when you got there?

EICHER: Our ambassador was Bill Bowdler, who was a career ambassador, a very distinguished, good fellow, who, I think, had spent most of his career in Latin America. The DCM was Bill Edmondson, who left within a few weeks after we got there and was replaced some months later by Harvey Nelson, who was an old Africa hand; we became good friends with him and his wife. Nelson was also a career officer, who went on to become ambassador in Swaziland. Edmondson, interestingly, returned as ambassador to South Africa a few weeks before the end of my assignment there, so I served with him there as both DCM and ambassador, although briefly in both cases. All three of them were good professionals and good guys. I learned a lot from working with them, especially since it was my first assignment as a political officer and I didn't really know the ropes. I certainly saw more of them than almost all the other embassy officers did, since I was also with them in Cape Town for six months a year, where the embassy had just a tiny staff, only four substantive officers, including me and the ambassador and DCM. As a result, in Cape Town, even as a very junior officer, I was attending the Ambassador's morning staff meetings.

Q: I was in INR in the late '60s and had the general impression – this was not deep analysis – that one of these days there's going to be a night of long knives in South Africa. I mean, this was kind of the idea that you can't sit on a volcano forever and reconcile it. What was the feeling about this, you know, in talking with your fellow officers?

EICHER: That was certainly the feeling I went out with. The feeling from the outside was that the situation was completely intractable and at some point it would explode or implode and you would have, indeed, an extremely bloody revolution on your hands. Of course, a low-level violent opposition was already underway through the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the so-called liberation movements – but generally the security forces had these well in hand; the liberation movements were winning the battle of public opinion in the UN and outside the country, but they were not effective within the country. And, of course, with the Soweto riots and the spread of unrest to other urban areas around the country, some people thought this could be the beginning of the violent end. Our view at the embassy was more restrained. We knew the riots were serious and were an indication of the inherent instability built into the system, but the overwhelming preponderance of power was still with the whites; the rioters weren't going to be able to topple the government and its security apparatus, certainly not in the short term.

On the white side, most of the power was still in the hands of the older generation of Afrikaner

politicians who were committed to apartheid as the solution to South Africa's racial problem. However, there was already starting to be the first signs of a split in the Nationalist Party, although "split" is probably too strong a word. The party was still solid, but what was happening was that a group of younger and more enlightened Afrikaners were emerging as a new generation within the Nationalist Party, who realized that they had a big problem and didn't have the answer. They didn't know what the answer was, yet, but they knew – unlike the previous generation which was still in power at the time – that over the long term apartheid was just not going to work. They were not going to be able to corral the black population into Bantustans and have that be an effective policy. These younger politicians, many of whom were already members of parliament for the National Party, but were still backbenchers, not actually in positions of power, were called the "verligtes," an Afrikaans word meaning "enlightened," and we hoped and believed they represented the future of the Nationalist Party. They represented a chance that white politics could develop in positive way and avoid the "night of the long knives."

On the black side, beyond the ANC and PAC, you saw a very strong sense of "we want our share, we want our rights, we want justice," but, surprisingly, this was not coupled with a strong desire for revenge or retribution, as you might expect. There was a whole new black political movement emerging out of the Soweto riots, the so-called "black consciousness movement," which was an internal opposition that continued to crystallize. Most of the leaders of the ANC and PAC were in exile or in prison. They were becoming increasingly irrelevant as a new, younger leadership emerged within South Africa. Steve Biko was perhaps the best known name among them but there was a very large group of younger generation people in all the townships around the country who were emerging into informal political leadership positions.

So, getting back to your original question, there was indeed a danger of a very bloody revolution in South Africa, but at the same time we saw that the combination of the young Afrikaners looking for solutions and the moderate blacks who were not seeking vengeance might still provide an opportunity for a peaceful way out. Even then we could see that as a possibility, so contrary to the general outside impression, it did not seem to us at the embassy that it was a hopeless case, bound for major bloodshed.

Q: Often when you come to a situation where things are changing, it's the junior officers at the embassy who sort of get out and around more than the more senior officers, who are sort of trapped in their positions of the establishment. And so they often depend on the junior officers to really get out and take soundings and all that. Did you find that situation in South Africa?

EICHER: We did, yes. I wouldn't say that the more senior officers were not connected; the Ambassador and DCM certainly did have access and knew top people on all sides of the color bar. Where they did not really know people, where it was hardest to know people, was in the emerging black leadership, that is, the young radicals in the townships. There, I think it certainly was the more junior officers who were getting out much more and knew people better. The more junior officers tended to be more radical, if you will, more anti-apartheid, or at least more apt to be actively or outspokenly anti-apartheid, than the more senior officers did. It was to a large extent up to the younger officers to get out into the townships and meet people and find out what was going on. That was my role in Pretoria. In Cape Town, I was much more following

Parliament and the Afrikaner establishment. I was in a particularly interesting position because I got to see both sides. The other less senior political officers and I did, in fact, continually try to push upon the higher-ups in the embassy the importance of giving greater credence to the new black leaders, and to push American policy toward a more equitable stance, and to press the South Africans to more reasonable policies. It wasn't that the embassy top leadership supported apartheid in any way; they didn't, of course. But, by virtue of their age, or their experience, or their professional standing, or greater commitment to reflect the carefully balanced U.S. policy, or whatever, they were just more restrained and more careful. In some ways, that translated to us a position that wasn't sufficiently anti-apartheid. I should say here that the Ambassador and DCM always seemed sympathetic to our positions, even if they often didn't go along with us. Some others in the embassy came across much more as supporters of the South African regime. And, the nature of the country was generally that the people in the embassy who were not specifically assigned to follow black affairs would be unlikely to meet educated blacks at all.

I remember at one point we had some internal dissent concerning a visit to South Africa by Henry Kissinger, who was secretary of state then. The country team was setting up Kissinger's schedule, including a meeting with a number of prominent black leaders which was, of course, something he had to do, even though as far as we could tell he himself was not much interested in doing that. He was coming to see the government leaders and this was really just a token meeting with blacks. Three of us in the political section – there were only four officers the political section, the counselor and three younger officers – were aghast when we saw this list of black leaders, which was a list of very nice people but didn't include people from the emerging leadership, nobody who we considered among the real, more credible leaders of black South Africa.

Q: Using the American term, more Uncle Toms and that?

EICHER: Yes, that's what we would have said at the time and probably did say at the time. In retrospect they weren't necessarily Uncle Toms at all, of course, but they were people who had reached senior positions in society without offending the government sufficiently to be banned or otherwise persecuted. I remember the three of us writing a joint memo to the ambassador telling him we were unhappy with the choice of participants in the meeting. He took it seriously enough to meet with us and ask for names of people that Kissinger ought to meet with. It was kind of tough for us. We came up with some names, but many of the ones that we had come up with were either in jail or they were so young and unknown that I guess it didn't make a sufficient impression on the ambassador. One, however, that we really pressed, because of its symbolism, was Robert Sobukwe, who was the head of the Pan-Africanist Congress. He was not in jail but was banned, meaning that he was restricted to a very small area and only could meet with one or two people at a time and could not go far from his home. I remember the ambassador saying, "You know, Sobukwe has been banned for many years. He's really kind of out of it. Besides that, he's in Kimberley and, you know, we couldn't work it out logistically." So they went ahead with their Uncle Tom meeting with Kissinger. We didn't win that one and we thought that was the end of the story.

But, when the embassy made its annual move down to Cape Town a few months later, the

ambassador actually stopped in Kimberley himself and met with Robert Sobukwe. I remember meeting the ambassador afterwards – I was the only one of the three who signed the memo who was part of the embassy’s Cape Town contingent – and him saying, “Oh, I was so impressed with Robert Sobukwe. You’d be amazed at how plugged in he is to what’s going on.” We felt a little moral victory there, proud, but it was a little too late.

I can’t remember specifically what it was that Kissinger came for or what prompted his visit, but it was certainly part of the general effort to try to improve American-South African relations by getting the South Africans to lighten up their apartheid policies a little bit, at the margins at least, and make them a little bit more internationally acceptable so that we could cooperate with them. The visit was also probably connected to the effort to find a solution to the Rhodesia problem. It was my first ever SecState visit, so that was interesting for me. Of course, we had control officers for different events and teams that had to be at the hotel all night long just in case something came up. I remember one of the middle-of-the-night jobs I had was scanning all the newspapers and the wire services and pulling out stories that might be worthy of being read by the secretary and his team. On top of each news report we selected, we had to attach an index card summarizing the article in one sentence for them. One amusing story I got on my watch was the incident when Vice President Rockefeller got angry with some demonstrators and gave them the finger, which was caught on film by some photographer. I carefully pulled the story out and put a card on the top saying “the vice president put his finger into a sticky ethical controversy.” That’s about all I remember of the Kissinger visit. I was not in any of the meetings and only saw the secretary walk by at a large gathering. I don’t remember him taking time to meet or greet the people at the Embassy; that would not have been Kissinger’s style.

Q: Could you sort of compare and contrast the situation from your viewpoint in Pretoria and in Cape Town?

EICHER: You mean the political situation?

Q: Yes and sort of the ambience.

EICHER: In general, Pretoria is very much a government town. It’s small and quiet. The sidewalks kind of roll up at five o’clock and everybody goes home. The big metropolis which was the commercial and financial center, Johannesburg, was about an hour down the road. Pretoria did have its own black townships, which were also very much in turmoil and it was in the Pretoria townships that I got to know most of my black contacts. In fact, since Johannesburg was a much bigger city with much bigger townships, the more important leaders emerged in the Johannesburg townships such as Soweto rather than in Pretoria, but those were generally covered by the consulate in Johannesburg rather than by us in Pretoria. We also had a consulate in Durban that followed events in Natal Province, which included most of South Africa’s Indian population and most of the Zulus, as well as a good proportion of the English-speaking whites. There was also a full-time consulate in Cape Town. Cape Town is a wonderful, beautiful city, or at least it was at the time. It’s right on the ocean, surrounded by pretty little mountains, which makes for a spectacular setting. Unlike Pretoria and Johannesburg and the other cities up north which weren’t settled until the 19th century, Cape Town has a lot of history, buildings going back hundreds of

years, a lot more character, including what they call the Cape Dutch influence in the architecture, little flower alleys, cobblestone streets, the Parliament Buildings and beaches and vineyards nearby. It was a much more cosmopolitan kind of city. Cape Town had a big “colored,” or mixed race, population who were the majority in Cape Town at the time. The “coloreds” were also restricted and segregated, but not as heavily as the blacks, so you had a feeling that, in a sense, Cape Town was a bit more open and liberal than Pretoria was. It certainly was a much more pleasant city. We always said that as bad as it was to move back and forth between Cape Town and Pretoria every six months, the advantage was that we got to spend six months of every year in Cape Town, which most embassy people did not. It really was a much nicer place to be than Pretoria.

Politics were not quite as rough there either, although they did have their problems in Cape Town as well, and they did have riots in their townships. Generally, events in those townships were followed by the consular staff in Cape Town. In Cape Town, my own portfolio shifted radically and my main issue to follow – the reason I was there – was parliament, which met just about every day. So, I would spend a lot of time going down to parliament. I got to know a lot of parliamentarians and a lot of the media folks who followed parliament. Since I was only about 26 or so, I tended to meet a lot of the young backbenchers more than the powerful leaders, but there were a lot of interesting people there. I knew Frederick de Klerk, who much later became prime minister and won the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela for bringing about a peaceful transition. I took him to lunch one day, just the two of us. He was still a backbencher but was already known as a young “verligte” who seemed to be going places. Frankly, I was less impressed with him than with some of the other backbenchers. I got to be pretty good friends with a couple of others who ended up as cabinet ministers in later years but were backbenchers at the time. These were the kind of people who gave me the sense that they wanted to try to find a solution other than apartheid, which they could see was not working. Or, at least, some of them did. The parliament was so heavily dominated by the Afrikaners, the Nationalist Party, that the opposition was practically meaningless. There may have been 20 or 30 opposition members out of a couple of hundred members of parliament. The real hope was for a change within the Nationalist Party.

Q: Looking at this group, described sometimes as “the great white tribe of Africa,” the Afrikaner, was there a good solid generational gap growing among them? I would assume the hard-liners were the older group and the young people had other ideas, because, I mean, it’s not much fun being so isolated and widely condemned.

EICHER: That’s true. You could see this split starting to emerge among the Afrikaners. It wasn’t quite so clearly the younger folks against the older folks, but certainly the older folks tended to be in the “verkrampste” or hard-line camp, and the younger folks tended to have a more enlightened viewpoint. This still was not a liberal view, by any means; it’s not as though they wanted to bring down the Afrikaner power structure or even bring an immediate end to apartheid. But it was still significant to see quite a number of younger Afrikaners questioning the system, not in the sense of protest or vigorous opposition, but in the sense that they could tell it wasn’t working, it wasn’t going to be a long term solution. They were starting to search for an answer that would allow the country to move ahead peacefully and end apartheid without damaging their own interests and

lifestyle and future. They were still afraid of taking steps to open things up in a way that might get out of control and lead to revolution. When I got there, John Vorster was prime minister. He was one of the architects of apartheid. He was very strongly conservative. He retired, while I was still there, he was replaced by P. W. Botha, who was also belligerently pro-apartheid. You just saw an increasing bunker mentality among the older folks, which was disturbing to some of the younger ones.

When I mention the bunker mentality, I'm not only talking about the bad image South Africa had in the world and the increasing number of sanctions against it, but there were also at the time the liberation struggles going on all over southern Africa. Although the ANC and PAC were not very successful in bringing the liberation struggle into South Africa proper, there was some active fighting against white regimes going on in South West Africa – Namibia, which South Africa controlled – as well as in Rhodesia, which had declared its independence and which South Africa was helping. Mozambique and Angola were still Portuguese territories until about a year before I got to South Africa, so there had been fighting, liberation struggles, in both of those. There was still fighting going on in both Angola and Mozambique while I was there, not against the Portuguese, who had left, but among the different liberation movements in Angola, and between the government and a rebel group backed by the white Rhodesians in Mozambique. There were still many South African troops in Namibia and they had made incursions deep into Angola. In fact, some South Africans once told me that they were with the military forces that went so far into Angola that they could see the lights of Luanda, which is all the way up at the north of Angola. They had gotten that far into Angola. They never admitted that publicly. So there was, in fact, a real war going on in the region, which contributed to the bunker mentality. The South Africans considered themselves a bastion against these communist-backed liberation movements and couldn't understand why the West didn't take their side, since they claimed to be fighting Soviet surrogates.

The Cubans were already in Angola at that point and the South Africans were vehemently anti-Cuban. I had one funny incident with that. I remember being taken to lunch in the Parliament's official dining room at one point by one of my South African parliamentarian friends, a young and very conservative fellow named Albert Nothnagel. We had a lovely lunch there and afterwards the waiter came around with a box of cigars and I said "They're probably Cuban cigars, ha, ha." He looked very offended and he called the waiter over and took a look and sure enough, these were Cuban cigars that they were serving in the South African Parliament, while their soldiers were up fighting the Cubans near the Namibian border. Nothnagel looked quite embarrassed. I suspect that he did something to stop that.

Q: Did the coloreds have any representation? Was there any kind of contact? How did they fit in?

EICHER: The coloreds, or mixed-race people, had no clout but, in fact, they were one of the chinks in the ideological armor of apartheid. I can't remember what the proportions of the population were; I think there were substantially fewer coloreds than whites. But it was a situation where the coloreds were not suitably accommodated by the apartheid structure. They did have their own political assembly of some kind but because they didn't have a specific

geographical area to go with it, it just didn't quite fit in into the grand theory of apartheid, that all people would be equal in their own territories. Most of the coloreds were in the Cape Town area, but they were not limited to that. It was accepted that they would have to be part of "white" South Africa over the long term, even though apartheid's restrictions clearly made them second class citizens. Coloreds had their own facilities – separate living areas, train cars, and so forth – separate from the blacks and whites. The same went for South Africa's Indian population, as well, which was concentrated in the Durban area. The Afrikaners hoped the coloreds and Indians would identify more with the whites than the blacks and therefore accept apartheid even if they didn't like it. In fact, it didn't really work that way; most politically active coloreds identified with the blacks.

Q: Looking at this, how about the, I don't know, is it called the "English group?" I'm sure they were as articulate as all hell, but did they have any particular influence?

EICHER: Not a lot. You know, they tended politically to be in opposition to the Afrikaner establishment, to condemn apartheid, and to want a more just system. They wanted to share power, but it wasn't clear exactly how they planned to do this or what final result they were looking for. They didn't have a master plan and it wasn't necessarily clear that they all wanted to completely get rid of the system of white control. In addition to the liberals, there was a white English party – gosh, I have forgotten the name of it – which in years past had run the South African government. But it was reduced to a small opposition by the time I got there. During the election while I was there, they were thoroughly trounced by the Nationalist Party and even lost to the more liberal, generally English, party which then took over as the official opposition. Again, by that time there was, as I say, maybe 30 opposition members of Parliament. They could have their say and often made very good points in debate, but they had no power to block anything the government wanted to do. Overall, the opposition actually lost seats to the Nationalist Party during the election while I was there.

Q: How did you find life in Cape Town? There might be people who would feel this is an abhorrent regime but life is pretty good I mean, if you happened to be white, English-speaking.

EICHER: Well, that's right. You could say that throughout South Africa, in general, living conditions for the foreign diplomats were extremely pleasant. Things are very cheap, everything was available, and housing was excellent; almost everybody at the embassy had a swimming pool at their house. Those of us who moved every six months had two houses, of course. We had one in Pretoria and one in Cape Town, which remained empty half the year when we were in the other place. There were good restaurants, good food, excellent wine, very, very cheap. We had wine we liked from the Western Cape for a couple of dollars a bottle. It was so cheap partly because the South Africans had trouble finding export markets because of their apartheid policy. There were all of the good colonial things – sporting clubs, servants. There were nice beaches and game parks. It was a lovely place to live if you were white and if you could close your eyes to the political situation, which, in fact, a disturbing number of Americans did, including at the embassy.

Those of us who followed politics tended to find it depressing after a while. It was a one issue

country. You couldn't have a discussion at a lunch or a cocktail party or any conversation that didn't come back to apartheid. That was the *only* issue. In one sense, it made it very easy to be a political officer there because everybody was dying to tell you their side of the story and give you their arguments. You didn't have to dig. We were very well received by everybody, black and white and Afrikaner and English. I never had any trouble making contacts. I remember at first being a little nervous because I was a very young, inexperienced American officer being expected to follow parliament, which was this august institution of senior South African leaders. But, you know, I would call up and ask some parliamentarian I had never met to lunch and they would say well, yes, of course. No problem. We would invite people to our house and it would be the first time the whites had ever met or talked with an educated black, or perhaps any black other than servants. It tended to be an eye-opener for them. So, you would feel like you were doing a little bit of good, opening a dialogue and making the whites see things a bit differently.

Q: You could then entertain? I would assume it was our policy wasn't it, to make sure that we got our views across to all sides?

EICHER: Absolutely. You tried to entertain everybody. You had to do much of it at home, of course, because the blacks were not allowed into the restaurants downtown. In fact, they were just starting to make the first exceptions to that when we were there, as well. There were a few designated hotels and restaurants around the country open to all races, very few; I think there was only one in all of Pretoria. It was the best hotel in town. Since it was so expensive, there was no danger that many blacks would actually go there. But, in line with the development of apartheid, if you're going to have the black president of one of the homelands or other African countries come to Pretoria, he had to have some place reasonable he could stay. So, in theory you could entertain blacks at one or two hotels but it was very rare. Basically, you had to do that kind of entertaining at home, which we did a lot of.

We had some black friends in Pretoria who we invited down to join us in Cape Town. They were young folks like us and came down and stayed with us for a few days and it was difficult because you couldn't go to the restaurants together; we weren't supposed to go to the same beach with them; we couldn't go to the movies with them. Everything was so completely segregated. They were forward-leaning folks and there were some fairly deserted beaches around Cape Town, and so I do remember we spent a little time on a rather deserted beach, but it was a very uncomfortable way to have to be looking over your shoulder expecting trouble. Sometimes it would really strike you. While our friends were visiting us in Cape Town, he was out front washing his car in our driveway and our neighbor came over to ask if "our boy" could also wash her car when he was finished. It was hard for us; I can't imagine how hard it must have been for them.

I remember once seeing a merry-go-round set up someplace that, as with many things in South Africa, had a sign on it saying "whites only" and I remember a little black child just watching the merry-go-round going around. There were lots of things like that. It got to be heart-rending, and worse. You know, we got to know more and more people who ended up in jail, or exiled, or even dead. So, although living conditions were very nice for us, it got to be quite a depressing place and that was the reason, along with the move back and forth every six months, which caused us

to leave at the end of two years instead of extending.

Q: Did you find interest on both sides of the apartheid divide in America's wrestling with racial discrimination? I mean, we were certainly working on the issue and in the '70s and, I mean, this was still very much a work in progress.

EICHER: We found that white South Africans referred to America's racial situation quite a bit, but didn't see it as a model of what they could do but rather along the lines of "you've got your problems, so how can you criticize us?" In fact, they would make a point of saying that our situation was not same as theirs at all. They would say that American blacks weren't really blacks at all, but "mulattoes," or "coloreds" and, of course, coloreds are much more civilized and much easier to deal with than real African blacks. So, in their eyes, Americans could not claim to have experience that was really relevant to what they were going through.

I remember getting once a telephone call from some irate person – as we do in every embassy – complaining about U.S. policy and asking how we could be critical of South Africa when we in the U.S. would never let a black be in a position of authority. The caller said that in the U.S. military, we would never let a black be a pilot, for example. I told him we already had black generals. He laughed and said "that's nonsense" and hung up. So that's just one small example of their not understanding the U.S. experience or seeing it as something relevant to them.

On the other hand, the U.S. policy toward South Africa became a huge domestic issue in South Africa. While I was there, the American administration changed from Gerry Ford to Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter took a much more principled position on South Africa, a harder line, and incensed the Afrikaners. There was a South African election shortly after Jimmy Carter became president and the Nationalist Party basically ran their campaign as if they were running against Jimmy Carter – denouncing him and his policy constantly – rather than running against the irrelevant white opposition. Using this anti-Carter approach, they won by a landslide and ended up in an even stronger position in parliament.

Q: Did you, both in the Ford and Carter administrations, get Congressional visitors, particularly, well, I mean, from both sides of the spectrum but basically, black leaders coming down there to make a point or not?

EICHER: We did get quite a lot of congressional visitors. I was involved with some of them and not others. I remember we had Charlie Diggs, of Michigan, who was a prominent congressman – I think he was head of the Black Caucus – who was later convicted of something corrupt and I think sent to jail. I remember being not at all impressed with him. But, he was trying to burnish his credentials as a kind of a liberation leader, or a sympathetic soul, or whatever. I was his control officer. I had him over to my house to meet a bunch of my black contacts. It was easier for them to come to the house than to the embassy. After the meeting he left them all with a handshake and told them "good work, keep at it and if you need anything, there is a black officer at the American Embassy you should contact." And when he said this he was sitting in my house with my contacts, my friends, so I took great offense at Charlie Diggs.

There was another congressman whose name I don't remember – Sykes, maybe? – who I was control officer for. I remember the big problem I had with him was that he wanted to go on a lion hunt while he was in South Africa. Of course, hunting lions is something that's not easy to do these days, or even back then, even in South Africa. In the game parks you're not allowed to hunt. But, the South Africans would bend over backwards to try to be helpful to a friendly U.S. congressman, which he was. So, one of our military attachés pulled a few strings and the South Africans actually set up a lion hunt for this guy. It took a lot of effort on our side, and probably on theirs, to get it done. Of course, you can never just go back and tell a congressman that his request is unreasonable. Anyway, he got there and decided that well, he'd better not go on this lion hunt after all, because it might look bad to the folks back home if news got out that he was in South Africa hunting lions on the taxpayers' dollars. After we set the whole thing up we had to cancel it again! That's the only memory I have of that particular congressman.

Q. At least the lions came out ahead.

EICHER: The lions came out ahead. The biggest visit while I was there was Vice President Mondale and this was kind of a seminal point in U.S.-South African relations. He was coming out to South Africa to make another effort to try to nudge them enough in the right direction that they would start to become acceptable internationally. He was very carefully briefed. The big issue for those preparing the visit was how to draw the balance in U.S. policy between a desire for majority rule and wanting to achieve this through peaceful evolution. The idea of the trip was for Mondale to pressure and encourage the government to do the right thing, move in the right direction. There was not a desire to break entirely with the white South African government or even to worsen relations with them, although the subtext of the visit was that if they didn't improve, relations would inevitably get worse. So, there was a lot of emphasis during the trip preparations on what sound bites to use and not to use. For example, the white South Africans were particularly averse to the idea of "one man, one vote," since they saw it as a formula for an immediate black takeover and their relegation to insignificance. So, U.S. policy, under both Ford and Carter was to avoid publicly using the formula "one man, one vote," which would just get a nasty reaction and prevent further dialogue. So, instead, the U.S. position was couched in kind of diplomatic terms that, you know, all South Africans had to find a just solution for sharing power. They have to work on it together. It had to be a solution that's acceptable to all South Africans. We used these kinds of formulations as a matter of policy, to shy away from the "one-man, one-vote" issue to the extent we could, because using that term would just convince the South Africans that we were in favor of black revolution and having the whites swept away; that's what "one man, one vote" meant to them. "One man, one vote in a unitary state," I think, was the line they used to use to describe an endgame that would be totally impossible for them to negotiate.

So anyway, Mondale came out, he had a series of meetings, and everything went pretty well. In his farewell press conference a journalist, in fact, one of my good friends from the parliamentary journalist corps, asked him, "Mr. Mondale. Are you saying that we should have one-man, one-vote?" and Mondale said, "Yes." So, because of that one answer, the headlines about the visit were all negative in the white South African press; the South Africans were up in arms and the visit was kind of a diplomatic disaster. Nobody could believe that after Mondale was briefed so carefully, he had gone out there and supported "one man, one vote," which effectively cut off

further discussion, as far as the South Africans were concerned. On the other hand, we young political officers were just elated and so was most of the black community. Relations with the South African government from that point onward for with the rest of my tour took an absolute nosedive and our relations with the non-white communities of South Africa improved by the same token. So that was a very interesting kind of turning point in U.S. policy.

There was one other small point that happened about the same time, or a bit later. The U.S. had always described the apartheid system as “abhorrent.” The South Africans didn’t like this, of course, and begged us to come up with another term. So, someone in Washington came up with the term “repugnant,” which we started using, even though the South Africans thought that was even worse. They didn’t ask us again to come up with new terms.

Q: Did Jesse Jackson get there?

EICHER: He did not during my time there, certainly not that I remember.

Q: Did we have a black officer at the embassy?

EICHER: We did have a black officer at the embassy. In fact, we had two in South Africa; one at the embassy and one at the consulate in Johannesburg; they were the second and third black officers to serve in South Africa.

Q: Who were they?

EICHER: One was Richard Baltimore, who was one of my young colleagues in the political section in Pretoria; in fact, he was part-time consular officer and part-time political. The other was Joseph Segars, who was the consular officer at the consulate in Johannesburg. There had been one black officer previously, who left just before I got there. He was an economic officer in Pretoria. His name, I don’t remember. He had been the first. So, the South Africans were starting to get used to this, to some extent, at least. There were also a couple of other black diplomats in town, an Ambassador from Malawi, I think, and a couple of “diplomats” from the Transkei, which was the first of the “independent” homelands.

Q: What were the perceptions of the two officers in your talking to them?

EICHER: I spent a lot of time with them, especially with Rich Baltimore.

Q: Where is he?

EICHER: I’ve lost track of him. I heard that he was retired. He spent years in the Middle East and I’m not quite sure where he physically is these days.

I spent a lot of time especially with him since we were in the political section together. He was a gregarious sort of guy and was very forward in his approach to the racial problems in South Africa. He loved going out to lunch with me to different places every time, just to be there and

insist that he was entitled to stay, just to make sure places had been integrated a bit, even if they were still off limits to South African non-whites. By that time, there have been enough publicity in South Africa about black diplomats that there wasn't much trouble; nobody... well, I think once or twice we had a little trouble, but not any serious trouble. We were asked to leave at least once but we stayed and insisted. We were never actually thrown out of a place. He always liked to get the most prominent table possible. He liked to do things that would just outrage the Afrikaners, to drive around town in his sports car convertible, and to date white girls. Joe Segars, in Johannesburg, was a lot more low key. I didn't get to know him as well at the time since he was in a different city. He had his family with him – a wife and small son – and that must've been extremely tough for him.

Q: Did you find in your work that there were sort of tribal politics that were going on between the Zulus and others? I mean, did this play any particular role or not?

EICHER: Well, it did, to some extent. Tribal politics were important especially within the context of the Bantustan system, which was going very strong while we were there. The first of the Bantustans, the Transkei, the Xhosa homeland, got its independence while I was there, or right before. The others were slated to. It was indeed, a big political issue at the time. A few black leaders had bought on to the idea. Some of them might sincerely have felt that they would be better off running their own homeland than as part of the oppressive South African system. So, you did have some "presidents" of homelands, and some blacks who were elected to homeland councils. Aside from Transkei, the most prominent was Kwazulu, the Zulu homeland in Natal, which was headed by the most prominent tribal leader, Gatsha Buthelezi. In general, the tribally-based leaders were seen by the urban blacks as "Uncle Toms." There was a debate within the Embassy about whether Buthelezi was an Uncle Tom or a liberation movement leader. He led a Zulu-based organization called Inkatha, which he styled a liberation movement. He was outspokenly anti-apartheid and was certainly a strong leader among the Zulus, so he was something of a problem for the South Africans. But, at the same time, he was acting within the system, as a leader of one of the so-called Bantustans. I remember arguing with the consul general from Durban, who thought Buthelezi was a liberation movement leader, while we in the political section saw him as more in the Uncle Tom category because that's how he was regarded by the urban blacks, who thought that he had sold out by accepting tribal politics and a position as a homeland tribal leader.

Also, I remember there were policy discussions about whether or not Americans would be allowed to visit or even drive through the independent Bantustans. It was decided that official Americans would not be allowed to visit. This met with some unhappiness from a lot of people in the embassy community because they felt we should be more supportive of South African policy and why shouldn't we be going to these places? But, in the larger scheme of things, I think we in the political section saw the Bantustans as largely irrelevant. Tribal politics were going on, but they were really a side issue. We didn't spend a lot of time reporting on them. The real black political movements at the time were developing in the townships with the new black leadership, and the urban blacks rejected the whole notion of sub-ethnicity or tribal identity within the black community.

Now, interestingly, at the same time, many young blacks were abandoning their English names and taking up African names, which may or may not have been part of their “official,” birth certificate names. For example, our good friend Victor Masipa, one of the national employees at the embassy, became Mokhedi Masipa. We became friends with lots of his friends, who had also changed their names from Cyril or John or whatever, to Africa names. This was all part of the growing black consciousness movement. You could tell it was new, and it was even funny sometimes, because they would introduce themselves with African names and then out of habit call each other by their English names. But, if you asked any of them what ethnic group or tribe they came from, they would become uncomfortable; they really didn’t like the idea of tribal politics. Perhaps that will turn out being a saving grace for South Africa compared to so many other African countries where tribalism is still such a problem. In South Africa, apartheid gave tribal politics such a bad name that perhaps it will be less likely to cause the kinds of divisions in the country that you see so many other places.

Q: I assume that naval visits were out of the question?

EICHER: Naval visits were out of the question, I believe, yes. We did have a naval attaché and an Army attaché and an Air Force attaché. There was actually even a little attaché airplane that they used to go flying around the country. They had quite good relations with the South African military. There was a big South African navy base near the Cape of Good Hope, Simonsig, that the South Africans always tried to hold out as a carrot for better relations, you know, “we’ve got this great strategic site right on the tip of Africa and wouldn’t it be a good place for you to be using to track Russian submarines and control the passage between the two oceans,” or whatever. So it was attractive to the American military, especially in the Cold War context, but we did not use it.

Q: Did you find the military attachés sort of fell into the... I mean, they were dealing with a white-run military. Did they feel comfortable with that? How did they see it?

EICHER: Some of my best friends at the embassy were a couple of assistant attachés because they were the ones I had taken Afrikaans language with. We got very close to them and close to their families. And, of course, they disapproved of apartheid. But the military generally, I think, tended to be on the more conservative side, as it always tends to be everywhere. I thought they were a bit too friendly towards the government, a bit too understanding of the problems faced by the white South Africans, and they probably thought I was unreasonable in my harder line views about South Africans. But it was all in a friendly way. I remember that there were a number of people at the embassy who I was seriously irritated with because they seemed so supportive of the South African government and its policies, but this didn’t include the military attachés I was close to.

Curiously, a couple of the military attachés who were there with me were PNG’d (asked to leave the country as *persona non grata*) after I left. This wasn’t aimed at them personally. It happened at a low point in U.S.-South African relations. I can’t remember what might have brought it on or what the U.S. might have said or done to provoke the South Africans, but the South Africans took the occasion to look at the attaché plane more carefully and find that to their supposed

surprise and horror that there was actually a camera on the plane and that these guys were taking pictures as they flew around. Can you imagine such a thing? What a discovery this must have been. So, they threw a couple of them out of the country, including one of my good friends. This always struck us as, you know, to some extent biting their nose to spite their face. Generally, the military attachés were among the people who were most sympathetic or understanding of the government within the embassy. It was also a bit ironic since for any of us young political officers, it would have been a badge of honor to be PNG'ed from South Africa. Instead, they did it to a military attaché, the last person we would have expected.

Q: I may have this wrong but the Sullivan concept or the Sullivan Principles? Were they, was that, something that was going on? If it was, could you explain what they are and how you saw them at the time?

EICHER: It was indeed going on. The Sullivan Principles were a set of standards, ideas, practices, that U.S. companies which were in South Africa could voluntarily agree to adhere to. They included fair labor practices and non-discrimination. I can't remember exactly what the specific provisions were but they covered things like collective bargaining, suitable housing for workers, maybe even radical concepts like equal pay for equal work, and those kinds of things. There was a big issue at the time as to whether U.S. companies ought to be investing in South Africa or withdrawing from South Africa. The Sullivan Principles, although a private initiative, were endorsed quite strongly by the U.S. government. I can't remember whether that would have been Ford or Carter or whether there was a change between the administrations. The Principles were seen as a way in which Americans could continue to invest in South Africa and have their companies there but still set an example for the South Africans and be a positive influence and show that things could change positively as a result of foreign investment. The principles were inspired by the Reverend Leon Sullivan and had no official status but they played a very big part in the debate about investment or disinvestment and what Americans should or should not be doing. So, the idea was basically to have as many companies as possible sign up to the Sullivan Principles and commit themselves to good practices. In the bluntest terms, companies committed to the Principles were seen as "good guys" who would have positive influence on South Africa and those which didn't sign up to the Sullivan Principles were part of the problem, complicit in the apartheid system. Separately, of course, a lot of people in the States thought there should be no investment in South African at all, but at that stage it seemed very unlikely that the big companies would disinvest, so the Sullivan Principles were at least a positive step in encouraging the companies that were there to adopt better practices. I think it actually worked to a certain extent. On the other hand, the opponents would say that it just gave cover to the American companies which were working there; they could say they were helping to improve things, so it reduced the pressure to pull out completely, which the more vociferous opponents of South Africa advocated.

Q: What was happening? Your bailiwick was not the business community, but what were you getting from the American business community and the business community in general; what were you getting and how are they seeing things? What was the situation?

EICHER: This was still in the relatively early years of the anti-apartheid movement and the

private Americans in South Africa tended to be very much pro-government, very sympathetic to the government. It was the rare American businessman or American tourist who would express serious concern about what was going on with the political or racial situation. There was a very high level of understanding for or sympathy with the government from among the foreign business community and even among many at the embassy. This was a continuing irritation to us “young Turks” in the political section, the complacency with which even many official Americans saw the whole situation in South Africa. They would tell us that “yes, of course, it’s a problem but you’ve got to understand their situation” and “yes, of course, but what do you expect them to do?” and “you can’t really expect them to turn over the government to these folks,” and “look at the history of it.” You know, we’d get exactly the same sorts of arguments from these Americans as we did from the South Africans, which to us showed that these unofficial Americans and a lot of official Americans seemed to swallow the South African arguments hook, line and sinker.

Q: Were you ever troubled taking a look at West Africa? It was not a very promising picture there. There were coups, tremendous corruption. And you think back to find an African run nation that you could pull up as a model.

EICHER: It was hard to do that. In fact, I think the only two functioning democracies in Africa at the time were Botswana and Gambia. You know, it seemed to me and to the other young officers in the political section to be just such a clear issue of right and wrong – black and white, if you will – and oppression and so forth that we were frustrated there was so much policy disagreement over it. It was just wrong, and so why couldn’t people see it was wrong and do something about it? Maybe we young and we weren’t prudent enough. I was just 26 when we got to South Africa. Maybe it was good that I had the ambassador and DCM to calm down my “purple prose,” as they used to call it when they edited the language in my drafts. I remember several times being told not to use such “purple prose” in my reporting. But, you know, from our point of view it didn’t matter what was happening elsewhere in Africa. South Africa was richer and more developed; it should be able to find a better way to deal with its problems. South Africa should find a way to do what it ought to do. That was really all there was to it. We were following events in South Africa, not the rest of Africa, that was what we cared about and what was going on there was just so wrong. And, with this conviction, we thought that then U.S. policy was also wrong, or at least not strong enough. This was during a time when, in the rest of the world, the U.S. was still supporting dictators here and there. We had just lost in Vietnam as a result of ill-conceived policy and it was clear to us that in South Africa we risked again being on the wrong side of history. We were starting to move in the right direction. We had said “one man, one vote.” We were advocating things like the Sullivan Principles. But we weren’t pushing things as far and as fast as I and some of the others, a few of the others, there thought we should.

Q: Let’s go back to this one-man, one-vote business. Where was U.S. policy coming from? How much thought was given to what the white South Africans wanted?

EICHER: I was still too junior to know what policy machinations might be coming out of Washington. I spent enough time with Afrikaners that I realized that a clear U.S. policy of “one man, one vote” would alienate them to such an extent that U.S. influence with the government

would be seriously diminished. In fact, one of the emerging public debates on the whole South African question at the time was whether we should wash our hands of the situation and go home – actually close down or restrict relations – or whether we could do more good by staying and trying to have a positive influence on the ground. There was even a name for the first option; it was sometimes called the “Pontius Pilate option,” washing your hands and going home, rather than being associated with a regime that was so bad and that was so unwilling to make reasonable changes to its policies. It never got to the point that official Americans seriously thought we should just completely pack it in, although that was certainly advocated in some academic circles and by most countries at the United Nations. But we did, at least some of us did, believe U.S. policy should get increasingly tough and we should ratchet down U.S. relations quite substantially if they did not improve their policies. I remember being elated when Mondale said “one man, one vote;” symbolically it finally put us clearly on the right side of the biggest political issue.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Israelis? What was our attitude toward the Israelis at the time?

EICHER: I don't recall having any contact with the Israelis in South Africa but there was one major incident involving them. I think I mentioned already that the Israelis were involved in arms cooperation with the South Africans and, in fact, there was quite a large and influential Jewish community in South Africa. While I was there, there was an atomic blast off the Atlantic coast of South Africa, which caught everybody by surprise, as far as I can tell. I think the embassy was really, seriously caught by surprise. I remember being in a meeting with the ambassador where he certainly gave every impression of not having known this was going to happen and wondering what was going on. One of the questions raised was whether it was a South African nuclear blast that they organized all on their own or to what extent cooperation with the Israelis might have been involved and if it might have been a joint project.

Q: Well, one suspects that they're doing their job. They're out trying to find out whether the South Africans were working on nuclear developments.

EICHER: The South Africans, of course, denied everything, even that there was a blast. But, I guess there were satellite pictures and maybe windborne radiation or whatever, but it was a big issue and it was pretty clear to us that there had been a nuclear blast that was off the coast of South Africa. No question that South Africans were involved and the remaining question was to what extent Israel was involved. There seemed to be a sense that there was certainly some Israeli involvement, a surmise, I should say, because I never personally saw any evidence of whether it was a joint effort or to what extent they may have just helped South Africa with the technology. That just was not clear at all.

Q: You mentioned there were a couple of other things you wanted to talk about.

EICHER: One of the most interesting meetings which I just wanted to mention was with Steve Biko, himself, when I was there. He was banned at the time, meaning he was restricted to his hometown in the Eastern Cape. But, a couple of us from the embassy, myself and another

political officer, Steve McDonald, went down and spent a day with Biko in East London, where he lived. I wish I could remember more of the specific conversation. I know we wrote it up in great detail and once I tried to get it under the Freedom of Information Act and failed, but I suspect I could probably get it now. I remember him being an extremely articulate, impressive young leader. While we were in East London, we played sort of hide and seek with a team of South African security police who were assigned to follow him everywhere he went. Part of his banning order allowed him to meet with only one outsider at a time but he was happy to stretch that and meet with two of us and the security team didn't interfere. He took us from place to place by back roads, trying to lose this team of security agents behind him, who always eventually found us again. He introduced us to a lot of other very impressive people in that neighborhood who later on became leaders of the anti-apartheid movement. Biko was later arrested and killed in prison. I did attend his funeral, as did the ambassador and Richard Baltimore, the other young political officer, and Steve McDonald, since Steve and I were the two who actually knew him.

There was even an amusing little article in the South African press. The ambassador was there in his limousine with the American flag flying and for some reason they were having trouble with the flag and couldn't get it to stay up on its little fender flagpole. So, the newspapers reported that the ambassador was there with his flag flying at half mast for Steve Biko.

Biko's death was one of the things that helped sort of catalyze international opinion a little bit more on how badly things were going in South Africa. He became very well known internationally after his death. I remember a couple of my Nationalist Party parliamentary friends being very upset by this and saying, "You know, who is this guy Biko? Nobody ever even heard of him and now you're making such a big international furor over him." I pointed out to them that here I was a foreigner in South Africa and I knew him and had heard so much about him that I traveled a thousand miles to East London just to spend a day with him. So how come they had never heard of him? That just showed how out of touch with their own country they were. I don't know whether my arguments had any influence or not, but it seemed to give them pause.

Q: What was the relevance of Biko and how did he come to your attention?

EICHER: He was one of the main brains behind the so-called Black Consciousness Movement, the whole intellectual – and later physical – uprising of the young generation of black South Africans that we've been talking about. It was sort of the South African equivalent, perhaps, of the "black is beautiful" movement in the United States but with a very strong political cast to it. He and a few of the others were the intellectual spirit behind the emergence of this.

The other big issue I was going to mention was Namibia. This was something I spent a lot of time on because it became my other portfolio, along with black politics and parliament. In fact, Namibia was a place which was generally off limits to official Americans because of its disputed status. It was still controlled by South Africa, as it had been since World War I, under a mandate from the League of Nations. The United Nations inherited the League of Nations mandate, but the South Africans didn't accept that. So, technically, there was an illegal regime occupying Namibia – still called South West Africa by the South Africans – and as a result there were strict

limits on which official Americans could go to Namibia. In practice, there were only two of us, the political counselor and myself, who were allowed to visit Namibia. This was one of several travel restrictions binding on embassy people at the time; I've already mentioned that we couldn't travel to Rhodesia or to the "independent" homelands.

Q: Who was the political counselor?

EICHER: The first year I was there it was Bob Munn and the second year it was Jay Taylor.

I ended up taking a lot of trips to Namibia, which were basically political reporting trips, getting information from politicians and others there and reporting back on what was going on. There were quite a lot of interesting political developments going on in regard to Namibia. In the UN there was an effort underway, particularly during the Carter administration, to try to find a solution that would lead to the Namibian independence. Don McHenry was one of our UN ambassadors and he was leading the Namibia negotiations. In New York they had formed "the Contact Group," made up of the five western members of the Security Council, and this group was negotiating with the South Africans. So it was a big international issue outside of Namibia and I was in the lucky position of being one of just two official Americans who could actually go into Namibia regularly and report on what was going on there. It was exciting because, you know, despite being a 26 year old youngster, I got to meet all the big political figures in Namibia.

Q: Can you describe Namibia and what was going on when you were there?

EICHER: Namibia was actually still called South West Africa, officially. The name Namibia was still emerging and was starting to be used by the blacks but certainly not by the white South Africans. The South Africans did accept that Namibia was a trust territory, not part of South Africa, even though they didn't accept that the UN had any jurisdiction there. By the time I arrived in South Africa in 1976, they had finally accepted in principle that it should become independent. They had started a process called the Turnhalle Conference under which Namibia would become independent. The Turnhalle was the name of a conference hall in Windhoek where the meetings to discuss independence were held. In good South African style, the independence plan was based on ethnic groups. So, at the Turnhalle there were representatives of the whites and the Hereros and the Ovambos and so forth, all according to their ethnic affiliation. They were trying to come to some agreement on how Namibia would become independent, a little bit along the lines of what was happening with the homelands in South Africa, but not nearly as severe. The South Africans had even succeed in luring back to Namibia a few liberation movement leaders who were involved in the conference and lent it a bit of a veneer of respectability. The major liberation movement, SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organization), would have nothing to do with the conference, of course. The Turnhalle process was going forward completely separately from the UN negotiating process, which was trying to bring real, internationally recognized independence to Namibia. The South Africans used the Turnhalle to some extent as a pressure point against the UN and the outside world. When the negotiations got too difficult at the UN they would say "well, we don't need to agree to that; we've got our own independence process going on and we'll just proceed with it."

The UN had adopted Security Council Resolution 385, which more or less condemned the South African-backed process and insisted on elections under UN supervision and control. The Contact Group, led by McHenry and others, was moving forward to try to make some actual progress in bridging the differences between South Africa and the UN, so that resolution 385 could actually be implemented. To do this, they needed to negotiate with the South Africans, which they actually started doing. McHenry came out a couple of times; I thought he was quite impressive. It was also nice to have the South Africans negotiating with a black American, which I think made them a bit uncomfortable. The internal process – the Turnhalle process – was not really relevant to the bigger picture except that it provided a real impetus for negotiations to find a solution before there was a unilateral declaration of independence, as there had been in Rhodesia, which would make it even harder to get an internationally recognized solution. And, of course, all the internal leaders took themselves seriously as needing to be consulted by the South Africans on the UN negotiations. In fact, the Turnhalle process was ongoing, so it was always out there as a threat to the UN negotiations and as a fall-back position for South Africa if the UN process should fail.

On my trips to Namibia, I would meet with all of the different internal parties, including SWAPO, the main black party. That's an interesting footnote: SWAPO had an internal branch in Namibia that was actually legal and operating openly as a political party, although it was boycotting the Turnhalle conference. It was headed by a young guy named Daniel Tjongarero, who I got to know pretty well. He later became a minister in the post-independence government, I think. The main white party was headed by a guy named Dirk Mudge. And, as I said, there were some former Namibian exiles, former SWAPO people and others, that had been lured back to take part in the Turnhalle, so the South Africans got some good propaganda value out of that.

The whole situation was really interesting and sometimes exciting. As the UN negotiations progressed, the five embassies in South Africa formed their own branch of the "Contact Group" and became involved in the day to day negotiations. There was some real progress in the talks – or what seemed like progress. Shortly after I moved on to my next assignment, the UN adopted the next big resolution on Namibia, 435, which eventually formed the basis for Namibian independence, after many more years of negotiation. So, I felt a certain pride in having been involved in that, even in a small way. We thought we were closer to independence than we really were. I remember even that I wrote to my assignments officer in Washington and asked to be assigned to Windhoek next if the negotiations succeeded and we opened an embassy there.

As for Windhoek itself, it was just a very quiet, a very pleasant place. The atmosphere was not nearly as oppressive as it was in South Africa. You could feel the difference when you got there. Even though there was lots of racial segregation, it was not the same kind of apartheid that you had in South Africa proper.

Q: Was there much going on there or in other parts of the country?

EICHER: Well, at that time I never got out of Windhoek. In a later phase of my career, I went back and helped set up the first U.S. mission in Namibia; that was in 1984. Back in 1976-1978, I was flying in and out of Windhoek directly from Cape Town or Johannesburg. I stayed at the

only big, nice hotel in town, the Kalahari Sands. I'd stay a few days, make the rounds of political meetings with journalists, political leaders, and others who might be influential, and then return to Cape Town or Pretoria, wherever I was flying out of. As I said, Windhoek was kind of a small town. It was very isolated, very pretty, very dry, and they spoke a lot of Afrikaans. In fact, I found I used my Afrikaans on the street more in Namibia than I did in South Africa. There was still a lot of German influence and a lot of ethnic Germans, left over from when it had been a German colony before World War I. There was even a German consul, the only foreign representative in Namibia, which they maintained because there were still a lot of German citizens. I remember that one of my best contacts was the editor of the German newspaper published in Windhoek.

Q: Who were the people? Was this all black or was this a mixture or what?

EICHER: I don't remember the proportions but it was similar to South Africa, although without the same level of "coloreds" and Indians. Among the whites, as I said, there was still a leftover German community, and there were more Afrikaners than English.

Although the South Africans had broken the negotiating structure of the Turnhalle into ethnic groups, you didn't feel the racial divide quite the way you did in South Africa. There didn't seem to be any kind of real Herero or Ovambo political movement, like the Zulu movement in South Africa, which really had any political influence on its own. It was just clearly a game the South Africans were playing. There was a chance that it would work, as long as the South African umbrella stayed over it. I mean "work" in the sense that they might have been able to take Namibia to a so-called independence that nobody would recognize, but that might continue to function for a long time, sort of along the Rhodesian model. That was the real threat to the UN process.

Q: Was there any reflection of the war in Angola when you left?

EICHER: There was. I mean, not so much in Windhoek as on the border. In Namibia, the South Africans had the military situation well in hand. There was, as I mentioned, this very curious situation where you had SWAPO, which was the main liberation movement, actually having offices, legally, inside the country. SWAPO, of course, rejected the whole South African Turnhalle process and they had people in the field based in Angola who were actually fighting a liberation war. That is, they were trying to fight a liberation war; it was an extremely unsuccessful liberation war. There were some places up in the far north where a certain number of insurgents would come across the border from Angola at a certain season of the year but they never got very far militarily, although they had a lot of popular support and sympathy. The South African military had it well in hand, and would follow them back well into Angola if necessary. In Angola it was kind of a mess as well, of course. They had recently become independent and had a civil war going on. Savimbi and his people were operating in the south of Angola with South African support at the same time that SWAPO was trying to use the same areas to come into Namibia.

Q: Did you find living in South Africa, being an American diplomat, did you find a heavy hand of security around you?

EICHER: I did not, directly. But I think I've mentioned that many of my black friends were questioned by security about their contacts with the embassy. It was also my first experience in having my telephone tapped, which I believe it was. And, of course the whole South African security situation was so repressive that it was constantly depressing for us. So, I didn't feel a heavy hand in the sense that I thought anyone was following me around or that I was in any danger, but certainly there was a heavy hand of security around me in the general sense that there was one all over the country.

Q: You left in 1978.

EICHER: I left in the middle of 1978 and I went on to my next assignment, which was Nigeria.

HARVEY F. NELSON JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Johannesburg (1976-1979)

Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, The University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland.

NELSON: Then Personnel came to me and said that they wanted to send me to South Africa as DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). I was told I could take or turn it down; there would be no argument; the decision would be entirely mine. But those were still the days when you went to where you were assigned. There was no bidding system. I really wanted to stay in H. I was not particularly interested in South Africa. My oldest children were in college by this time; only my daughter would have accompanied us. I knew that she didn't want to go to South Africa. She had serious objections to the apartheid policy. She had been there. She had another year in high school. My wife had recently gotten a wonderful job - the first for a long time since she had stayed home with the children. She became the executive secretary to the dean of the Catholic University Law school. They were involved in some interesting work, such as gun legislation. She was very happy and I really was very reluctant to have her abandon that job. But we had kids in college, and we looked at our financial situation. We were quite mercenary about this: the tax situation, the mortgage costs, school costs and all other expenses. Overseas, we would have been eligible for several allowances; we would have gone broke unless we went to South Africa. So we decided to go.

It was a good decision as it turned out. It was very interesting. Both of us were able to be useful.

Q: You were there from when to when?

NELSON: From 1976 to 1979. The ambassador was first Bill Bowdler. I had replaced Bill Edmondson, who came out as ambassador in 1978.

Q: In 1976, what was the political situation?

NELSON: It was a key period. The Johannesburg township of Soweto went into rebellion - mostly the young ones. This was the beginning of the end. Even the white regime recognized then that it had to do something. When I was deputy director of southern African affairs, I went out on an orientation trip to South Africa. I was full of missionary zeal to get rid of apartheid, not understanding the situation at all. I participated in many discussions lasting well into the night with both blacks and whites. One old white Afrikaner said to me, in the wee hours of the morning, that I was absolutely correct that apartheid could not survive, but that that wasn't his problem. It would be his grandchildren's problem. So there was a recognition that apartheid had to end. After the young people in Soweto rioted and a number of people were killed, everybody remained nervous because the turbulence continued even after the riots had passed. So it was a very interesting time.

Q: When you arrived in South Africa, who was the government and how did we deal with it?

NELSON: Botha became president in 1978. We engaged the government more and more during my tour. We didn't work directly on South Africa's internal problems. Rather we concentrated on trying to achieve independence for Namibia. There seemed to be possibilities because there were several groups in South Africa - Germans, South Africans, the colored population and the blacks, primarily the Ovambos - and some political parties which seemed amenable. So there were possible allies in South Africa. Don McHenry, a very talented African-American, came out and started a process to gain independence for Namibia. We brought the French and the Germans and the British in to join us in this effort. So we had a consortium to work with the South Africans who were willing to consider some new status for Namibia. No one knew exactly what that status might be. So we began to work on some kind of process that would ultimately bring independence to South-West Africa. The development of this process was in the works through my entire tour. I think it moved pretty well, but we could not bring it to fruition. But we developed a framework which was not used right away.

Relationships with South Africa turned sour and we invoked sanctions and other pressures. But the framework still existed and when the time was ripe and an opportunity to move came along, that framework was used. It was not current but bringing it up to date was not a major challenge. So it was a useful achievement even if it did not pay off for several years. Secretary Cyrus Vance was involved, and he visited South Africa. He was not only a very nice guy but pretty effective with the South Africans. During the development of this framework, we also began discussions on independence for Southern Rhodesia. That was less successful, although there was some progress. We held some clandestine meetings with Ian Smith in South Africa.

Q: What was your role in this work?

NELSON: I was part of the group that worked on these issues. I made several trips to South-West Africa and I attended one of the meetings with Ian Smith.

Q: I gather from what you have said is that we put apartheid aside and focused on Namibia and Southern Rhodesia.

NELSON: That is right. It was something akin to what we are trying to do in the Middle East; work on peripheral issues saving the hardest to last. In cases like those, it is important to develop trust and show some successes. In South Africa, we didn't have a clear road-map of where we were going. We knew the objective, but no one was certain how we would get there. In the end, we played a catalytic role because the final decisions could only be reached by the people living in the region. A lot of people in the U.S. didn't understand that. A lot of Africans elsewhere didn't understand that. They expected the U.S. to impose a solution. That can't be done. It does not work. The final resolution must be left to agreements reached by the people living in the region.

Q: What was your impression of the white South Africans you were dealing with?

NELSON: They understood that current situation would have to change. But they resisted because change was a frightening prospect. I don't think they were so concerned with retribution as they were with the question of what could be done with all the blacks. They were all poor, and there was no environment within which they could prosper. That was a hazardous prospect and still remains so today. Little progress has been made in raising the standard of living of the blacks. They got freedom, but few economic benefits. That was the challenge that the whites foresaw. Many of them of course were very privileged and very well off. In the parliament, there was a member by the name of Helen Suzman, who was the sole representative of the Progressive party. She was delightful and fought for the abolition of apartheid all the time. The Liberal Party represented mostly the English speaking population. The Afrikaner party represented most of the whites and the power structure and then there was Helen Suzman who nipped at their heels all the time. She was a very bold woman. She still lives, but has no role any more in South Africa. She was one person I met in 1969 when I visited South Africa on my orientation trip. Then I saw her periodically during my assignment there. Eventually, she managed to get a couple of her colleagues elected as well. The government finally had to give in to her because she became so well known around the world. She saw Mandela many times while he was in prison; she spent a lot of time with Winnie Mandela. She was prolific in her edicts, which put more pressure on the government. Her participation gave the black population and other anti-apartheid groups hope that someday, the situation could change.

The government behaved horrendously, torturing and putting Steve Biko and a few others to death. Most of these atrocities were perpetrated by security forces.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the security forces were operating on their own?

NELSON: I don't think so. Perhaps at times they operated on their own because the orders were probably written in such a way to give them great latitude. The author of those orders may well

have written so broadly because he - or they - hoped that the security forces would conduct themselves as they did. The ANC (African National Congress) had religiously followed non-violent methods until about the 1970s. They stuck to their principles for a long time, but their approach was met with violence. Finally, they decided that their approach was not working and began to fight violence with violence. They then also committed some atrocities.

Q: What did we do about Soweto?

NELSON: Congressman Dingell came out and said that we would open a USIS office in Soweto. And we did! It was an interesting experiment which was pretty successful. I don't know that it made a lot of difference, but it became a protected place where some of the restless youths could come and find shelter. They would use the facility as a place to talk, and some may even have used the library. I and others would go there periodically and meet with these young people. It was an American presence right in that community. It became a small chink in the apartheid armor.

Most South Africans showed no concern about this USIS facility. Interestingly enough, they were not strong enough to resist us, which suggests a lot about how they saw their future. The general rule in the American community was when you hosted a social function, you invited a mixture of guests - white, black, colored, Indian, etc. I don't remember one official social occasion when we did not host a mixture of guests. These occasions were therefore consistently interesting. One would find white people sitting down with other communities, getting addresses and phone numbers and having some frank discussions. I don't know whether it led to anything, but the white people had experiences in our homes which they never had before. One hopes that had some impact. There was a readiness particularly in the black community to compromise, not to be vindictive, to find a solution. There was the same sentiment in the white community to a very substantial degree. But it was most noticeable among the blacks, at least with those we came into contact. They were ready to work for solutions, not demanding full satisfaction all at once, but to start a process to dismantle apartheid. Some guests would call to say that they had been stopped by a policeman who would suggest that they spend the evening at home. There was a lot of harassment. The police knew whom we had invited because the invitations were made telephonically, which were tapped. The security system worked well.

The regime did a lot of dumb things like arresting the wrong people at the wrong times which only served to stir up the black population. At the request of the ambassador, I did a lot of work exploring the various forces at work in South Africa. One of the vocal groups was the religious one: there was the Dutch Reformed; and the Anglican for the English speaking population; the black population was all over the map. Some belonged to Dutch Reformed, some Anglican, but most in mixed kinds of churches. So I had a very interesting time learning about the religious sector in South Africa. I am not a very religious person. I don't know much about churches, but I wandered into that community and met all kinds of people like Bishop Desmond Tutu, an Anglican.

In one of the townships outside Pretoria, there was a church with a nifty choir - adults and children. For three Christmases, we invited them to our house. We would also invite all of our

South African friends - neighbors, officials, etc. They would mix with the choir people. It was a very interesting mix, almost emotional. The choir would sing and then mix with the whites at the party. The blacks would take the initiative to make these contacts; the whites were very hesitant. It worked like a charm; everyone had an absolutely glorious celebration. It was fun.

Q: As DCM, did you have any problems with young officers who were unboundedly against apartheid and who were probably quite vocal in their objections?

NELSON: Of course. We had crusaders. The officers were pretty responsible, but some of their wives were less inhibited. One or two of them tended to get into trouble. We had a number of shanty towns which had sprung up as the blacks left the rural areas to find employment in the city. These enclaves, built on empty property owned by someone, would become huge and very unhealthy and also became breeding grounds for the restless. The unemployment was very high. One of the temporary solutions undertaken by the government was to bring in bull dozers and wipe out these shanty towns. The inhabitants were forewarned. But one of the wives would go to the shanty town scheduled for removal and sit down in front of the bull dozer. There was a report that early one morning this deed had been undertaken. It was not true, but I became very concerned because I thought that the Foreign Ministry, having seen the report might well declare that family *persona non grata*. I checked with the alleged perpetrator in the wee hours of the morning and ascertained that she had been in bed all night long. Then at 5:30 a.m. I called the Foreign Minister and told him that if he heard that story, it was not true. Since I was chargé at the time, I said that before he took any action, I would be happy to talk to him. I repeated that the story was just not true. The Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, was very able, but had a short fuse. Fortunately, my call was enough to head off any action by the government. I don't know that Botha would have invoked sanctions, but based on his history, he might well have. The story had appeared in the early newscast which I had heard. It may have been deliberately planted to cause trouble.

Q: Did you have any African-American officers in the embassy?

NELSON: Yes, we had one, Joe Segars, and his wife Elizabeth. This was a very courageous couple. He was a commercial officer. I had met him during my year at the Senior Seminar. For my research paper I had gone to Tokyo to examine its pollution problem and what remedies the Japanese were undertaking, and he was a commercial officer there. One day he came to me and told me that he had been asked to go to Pretoria and asked me what my opinion was. I said that I didn't really have an answer, I could not put myself in his shoes. This was a decision that he had to reach on his own, but I did tell him what I knew about the situation. I didn't think that the people would be tough on him personally, but I was pretty sure that he would run into trouble wherever he went outside the official environment. But the Segars, husband, wife and little son, went to Pretoria. They got a comfortable house with a swimming pool in a white community. I think it worked out pretty well. He had a job; I think it was harder on his wife who stayed at home with her child. She has told some wonderful stories, which I am sure were very distressing to her at the time they took place. For example, she would answer the door bell and people would say: "Is anyone home?" One day, she was out at the pool. She had requested a repairman who treated her something awful. Working for a black woman was very tough for this Afrikaner

repairman. After a while, he told Elizabeth that the repair job was done; she then asked him whether he could install a phone at pool-side. She didn't really want that phone, but she just wanted the repairman to suffer some more. He finally did it, but I am sure he was very unhappy. They encountered prejudices wherever they went - e.g., traveling on the train. But I thought they were very courageous. He eventually ended up as ambassador to the Cape Verde islands.

The experience that the Segars had in some ways illustrated the views of many South Africans. Many of them opposed apartheid. They knew it was wrong. One of the early chinks in the apartheid system came when the private schools began to integrate; it was against the law, but they went ahead anyway. The Segars' son went to one of these schools. There weren't many blacks in these private schools, but there were some. The bastion of the South African educational system - the medical school of Stellenbosch University - had black students. They didn't live in the dormitories, but they did attend the school. The university in Johannesburg was integrated. So the system was slowly - very slowly - being broken down by the South Africans themselves. In 1969, on my orientation trip, I went to a factory. There I was told that certain positions were reserved for whites - these were all the skilled jobs. But I saw a black man running a fork lift. I asked how that happened. I was told that he was a "sweeper." They obviously had found a way to dent the system.

Q: The Carter administration moved to sanctions. How did the embassy view sanctions?

NELSON: That is right. It was much more aggressive than the Reagan administration. We did not think that sanctions would be very productive. It was not an approach that would produce any positive results. We were concerned that sanctions would cause more problems for the black population, as indeed they did. My sense at the time was that time was not ripe for such an action because it would cause more damage than good.

Q: Did the South African government give the embassy a lot of grief over the sanctions?

NELSON: No; at least not to me. The ambassador may have heard more complaints.

I can't remember any difficult problems we had with the South Africans about sanctions. I don't know what discussion had taken place with them. That was the ambassador's bailiwick, and I didn't really get involved. When I was chargé, I did have a meeting with the South Africans about the Namibia negotiations. They didn't enter those negotiations willingly. They felt they had to, but it rankled. Don McHenry was the lead U.S. negotiator on South-West Africa. This meeting included British, French and German representatives, as well as the South African foreign minister. The president of South Africa, John Foster, chaired the meeting. He had received a false report about McHenry and took the opportunity to lambaste him. He called him a "reverse racist" and vindictive with no integrity. No one spoke out to defend McHenry, despite the fact that all the other delegations and the foreign minister knew the report that had set off the president was untrue. So I had to respond to the president. I told him that with all due respect, he was working from a false report and that Don McHenry was one of the finest individuals on earth. I went on to say that when McHenry said something, you could be assured that it was true. That was the only time that I ran into criticism of what we were doing.

Q: When you left in 1979, what were your views about the future of South Africa?

NELSON: I was afraid for it. I was very attached to the country. We had made a lot of friends, both whites and blacks. These were not enduring friendships, although in some cases I wished we had kept in contact. I kept in touch periodically with Helen Suzman, but that was about it. There was one black minister with whom I wished we would have stayed in contact. He was the religious leader of one of the Cape Town's townships. Just before we left, we were going to pay him a visit to say good-bye. I was pulled off to do something else. The situation in Cape Town was very unstable with riots and stone throwing incidents. It was not a secure situation, but my wife went ahead and met with the minister and his wife. There were sad goodbyes. The minister gave her a blanket for me. It was a cheap cotton blanket with an African design on it and I still have it. I became very attached to it.

I thought that we could try to influence both sides to reach a mutually acceptable solution, but in the final analysis it was their dispute that only they could resolve. Most of the South Africans wanted a solution and it was up to them to find it. It may well have been a solution that we had not anticipated or planned for them.

Q: You left South Africa in 1979. What was next?

NELSON: I was assigned as diplomat-in-residence at Arizona State University for one year. I left there in June, 1980. The university was in Tempe, close to Phoenix.

Q: What was the diplomat-in-residence program?

NELSON: At that time, there were about 40 diplomats-in-residence. It proved an opportunity to re-familiarization with the U.S. The main contact of course was the academic community, which is a special part of our society. It was an opportunity to learn while teaching. If I had to do it again, I think I would have done more teaching than I did in 1979-80. Many academic institutions and certainly Arizona State was not really prepared for us. They thought it was a good idea, but really didn't quite know how to utilize these Foreign Service officers. So we lost a lot of time while the institution worked out this problem. In the first semester, I did not have a course to teach. In the second semester, I was given a small seminar, consisting of about six juniors and seniors. We discussed South Africans affairs and I thought it was very neat. It was a lot of fun. The students were a very mixed bag, but they all were very stimulating.

The most exciting experience that I had was when I had to opportunity to travel throughout Arizona to the community colleges. It was fun to be at Arizona State and to contribute to their academic efforts. My presence in Arizona was noted by academics, and I was invited to go to various community colleges. In fact, this activity snow-balled. The community colleges were just becoming an important part of Arizona's academic efforts. My appearances there gave me a real opportunity to become acquainted with Arizonians from all walks of life. The community colleges were popping up all over the state. The student bodies tended to be small, but they consisted of people, young and old, who attended for a purpose. They did not attend college

because that was what one was supposed to do. They had clear academic pursuits either to specialize in one subject or another or to clear up a bad high school record or just to get an associate degree which was required in their particular profession. They knew exactly what they wanted to do and where they were going. There were a lot of more senior people who were pursuing continuing education opportunities. They were interested in just learning more. So the community colleges had a large mixture age-wise, ethnically, and by economic groups. They were very stimulating and quite different from university students. At Arizona State, there were 50,000 students, 90% of them commuters. I had never experienced that type of environment. There were parking lots all over the place reaching to the edge of the desert. It was a very fine institution, but the motivation of the student body - all young people - was very different than that found in the community colleges. So I enjoyed the community colleges more than I did Arizona State.

Q: How were your discussions of South Africa received?

NELSON: I had realized that people in the world get stirred up by a lot of things. That may have not been typical of the Vietnam war, but in the case of South Africa, segments of our society - certain age groups, particularly college students - get worked up about certain issues, but they do not do it in large numbers. I am referring to that 10% that makes a difference. The rest of the people have other matters on their mind more closely related to their everyday living. That is the way it was on campus. There were some students who were interested, but they were by no means the majority. When I would give a talk on South Africa, all those who were engaged - pro and con - were all there. Some wanted to learn, some just wanted to make trouble. So there was a lot of give and take, including some unpleasanties. On a campus of 50,000 students, I might get 500 to listen to my lecture; they were the only ones that were interested.

Q: Was there a black student movement at Arizona State when you were there and was that involved in the South Africa issue?

NELSON: There were a couple of black students in my class. They were very level-headed, very interested, intellectuals and not emotional. I also had an American Indian in our seminar, a Hispanic, a couple of Anglos and a few who took the course just because they had to fulfill some academic requirements. But we did not have a black student movement.

The major issue which took center stage while I was at Arizona State was the occupation of our embassy in Tehran. We had a lot of Iranian students on campus. That issue attracted attention, but again only by a minority.

Q: Did you find yourself explaining the rights of diplomats and diplomatic property and things like that?

NELSON: Not a lot. On occasion, I was asked about those matters, but it was not a hot subject by any means. I did spend some time talking to students who were interested in the Foreign Service. I suggested to them what they might want to study if they wanted to take the exams.

When the Iranian problem arose, there were a lot of questions. I was asked what the likely scenario might be and how it might be resolved; no one knew the answer, but there was considerable speculation. There were some who were interested in the origins of our difficulties. The media was generally the main source of information for the campus community. I should note that the majority of the student body probably did not know that I existed. As I said there were 50,000 students; and one got lost in the campus in a hurry. So there was only a small group who knew of my presence. But it was a great year for us. My wife and I enjoyed it tremendously; she got a job as a secretary to the head of the biology department. So she was on campus every day. We became acquainted with a number of the faculty members and a handful of students. And then, as I said, I developed contacts all over the state through the community colleges. Some of these institutions were so new that they were still operating out of trailers; they had no buildings finished yet. There was real energy in these community colleges; they were bound and determined to make their mark in the academic community. The faculty was mainly young and it had that pioneering spirit one often sees in new endeavors. It was just neat!

DONALD R. NORLAND

Ambassador

Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (1976-1979)

Ambassador Donald R. Norland was born in Laurens, Iowa in 1924. He joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Morocco, the Ivory Coast, France (as part of the U.S. NATO delegation), the Netherlands, and Guinea. He was also ambassador to Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, and Chad. Ambassador Norland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: *What were American interests [in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland]?*

NORLAND: That's really the question. American interests at that time were much as they are now; but we were not attuned to what was going on in that part of the world. It is just amazing to think that just fifteen years ago we had no hesitation in sending out one person to three countries, all bordering on South Africa. All reflected, in one degree or another, what was going on in South Africa. And our contacts among South African blacks were not good. Contacts endangered blacks. I've had people tell me that Botswana reflected the most accurate source of black public opinion in Southern Africa. As a result of the Soweto riots of June 1976, we had probably a thousand hard-core black-nationalists in Botswana, which was only two hundred and fifty miles northwest of Johannesburg. The riots in Johannesburg were such that it was very uncomfortable for many blacks to stay on. Schools were closed. So we were able to monitor what was going on there, to test reactions and attitudes of these black nationalists, black-liberation-movement representatives.

Q: *You went out there in '76, which was still Kissinger and all. And then came the Carter administration. Now did you see a major change? Kissinger was renowned for having no real interest in Africa except to see it in an East-West context; you know, Angola or something like*

that, but only as a reflection of our antipathy towards the Soviet Union.

NORLAND: It was a position that he maintained until April of 1976. He was on a tour of the area and, from what I've heard from insiders, was getting ready to go to Lusaka, capital of Zambia, to give another speech reflecting the policy that South Africa's monopoly on modern, organized military force in this part of the world meant it would remain in charge for the foreseeable future. At least to the end of the century. So we had to work with South Africa; together we were going to confront the onslaught of Communism. I hope someday you'll get the people like Win Lord to give the background. I read the...biography very carefully on this, and it's not clear. But Win Lord apparently got to Henry and said, "You can't give this speech any longer. The forces represented by the black nationalist movements are forces we should be sympathetic to. They are taking much of their rhetoric and much of their philosophy from our own experience; that is to say, human rights, civil rights, the right of self-determination, and so forth." So in April of '76, Henry's speech changed a little bit. It was nuance, but he did change; he did say that South Africa was going to have to come to terms with events in the world. As I recall, that was the main thrust. But it wasn't more than a little opening.

At that time it was absolutely forbidden for our officials to have official contact with the ANC (African National Congress), the largest of those groups. And the non-ANC black groups were so small they were mere splinters.

We in Gaborone didn't know the refugees were ANC. We just knew that they were blacks from South Africa, and so we contacted them.

It was depressing to hear what they believed and what they thought were the major forces at work in the world, and specifically in South Africa. There was strong pro-Communist ideology. You'd look at the books these people had in their refugee quarters (and I visited some of them, in so-called refugee houses, on the outskirts of town). They'd have a half dozen books; three or four of them would be Lenin, Marx, Castro, or Guevara. We had a problem.

Q: But you were under tight reins then, is that right?

NORLAND: Yes. It was considered provocative to South Africa if we had meetings with the ANC. So people would meet informally, the ANC had a big office in Lusaka, for example. Mutual friends would invite ANC and Americans to the same party, and you'd interact. The CIA got special dispensation. I've never been impressed by their knowledge in this area. But some of our people had made an effort to really get to know the languages and the people, and they would have sustained contacts - but never official.

This was only broken in January of 1987, when Secretary Shultz received Oliver Tambo in the Department of State. That's ten years later. Unbelievable.

Q: What about your relationship with the South African authorities in these various places?

NORLAND: Well, they were not welcome in these places. There was no official South African mission.

Q: *Really? In none of them?*

NORLAND: None. There were South African businessmen, South African spies, South African domination of the police force, as in Swaziland. They were functionaries behind the scenes. You'd have a sign that said: "Mr. Dlamini" (the most common name in Swaziland; almost everybody is a Dlamini); but behind the scenes was a South African.

Q: *What were your relations with our embassy in Pretoria, Cape Town?*

NORLAND: They were not always as smooth as could have been expected, they were naturally apprehensive that we might be having contact with ANC people. If the South African government found out about such contacts it would protest: "Why are your colleagues in Gaborone having contacts with these black terrorists?" So we were discreet, trying to minimize the problems for our colleagues.

We had our own interests. And we thought what we were doing was more in harmony with the overall U.S. policy objectives - namely, to encourage democratization, freedom of movement and expression, voting rights, that sort of thing. We didn't think we should be inhibited by always deferring to the South African government. After all, they were on the wrong side of these issues.

We had a lot of sentiment to overcome; for a long time, the American government was in bed with the South African government. We had various ambassadors out there, many of them political appointees, who felt that our future was with South Africa. Until very late, Kissinger felt that our future was with South Africa. He had such bad judgment on these issues. He really thought power was measured principally, if not exclusively, by force of arms, ignoring the ideas that have produced revolution around the world. And he still is a little slow to recognize those virtues.

HERMAN J. ROSSI III
Economic Officer
Pretoria (1976-1980)

Mr. Rossi was born in Florida and raised in Idaho. He was educated at Gonzaga University and Washington State University. In 1965, he entered the Foreign Service, specializing primarily in economic and African affairs. During his career, Mr. Rossi served in Kinshasa, Blantyre, Rome, Pretoria, Monrovia, Kingston and Libreville, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He was Economic Counselor at several of his posts. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Rossi dealt with both African and Economic matters. Mr. Rossi was interviewed

by Peter Eicher in 2007.

Q: Before you start talking about Pretoria, has the assignments process changed by now? Did you choose Pretoria?

ROSSI: I actually volunteered for Pretoria. There was notification sent around that included among other openings an Afrikaans-language economic slot in Pretoria so I volunteered for it. By the time the assignment actually came through, I was less interested in leaving Italy than I had been earlier, and we were more into the Italian culture. I'm trying to remember whether open assignments had started by then or not, and I honestly don't remember. I had visited South Africa from Malawi a couple of times. I had first gone down on a medical evacuation when I tore up my knee, one of many times I tore up my knee. I had an operation in South Africa. Then my wife and I went down on a short vacation to South Africa and visited a few South Africa cities. Thus in early 1976, I was back at FSI this time in Afrikaans language training.

We ended up arriving sometime in early August of '76 in Pretoria. That's the South African winter, and Pretoria is on the high plateau at about 5,500 ft. It's a short winter, but nights get pretty cold, particularly since the houses don't have central heating. We arrived early in the evening but after dark. We went over to my boss's house for dinner with the family and then went back home and got ready for bed. We found the house was quite cold, probably around 40 degrees. The walls are about a foot thick with brick.

There were some space heaters there, so we put them out in the various bedrooms for the kids and one for ourselves, turned them on, and went to bed. About an hour later, the circuit breaker tripped, and the space heaters went off and all the lights went off. I had no idea where the circuit breaker box was. I learned from then on that there was a definite limit to the number of space heaters you can attach to these old South African homes before the wiring would overload. We learned exactly how many you could run at any one time. But that night, we didn't know it, and it was dark, and we couldn't find our way around the house. We ended up sleeping in a pretty cold house that night. Afterwards we learned to cope with all these things. Considering we were in Africa, you don't normally think about being cold there.

Since I had visited down to South Africa a couple of times before and had served in the region, I knew the country and the political situation to some degree. Apartheid was still in practice. It was after the Soweto riots, and pressure was growing on the government to reduce apartheid. Some aspects of apartheid were slowly being dismantled, but the main elements were still in place when I arrived.

It was an interesting place politically. There was a debate going on within the Afrikaner community about apartheid between the more progressive group (verlichters) and the more conservative group (verkrampers). It was a turbulent, interesting period.

I was an economic officer there. The economy was doing pretty well most of the time I was there, but it also was the period of the Carter administration. Carter decided he was going to get much tougher on South Africa than previous administrations had been. Much of my work involved

implementing these tougher policies. One of them was on export controls like light aircraft and things of this nature. One of my responsibilities was to set up a whole system to check on purchases of light aircraft (Piper, Cessna, etc) and their later use. There was sort of an Air National Guard militia in South Africa where members supplied their own planes, and the Carter administration did not want any U.S. manufactured planes being used for that. Checking on all this became very time-consuming and cut back on our ability to do economic reporting.

We did the usual economic reporting there. South Africa was and is the most developed economy in Africa so it was quite different from doing economic reporting on the two other African countries I had served in. It was probably closer to a European economy than to the African ones. However, the political situation was often a factor in the economy and became more so after I left.

One of the more interesting aspects of my job was that I was also responsible for the economic reporting on Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). We had closed our consulate general in Salisbury by that time following the white Rhodesian government's declaration of independence (UDI). Thus the Pretoria economic section was responsible for reporting all Rhodesian economic issues. We had to do all this by long distance - talking to people, reading Rhodesian press and publications, etc - since we were not allowed by the USG to go up to Rhodesia.

I found it a very interesting tour. Of course, the living conditions were fairly good. It's a good climate and, compared to other African countries I'd been in, the availability of goods and services was far better.

I had come out of two rather ruthless and authoritarian African dictatorships in my earlier posts, so I was used to countries with rather limited freedom and the political situation in South Africa was not a big change for me. I hadn't seen much of democracy in Africa at that point. In fact, there were some areas where there was more freedom in South Africa than there had been in Congo or Malawi. There was relative freedom of the press and a more or less independent judiciary, and opposition political parties, none of which existed in my other two African posts. The apartheid system was oppressive, but you really had to go out of the major cities to find its real impact, into the African townships, the "homelands", and places like that. It was less obvious in the central cities.

Q: Were sanctions an issue aside from just controls?

ROSSI: The only major sanction that had been put in place was prohibition on sales of military weapons. Other sanctions came in later, after I left. The military sales ban was a UN resolution. However the Carter administration was interpreting it much broadly than before to include a host of dual- use items.

There were issues related to spare parts for planes, particularly aircraft and other things that had been sold previously. Those were being done on a case-by-case basis. Also, a number of civilian version C-130's had been sold to an air cargo company, which was ultimately owned by the South African government. There was concern in an emergency those planes would be used for

military purposes.

These issues had been out there before, but when the Carter administration came in, they were looked at much more critically. The Carter administration would tend to err on the side of being more restrictive rather than less. There were other sanctions that were under discussion at that time by the Administration against South Africa but most did not come into effect while I was there.

One of our other jobs was dealing with American companies that were in South Africa. There were a large number of American companies that had been in South Africa for many years and were well established in the country. They were under heavy pressure both from the Carter administration and from private American groups to either withdraw their investment or adapt more liberal labor policies. Out of this came an investment code named after a black minister in Philadelphia.

Q: Sullivan code.

ROSSI: How could I forget the famous Sullivan code? The Sullivan code was developed to pressure US companies in South Africa to follow more liberal (anti-apartheid) labor practices. One of our jobs was to report on how the progress of this, how the American companies were adhering to it, how was it working, and that sort of thing. Certainly the net result was the American-owned companies in South Africa were much more liberal and tried harder to improve the position of their black employees than most other South African companies did. It was not perfect. Some companies were less active than others, but all felt the pressure to do something.

It was a period when Apartheid was under severe pressure. Our political section had the greater responsibility in this area. On the economics side, there was also a lot of pressure, too, and we did regular reporting on the impact of the apartheid struggle on what was a rather large and sophisticated economy.

Q: Did you visit the gold mines and the diamond mines there?

ROSSI: Yes, I did. I visited them both. They were all fascinating to see. Certainly the gold mine, I think we went down about 12,000 feet or something but some mines were much deeper. This is the absolute limits of technology that you can actually mine that far down. The South Africans have been doing it for a long time and have gotten very good at the technology. They are highly mechanized mines. They had gold miners from all over southern Africa.

I didn't find the status of the black miners all that bad. I thought they were treated fairly decently. You have to remember that I had been in Malawi where Malawians would fight to get a chance to work in the South African gold mines because it was one of the few paying jobs that they could get. The same was true of Mozambique and other neighboring countries which also sent many workers to the gold mines. I thought the mines did a decent job of trying to feed, clothe and pay their miners what was then a considered a decent wage. One could argue back and forth about that. The main problem of course was that the white miners, who held the more highly

skilled jobs, were paid far more than the black miners.

Q: This was about the time when the homelands were becoming independent as well. Did that affect our relations? Did we have American businesses in the homelands?

ROSSI: Transkei was the one homeland actually in operation, that had its own government, when I arrived, but others became “independent” or were declared independent while I was there. I’m not aware of any American-owned businesses that were headquartered in the homelands. The USG would have strongly discouraged that. An American company could not do what a big South African businessman did and set up the big Sun City project in Bophuthatswana, a homeland not far from Pretoria.

No American company to my knowledge made any investments in the homelands. There were some mines there I think that had been there before they declared independent and were just kept going. I think there was a manganese mine in Bophuthatswana. I remember I had to get up and visit it before they declared independence because the Embassy would not let me visit it afterwards.

South Africa, of course, is well known as a huge amount of mineral resources. Not just gold and diamonds but manganese, chrome, and many other things. Mining is a very major industry there.

It was a funny economy. At that point, I had served in two rather poor African countries and then a European country. South Africa was a mixture between the two. Significant elements of South Africa were as fully developed as anything you would see in the U.S. particularly in the cities. Johannesburg and Pretoria could be Midwestern cities for all you could tell. Even the white farms were mechanized. Only when you got out of the cities and away from what were called the “white areas” did you see the other side, the less developed side of the African economy. This was particularly true when you got to the black homelands, which were the poorest and least developed part of the economy.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time in Johannesburg as an economic officer?

ROSSI: I can’t say I spent a lot of time there. I went down to call on people, take visitors down there. We had a consulate general down there. They did a lot of work, and we also had a minerals officer down there. They would send material up to me which I would include in my economic reporting. The same was true of the other three consulates, too.

I went down to Cape Town a couple of times a year, particularly for the budget speech which is one of the few times I actually used my Afrikaans. My Afrikaans went downhill while I was there. All the educated Afrikaners, particularly ones I dealt with, spoke excellent English, most spoke better English than I spoke Afrikaans. We ended up exchanging pleasantries in Afrikaans and then ended up doing all the work in English. I remember several of the Afrikaners in the central bank had Masters degrees from very American universities like Stanford. Of course, their English was at a very high level.

The budget speech and a few occasions like that was one of the few occasions when I actually used my Afrikaans. There was also an Afrikaans business association. They had a convention every year and that was completely in Afrikaans. After three days of that my Afrikaans would come back to some degree, but then I'd start losing it again. I think you used your Afrikaans a lot more than I used mine.

Q: I was following parliamentary six months a year instead of for one day!

ROSSI: Yes! Literally, this was the only post I was in where my language went downhill during my tour.

Q: Did you have any high level visitors you had to take care of?

ROSSI: Yes. Kissinger came in that period. The first six months that I was there was still the Ford administration. Kissinger came in. There were ongoing negotiations with South Africans on several issues. The two biggest ones then were Rhodesia and Namibia. Kissinger came in with a big entourage, many planes, and was going to "settle" these two issues with the South Africans. I think you were probably involved in this, too. Virtually the whole embassy was roped in to help with this as was I. I had seen Kissinger at work in Rome. There was a presidential visit while I was in Rome. Gerry Ford came with Kissinger and a huge entourage.

Rome was my only major presidential visit. To see what goes on in a presidential visit was quite amazing in Rome. The White House staff people were rather overbearing, and I was embarrassed at how demanding they were with the Italian foreign ministry officials. A major part of the problem was that there was not just one advance White House staff group but several, each with their own agenda and demands. The Italians took it in better humor than I expected. I guess they were somewhat used to it.

Anyway Kissinger came to Pretoria the first six months of my tour, and I worked on the visit. He was going to solve the Rhodesian and Namibian problems or issues. It didn't happen, of course. He negotiated with the South Africans for several days, but my recollection was that little progress was made. Anyway these two issues were the subject of prolonged negotiations between South Africa and the U.S. over my entire tour in Pretoria.

I stayed in South Africa for four years. Main reason we stayed there for so long was my wife Mary had previously decided she wanted to become a nurse-midwife. Thus she was attended a nursing school in Johannesburg although she already had a bachelor's degree in biology. She was going to school for most of our tour in Pretoria and commuting to Johannesburg. Fortunately, we had a very good staff at the house who helped take care of the kids. Mary would come home some nights, but other nights she's have to stay over at the school which of course was attached to a hospital. I had to pitch in with the kids more than I had in the past but it worked out reasonably well.

She got her degree as a nurse-midwife. We left South Africa in mid-1980, and we came back to the U.S. We had planned to come back because the kids were approaching high school age.

Excluding some language training, we had been outside the U.S. for ten years at that point essentially. We came back in '80 just in time to see Reagan inaugurated, and we went to the parade, the only inaugural parade I've ever been to.

E. ASHLEY WILLS
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Durban (1977-1979)

Ambassador Wills was born in Tennessee and raised in Tennessee and Georgia. He was educated at the University of Virginia and John Hopkins University. Entering the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1972, Ambassador Wills served abroad in the field of public affairs in Romania, South Africa, Barbados, Yugoslavia and Belgium and in India as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Washington as Deputy Director for Southern Africa Affairs for USIA and as Political Advisor to the US Military Commander in the invasion of Grenada. From 2000 to 2003 he was US Ambassador to Sri Lanka. His final posting was as Assistant US Trade Representative. Ambassador Wills was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: Well then you are off to Durban in...

WILLS: In '77, no language needed because English was widely spoken and obviously neither of us had ever set foot in Africa. We stopped in Kenya on the way down but didn't get to go to the game parks; we stopped in Tanzania because the Africa department at USIA wanted me to see the real Africa before I went to South Africa. We stopped in Pretoria to meet the PAO and find out what he wanted me to do in opening this post and then we went down to Durban, which is a beautiful city. It's not as beautiful as Capetown, which is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, or one of the most magnificently located cities in the world.

Q: It certainly is handsome.

WILLS: Durban is right on the Indian Ocean and has quite steep hills that go back inland. About six months of the year it is quite hot and humid and about six months of the year it is like champagne: wonderful cool climate of low humidity and every day it is about 65 degrees. That was a wonderful assignment; that was what moved us to decide to stay in the Foreign Service; it was a Democracy if you were white. Jimmy Carter was president so our task was to develop our links with the Black community. We were perceived by the Whites particularly the Afrikaners as agents of subversion. They thought we were trying to run them out of their own country and give it to the Black majority. I got death threats there from Whites over the two years that we were assigned there. I had to do all the tasks that one does in opening the office; it's just like running a business really. I felt really thrilled to be given this chance. I had to rent space and buy furniture, hire staff, negotiate with landlords; I was only 26 or 27. So it was all really fun stuff for me. My office was in the same building as the consulate, which was on the 35th floor. My office was on

the first floor, glass front; they wouldn't allow it now, too insecure. There were three other officers in the consulate; we all got along very well. As I said, my task was to promote change away from apartheid so I spent a lot of time developing relationships in the Zulu community. I learned to speak some Zulu, so did my wife. The Indian community, such as it was in South Africa; about a million strong was located mostly in Natal, Durban. So I developed good relationships with the Indian community and they were discriminated against as well but not as much as Blacks were discriminated against. We didn't have so many so called Coloreds; there were four racial groups in South Africa according to the constitution of the times. Then I would work with the White media many of whom whose leaders were sympathetic with the ANC (African National Congress).

Q: Could we talk a bit about Durban and how it stood? Pretoria is Afrikaner but where did Durban fit in?

WILLS: Durban was an English part of South Africa. There were a few Afrikaners in Durban; very few, a few more in the rural areas but it was mainly English speakers, descendants of English settlers. They were supposedly more tolerant and it really was true: these people weren't for the most part sympathetic with the Afrikaner leadership of the country. As I said, it was very modern; if you got off the plane in 1977 or earlier as we did you would have thought you were in San Diego, it was really quite advanced. South Africa, even now, but certainly then was far ahead of the rest of the continent in material terms.

We rented a house, this is a wonderful story, again the State Department trio that were there didn't really know how to deal with me because there had been no USIA operation and they didn't have, apparently, none of the three of them a lot of experience with USIS. So they let me do what I wanted to do, they were cordial and welcoming to some extent.

Q: Who was the counselor then?

WILLS: Jim Farber was his name. And because it was a small consulate we didn't have a housing office. So I went out with agents and looked for places. I found this place right up by the university in a place called the Berea, which overlooks Durban in a very beautiful neighborhood, and we rented this glorious house that had a Japanese interior garden; it was gorgeous, it had a little waterfall. It was just the two of us and it was just beautiful. The woman who rented it to us was a native of Capetown, her name was Dorothy Ryershack, an Afrikaner more of German and English decent really than of Dutch decent. She was thrilled to rent to an American consulate person. Although she lived in Capetown she visited Durban a lot and we would see her and we became friends. About two months after we had got there Dorothy called me and said, "Through a friend I've learned that a fellow who has been on Robben Island, an ANC chap, a confidant of Nelson Mandela's and someone who was convicted with Mandela of treason and put on Robben Island for 20 some years is being released and he is going to be coming back to Durban. He's a South African of Indian descent and he's going to need a job and he's been in jail all these years. Would you and Gina be interested in hiring him perhaps as a gardener?" I said, "Of course Dorothy, we need a gardener, it's your house and I can't take care of it. It's too big."

So we hired this guy named Mac Maharaj and we became very close friends of Mac's, he was a gardener in name only. What he would do was run political seminars really for Gina and me explaining to us the history of the ANC struggle against apartheid and going over the teachings of Mandela with us; Gina especially found it quite educational. She hadn't read as much of South Africa's history as I had. One Monday Mac didn't show up for work and lo and behold we read in the South African press that he had fled to Mozambique and he was actually the commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe, which is Spear of the Nation, the military wing of the ANC and he had been working at our house as a gardener for about six months until he could arrange to sneak out of South Africa and resume his role as military commander of the ANC at Mandela's request. Well we obviously lost contact with him.

Cut to ten years later and I'm on detail from USIA to, not even ten years seven years later, I have been detailed to State to be head of the South African desk in the Africa bureau and our assistant secretary Chet Crocker, our senior P DAS Frank Wisner, the office director Jeff Davidow and Secretary Shultz who had a personal interest in this South African account were musing with me about whether we should establish contact with the ANC. I'd written a bunch of memos advocating to Secretary Shultz that we open up contact with the ANC. They were musing about whether or not we should do this and if we decided to do this how could we do it. Did anybody know how we could do it? I said, "I happen to know the military commander of the ANC. He used to work for me as a gardener." Of course, jaws dropped all around the room. They agreed that we should try to establish contact with the ANC and I should try to find out how to reach Mac Maharaj. Through contacts we learned that Mac was coming to the UN, remember in those days maybe once or twice a year there would be a special session on apartheid and Mac was the ANC representative at this particular one coming up. So I was sent to New York to meet with Mac Maharaj. I walked into his hotel and rang his room and he said, "Ashley?" So he came downstairs, we embraced and we had a wonderful three or four hour chat about how he had been fooling with us about how he was going to stay in South Africa, he always knew he was leaving to return to the ANC. He took the message that we wanted to establish contact. We did in Zambia which was where the ANC had it's main base of operations and lo and behold within a year the leader of the ANC came to Washington, this is before Mandela was released, and walked into the office of the Secretary of State. I have a wonderful picture on my "me" wall of George Shultz standing there with Oliver Tambo and me, just the three of us.. Thus began the Reagan administration's relationship with a group that had been earlier regarded as a terrorist group. It led eventually to our putting pressure on the South Africans successfully to release Nelson Mandela. One does these little things in a career and things work out.

Q: That's a great story.

WILLS: Anyway we loved aspects of South Africa. It was a repellant socially for the obvious reason that there was so much discrimination and it was so organized and so ruthless. It was weird, Gina felt particular psychological pressure because we lived in a luxurious part of Durban but my work was all in the Black Townships or further out in rural Natal where the capital of the...

Q: Inkatha?

WILLS: Yeah, Inkatha.

Q: The Zulu part of Buthelezi.

WILLS: Inkatha Buthelezi.

Q: Buthelezi.

WILLS: I got to be, I would have to say, friends with Gatsha and came to admire many of his qualities. We have some great family photographs of attending social events at his residence. It was exciting and Natal is a beautiful place; there is a mountain chain there called the Drakensberg Range. You go up there and it snows, there are these fantastic military sites, I also love military history, there were two films made about the Zulu's fighting the British.

Q: Zulu and Zulu Dawn.

WILLS: Zulu and Zulu Dawn, yeah and they were about the battles of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, and those are both in Natal. They are not too far, maybe seventy or eighty miles from Durban. We would go out there and tour these battle fields.

Q: Is it sort of a kraal at Rorke's Drift, or has that been overlaid?

WILLS: I don't remember if it is the actual kraal or whether it's a recreation but it is there and you'd be amazed in those days you would go up there and there would be nobody.

Q: Yeah.

WILLS: And at Rorke's Drift I can't remember exactly the statistic but it was something like thirteen or fourteen Victoria's Crosses awarded, more than any other single engagement in British Colonial history.

Q: It's a wonderful movie.

WILLS: Yes it is. That is another charming story; at least I think it is charming. They made Zulu with Michael Caine back in the '60s. Zulu Dawn was made in the late '70s and I'm trying to remember I think it was Kirk Douglas?

Q: It might have been or Burt Lancaster.

WILLS: Burt Lancaster.

Q: Peter O'Toole.

WILLS: They came to Durban and we met them. A lot of the crew was American and they said,

“Hey, you know you look kind of Scottish.” They were going to have a scene in the movie where the Scottish guards rides up and you’ll have three or four lines and we would like you to be a Scottish Guard officer.” I said – if I may quote the current Republican vice presidential candidate now, Ms. Palin – “you betcha.” So they gave me their props, their Scottish guards uniform and the pith helmet and the red cape. They asked if I knew how to ride a horse. Of course I did having grown up in rural areas of the country. So I was all excited about this and went home and told Gina. The day approached it was two or three weeks hence and I was really looking forward to it. I’d memorized my three or four lines and developed my Scottish accent. Then I got a cable from Washington informing me that CBS Newsman Walter Cronkite is coming to Durban and wants to be escorted to meet Gatsha Buthelezi and Alan Paton, the great White writer, anti-apartheid....

Q: Father of the country and all.

WILLS: ...who had become a close friend of ours since we had arrived there. I still have my autograph copies of Cry the Beloved Country and other Paton books. It was the day of filming my segment so I had to get in touch with the producer and say, “I’m very, very sorry I can’t do this. I have to escort this guy. I’ll give you back the uniform.” He said, “Oh, don’t worry you can keep that as a keepsake.” Well for years and years and years afterward I would occasionally try on that coat to make sure I could still fit in it and it fit until about ten years ago. I finally grew a little bit too thick to wear it but that would have been fun to appear in the movie, Zulu Dawn.

Q: I talked to one USIA man who was in India when they did Gandhi and they got him to play the British general who did that horrible massacre whatever it is.

WILLS: Yeah, Amritsar.

Q: Yes, and he played the British general.

WILLS: They annihilated, I can’t remember how many Sikhs at that, anyway.

Q: Speaking of this TV thing a great, which was...did Shackle come out yet?

WILLS: No, no they had not. Here we were in our late twenties and blessedly we decided to start a family there, we’d been married by that time four years. Gina got pregnant and the South African doctors were great. The quality of medical care was so high, if you were White. Our doctor was of English-Jewish extraction and he delivered our son Zachary, what a wonderful, wonderful experience. But, as I said, against that was the professional preoccupation Carter was introducing the notion of human rights as an integral part of our foreign policy. I must say I had some misgivings even though I was very happy as a Georgian on chauvinistic grounds to see him as president. I was by nature not inclined to believe that human rights should be at the center of our foreign policy and I definitely didn’t like lecturing other nations. He and Andrew Young, not so much Cyrus Vance who was kind of a quiet man, were forever lecturing countries less blessed than we.

Q: Ashley I would like to stop at this point because we rally haven’t gotten into the situations

there. You know contacts, the Inkatha Party, Buthelezi, the government there, what you were doing and the human rights thing. Were we trying to break the color barrier, there are a lot of things we want to talk about.

WILLS: Okay.

Q: Today is the third session with Ashley Wills. Today is the 6th of November 2008 and Ashley we were talking about going to South Africa and I wanted to ask you in the first place what was life like living in South Africa? You were in South Africa from when to when?

WILLS: We got there in '77 and stayed two years. All assignments in those days were just two years because the State Department felt that it was such a difficult place to live we shouldn't be there for too long. It was very stressful in a psychological way; it wasn't stressful in a physical way because we lived in a White area and it was beautiful and it was very well kept. Our house was lovely; we had a Japanese garden so our way of life was very pleasant. But my work was in the Black areas of South Africa and also the Indian areas. In Durban where I was living there weren't many so called colored, people of mixed race. In South Africa there were four racial groups that the White government had identified: Whites, Africans, Indians and Coloreds. In Natal there weren't many Colored's. The people we dealt with were Blacks and they were mainly Zulu's and also some Xhosa who were from the Eastern Cape, migrated over to Natal. In fact, one of my friends in the very earliest days of my assignment was a guy by the name of Steve Biko who was a leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. He was arrested about five months after I got there and taken in a police van from Durban to Pretoria and along the way he was beaten and died in the back of that police van. So that was the sort of thing we dealt with during business hours talking with people who were opposed to apartheid and encouraging them.

I took a lot of Zulu classes, I spent a lot of time in the Zulu townships around Durban but I also went up into KwaZulu, it was called a Zulu homeland. As we talked about last time I got to know Gatsha Buthelezi who was the leader of the Zulus, a so-called moderate. He was willing to negotiate with the government unlike members of the ANC or the Black Consciousness Movement, which Biko led. I also had a lot of friends in the labor movement. So those were the people we were dealing with during the day and their lives were much harder than the lives of White people. They had to leave the center of Durban every night and go back to their townships; they couldn't stay in town and go to dinner or whatever because their areas were outside of town. During the business day they could come in but at night it wasn't possible. But at night I would go home to this lovely home. It was a happy time for us in a way because my wife became pregnant with our first child and the quality of the medical care, which I think I mentioned in my last interview, was extremely high for Whites. So her pregnancy was well attended by the doctors. In fact, her obstetrician had the most ideal name for an obstetrician his name was Dr. Cradle.

That was all pretty good. We had a small consulate, only four officers. We were all keen sportsmen. For example, the consul general was a keen rugby player and the South Africans are very avid rugby players so he became a referee for the rugby league. Our political officer played rugby, the consular officer played I guess he was a golfer and I played baseball. The South

Africans had a baseball league; it turns out that in the late 19th century when the gold rush began in South Africa lots of Americans came down there and brought with them our sport of baseball. I played some baseball at Virginia when I was a student there and thought I was pretty good and got to South Africa and to my amazement they played baseball, no one had told me that, and they had a proper league and they were very good. So that was fun.

Q: You are talking about Stephen Biko. In the first place did we at the time and sort of the rest of the world protest this and what happened?

WILLS: Yeah, we protested. At the time Jimmy Carter was the U.S. president and he had introduced a new policy toward southern Africa, South Africa in particular, emphasizing human rights. Andrew Young was the UN ambassador and he took a special interest in South Africa. We were very critical of the government and would protest whenever we could. As spokesman for the consulate I was forever being quoted about our disagreement with the government's policies. It was kind of funny because I got death threats and the death threats came from White South Africans, Afrikaners, a small number of Afrikaners who lived in Natal. They were very, very unhappy with Carter's presidency. They were racist and they didn't understand why we would favor a non-racial society or democracy giving Black people and Indians the right to vote. They would accuse us of hypocrisy; things got really heated in South Africa at that time. The White South Africans hated Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young.

Q: Now let's talk about Natal. When you say the White South Africans there were two White South Africans. There were Afrikaners and the English speakers.

WILLS: And the English speakers.

Q: How did it play out there?

WILLS: The Afrikaners tended to live on the reef it was called around Johannesburg, in Pretoria and in the Orange Free State and in the Cape Province. There were few in Natal, maybe twenty percent of the White population, the other 80 percent were descendants of English colonialists. They did have a somewhat more progressive view of racial politics; many of them were completely committed to the end of apartheid. I have many friends in this community, Whites who were descendants of English colonialists and they were working in their own quiet way to end apartheid. It was tough for them because they were not the majority in the White community or the nation as a whole and Natal was seen as peripheral to this. The key element in Natal politics was the Zulu's and as I said I spent a lot of time trying to learn their language; it is a click language. There are four clicks. I've studied five languages and Zulu is the most fun to learn because of those clicks. You have (click sound) and then (click sound) and (click sound). I'm trying to remember the fourth one. For example, you might remember, you would remember I think, a very popular singer back in the '60s and '70s named Miriam Makeba. She did a wonderful song called the Click Song; it's all about the clicks. She was a Xhosa. We spell it with an English Khosa but the K signifies a click and Zulu is the same. Zulu, Xhosa are Bantu languages but they also are unique within the group because they have these clicks. So if you wanted to ask someone how he's doing he'd say, "(click) _____ (click) _____" (how are

you?) So it was kind of a fun language. But nearly everyone spoke English and I was studying Zulu just to show respect for their culture.

Q: During this '70ish period where did the Zulu's fit in the equation of what was going on and in the political movement?

WILLS: Well there were Zulu's in the ANC outside of South Africa fighting the government from outside. But most Zulu's followed Buthelezi and he was moderate as I said and was trying to promote a peaceful end to apartheid rather than an end to it through insurrection and war; for that he was criticized by the ANC who regarded him as a traitor. Nelson Mandela didn't regard him as a traitor and although he was in prison and obviously didn't have any contact with Buthelezi it was known that he understood what Buthelezi was trying to do even if he didn't think it was going to be productive. Mandela is a Xhosa and they are close ethnically to the Zulu's so there was an understanding, I suppose you could say. Most of the leaders of the ANC were Xhosa but there were some Zulu's, what's his name Zuma is a Zulu and had been a leader of the ANC for decades and there were others. But the Zulu's were fairly moderate; they were culturally conservative. They didn't like apartheid but they weren't at that point as a group willing to fight it.

Q: What was the attitude of both the consulate and maybe if there was a difference with the embassy about how this whole thing would end. I can remember being in intelligence and research, INR, back in the early '60s and we were dealing with the heart of Africa but the people I talked to who were dealing with southern Africa it was accepted that there would be a night of long knives. The whole thing would be a bloodbath at some point.

WILLS: Well, many people predicted that. I would say the embassy at the time, I came back to work on South Africa years later and we'll come to that at some point, I was head of the South African desk at the State Department when Chet Crocker was the assistant secretary and we were pursuing a policy called constructive endangerment. But at this time when Jimmy Carter was president I think the embassy in Pretoria, it spent six-month of the year in Pretoria and six-months of the year in Capetown, when the parliament was in session. I got the sense that the embassy and the ambassador were pretty comfortable with what President Carter and Ambassador Andrew Young were trying to do.

Our little group of four had some misgivings. It was interesting. The four of us agreed on this when we would have our private chats. Publicly we espoused the line that President Carter told us to. As I say I was in the media all the time being quoted about some horror that had just been committed like the death of Steve Biko or some others; there were events all the time, horrible events where Blacks were being persecuted or killed. But it was usually not persecution that led to death it was just discrimination just of the worse sort. But the four of us felt privately that it was not in our interest as a country to be so outspoken in favor of human rights; it was one thing to have human rights as a factor and take a principled stand but it was another to make it the centerpiece of American policy. We felt we had other interests at stake that were not being served well by President Carter's policy, economic interest, political interest, instability in the region. The Soviets were busily arming the ANC and other liberation movements. We thought we should

handle that differently. I think the four of us also felt uncomfortable because of the racial history in the United States preaching when we knew our own country even in the '70s was hardly an example of racial tolerance in all respects. Obviously the laws were changed in the '60s, the voting rights act was passed and discrimination was declining. The White South Africans, especially the Afrikaners, were brutal about this. They would say, "It took you 200 years to treat your Blacks decently and they only comprise 12 percent of your population. In our case it's 75 percent of the population...or 80 percent I can't remember, (and you expect us to treat them the same way?)" It was a little uncomfortable but we felt that privately, we talked about that privately, we never let on to any South African of any color that we felt this way.

Q: In your private sessions what did you think you should be doing?

WILLS: We felt we should be doing what Chet Crocker later did in the '80s which was accepting that the government was in power, there was nothing we could do short of a declaration of war and throw it out of power and we would have to deal with it and coax it and cajole it and encourage it to change rather than to condemn it all the time. President Carter and Andrew Young never acknowledged anything positive about South Africa. The government was evil, an unalloyed evil. While that was substantially true it wasn't completely true. I had spent three years in the Communist world and I thought that the human rights violations in the Communist world were just as hideous as the ones in South Africa. But we didn't draw so much attention to them as we did to this. So I, and the others, felt like we could be accused of a double standard and there was some truth in that.

Q: What about when we talk about the various tribal things, what about the White tribal thing. I don't know South Africa very well but Johannesburg is I think of having a powerful if not in numbers but in sheer financial Jewish population. What about Natal?

WILLS: Yeah, there was a small but economically strong community of South African Jews. I think I mentioned to you that I rented this lovely house that we lived in from a South African Jew and it turned out, I think I told you in a previous meeting...

Q: You can repeat it here.

WILLS: ...that she was actually working with the ANC. This woman, I can't describe to you how innocent she looked. She was about 50 or maybe even 60 years old, great big White woman who looked like everybody's grandmom. You never would have suspected that this woman was not only helping the ANC she was a member of the ANC. She was carrying out secret missions for the ANC. There were some Whites around the country who did that. Overall I would say the Jewish community at least in Natal was pushing for change but it was not supporting the actions of the ANC.

Q: Did the security forces, what were they called?

WILLS: South African Defense Force.

Q: The defense force was this an Afrikaner run thing in Natal too? I mean...

WILLS: Yeah. The officer corps was overwhelmingly Afrikaner. But it was not a presence that one encountered all the time; it was more the South African police that one would see. The defense force was really on the borders with Namibia.

Q: Okay the police, now these are the people who basically enforced it? Where did they come from in Natal? Were they...

WILLS: They were mainly Afrikaans, not English speakers, from rural parts of Natal or from the small community of Afrikaners who lived right in Durban. It was funny when I landed in South Africa, mind you I'd just come out of three years in Romania where everything was bleak and gray and oppressive, I'd never been to Africa before. We went first to Kenya and to Tanzania for brief stops so I would have an idea of what real Africa was like. Then we flew to Johannesburg and when we got off the plane in Johannesburg I was astonished. It looked like Phoenix with beautiful modern buildings and wide boulevards and a very high standard of living just as I found in Durban when we went there. But all this time we were advocating change, this very appealing material wealth was concentrated in White hands; it was built by White entrepreneurs and investors with Black labor; it was dirt cheap but that couldn't be sustained. So we were trying to do what we could to end this thing. Along the way we began to have contacts with some of the liberation movements.

I remember one time I was assigned the task of going up to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I think there was a conference going on or something. I was asked to give a talk on what was going on in South Africa. So I flew from Durban to Jo'burg and caught a flight to Dar es Salaam via Maputo, Mozambique. The flight was overwhelmingly Black Africans and I didn't really talk to anyone until we took off from Maputo and the plane began to encounter mechanical problems in the air and it had to make a forced landing at a remote airbase in Northern Mozambique. So we got off the plane, maybe 50 people, and I was the only White. We were out in the middle of nowhere in Mozambique, there was no terminal, to get out of the sun we got under the wings and I started a conversation with a guy. It turns out he was a member of ZANU, Robert Mugabe's liberation movement that was trying to overthrow the White Rhodesian government. This man and I began to chat; it turned out that he had been to school in the United States; in fact, I think he went to Harvard and he was back working to overthrow Ian Smith's racist government in Rhodesia. It was a fascinating conversation as we sat there for hours and hours waiting for the mechanic to come and fix the plane. Eventually we took off and we stayed in touch over the following years. About three or four years later there was a settlement and Ian Smith's government left power and Robert Mugabe took over Zimbabwe. And this guy, his name was Edison Zvobgo became the defense minister of Zimbabwe and served in that capacity for many, many years. I saw him several times in Washington and around the world at various conferences. Our friendship began under a wing of an old McDonald Douglas aircraft; that would happen in Southern Africa. You would run into people who were very imminent people and you wouldn't know because they were Blacks and for most people they were invisible. In that case, I got to know this man.

Q: What was happening in the foreign investment field in your area? Was anything happening?

WILLS: There was investment in Natal from the United States but not very much. I think there were a couple of our mining companies that had invested. I'm trying to think; there was very little going on. Most of the U.S. investment in South Africa on the reef in Johannesburg in the financial sector, mining and then some of our big service companies like IBM, AT&T, Coca Cola, some of our consumer products companies.

Q: Had we started pressing for the policy of ...

WILLS: Disinvestments?

Q: What?

WILLS: Disinvestments?

Q: Well, I was thinking disinvestments one but the one was you had something there you weren't going to play by South African rules, paying better...

WILLS: Yeah, that came later that came in the '80s and I'm trying to remember the man's name.

Q: Well there was the Sullivan rule.

WILLS: Yeah, the Sullivan rules, Leon Sullivan, that came later. We were not yet at that point but we were right on the edge of it because, as I say, this was the late seventies.

Q: Were you picking up anything from...I realize you were not at the heart of business investment but Americans who came through was there the feeling of well what was the feeling about South Africa at the time?

WILLS: You mean among the private American's living there?

Q: Yeah.

WILLS: I think you would have found most of them believed that we were being unfair to the White South Africans, that we were being too harsh, that we were being too judgmental. We were applying our standards to them and they lived in a different part of the world and had a different reality they had to confront. If you think back why would an American have gone to South Africa in that period? That American would have had to be willing to put up with this sort of stuff and many of them were entirely sympathetic frankly with the apartheid approach. So there was tension with the resident Americans, between the official Americans and the private ones. One would encounter a few who felt as we did but it was not the majority but I don't want to over do that because there weren't that many American's living there at the time, at least not where I lived.

Q: Did you get any ship visits while you were there?

WILLS: No, didn't have ship visits. It's hard to describe how lovely this place was. Six months of the year Natal was hot and humid, six months of the year it was the most perfect weather I'd ever seen in the world. Every day I'd say it was like champagne, low humidity or nearly none, a high of about 65 degrees, clear skies. Durban was right on the Indian Ocean, that's another story.

Here's a classic apartheid story. I became interested in sharks; some of the world's biggest great white sharks patrol off the coast of Natal.

Q: Oh how nice.

WILLS: Yeah, and they had, believe it or not, nets along the beach but these nets were not uninterrupted. There would be a net of maybe twenty yards and then 30 or 40 yards away from that there would be another net that was 20 yards long. So these nets were staggered and the sharks could get inside and in fact most of the sharks did and the sharks that were caught in the nets were caught on the way out not on the way in. So I volunteered for the Natal shark control board and would go out on their boats. We would look at the nets and make sure they were in good repair. It was all very exciting. Well they had four beaches in Natal. They had a beach for White folks, the biggest and most beautiful beach. They had a beach for Indians, a beach for Coloreds and then they had a beach for Africans far removed from Durban. There were nets to protect the White beach, the Indian beach and the Colored beach; there were no nets on the African beach.

Q: Oh boy.

WILLS: This was a strange place, a strange place.

Q: How did the India community fit in there at that time?

WILLS: The biggest number of Indians in South Africa lived in Durban, in Natal and they were descendents of workers who had come there during the British Raj during the 19th century to work in the sugarcane fields. Many people don't realize that Mahatma Gandhi was born in South Africa and then went back to India as an adult. They are very accomplished, lots of professionals, they tended to be lower cast Indians, very few Brahmins so they weren't hung up on caste; Brahmin's are hung up on caste more than the other castes. In Durban itself they were traders, business executives, lots of university professors. In rural Natal many of the trading posts were owned by Indians and the Zulu's didn't like the Indians at all. In fact, in all of East Africa, I don't know if it reached up to the Sudan but in East Africa there was such resentment against the Indian trading class that they were persecuted after Independence.

Q: And Idi Amin, of course, kicked them out.

WILLS: They were kicked out of I think of Uganda, Idi Amin yes; but I think in Tanzania Julius Nyerere who was a very decent sort of fellow in most respects would give these scathing speeches about Indian business people extorting poor Africans. So there was a lot of anti-Indian

feeling.

Q: Of course, you know in a way one looks at this even today in Washington, DC. In what you would call the Black neighborhoods you see the small mom and pop stores are usually Koreans.

WILLS: Yes, that sort of thing.

Q: This is not a marriage made in heaven they just don't get along. Also the people who live in the place have to have the small traders but the small traders want to get paid and often the people who should pay don't have the money to pay. It's a very uncomfortable relationship.

WILLS: One of my earlier interviews I mentioned I went there to open a USIS branch post. The image of the United States was what our concern was whereas in most businesses in Natal they would have only Whites in public positions; again to make a political statement I decided to hire people of color. So we opened a library and the librarian I hired didn't know a thing about librarianship but he was smart and his name was Deva Govindsamy, a Tamil. He turned out to be a wonderful employee. My senior assistant originally was a White woman because she had been there when I came there; she was an employee of the consulate. She left and I hired a Zulu to be the number two basically in this operation. All of this was so people would see Blacks, Indians in responsible positions. Everything we did in South Africa was political. I would come back to this country on leave every year we would come back and at least once they would ask me what it was like living in South Africa. I would say, "I felt like I was living on another planet." It looked outwardly like a very developed and prosperous place but everything was wrong, everything was distorted. There was a sickness when you had a society so rigidly organized according to race; it was so bizarre. As I say, the psychological pressures were the greatest I'd ever felt in a foreign posting. We were glad to leave after two years. But having said that there was so much about it that I found seductive not the racial politics but the climate. I loved the outdoors and I could go out, it was one of the most beautiful places I'd ever been in the world. You could go on hikes, they had great game parks. You would go on long safari's into the game reserves that were hundreds of thousands of acres and see white rhinos and black rhinos and lions and leopards and all kinds of antelope and gazelles, elephants, it was just amazing. Then you would go down to the coast and it was a spectacularly beautiful coast. So there was a lot about it that was so appealing and a lot about it that was disgusting.

Q: You were an information officer what about the university there? How did that fit in?

WILLS: They had a White university and an Indian university and a Zulu university.

Q: But no Black university I assume?

WILLS: Well it was a Black university but it was overwhelmingly Zulu's. I did a lot of work with all three of them; we would bring in lecturers. All our lecturers were about racial politics basically.

Q: Well this is odd.

WILLS: Or every once in a while we would have a cultural program but it was mainly hard-core politics.

Q: In the first place were there problems with the government letting people come in? I'm sure the people who came in weren't going to say you are doing a great job you Afrikaners or something like that.

WILLS: Well when we would have programs at the universities we would try to have them in. I mean the University of Durban, for example, although a White university was trying to be more open minded. So it would invite at our insistence students from the Indian University, which was nearby. The African University was farther away so when we would do programs there we would only go out there and do them; we couldn't have multi racial events there. When I would have events at our cultural center downtown I'd always have them end at a certain hour to give the African people and the Indian people a chance to get home before they would come under scrutiny by the police. Sometimes people would, as I say, come up and get very confrontational with us, with me. The other three officers didn't take part in these programs.

Q: I can understand why. That's his job.

WILLS: But sometimes people would come up and say thank you for doing this, it's a great thing. When I would have events in my home I would go out of my way to make them multi-racial. Believe it or not people would live their whole lives and not have normal social contact with a person from a different race. I had several white South Africans come to dinner at my home and meet let's say a distinguished Zulu doctor and they'd never met a Zulu professional. I could not mix Afrikaners with other races very successfully but the English speakers could come with Indians and Africans and that would be all right.

I remember once I had a dinner party for several leading Afrikaners all of them believers in apartheid. It was just my wife and I and four Afrikaner couples. At one point in the night I was struggling for conversation with these people because they are very different and I didn't speak Afrikaans; so we were doing all this in English. I found myself seated next to this very large woman who obviously had been brought up on a large farm and was not very couth but she was a sweet lady and we started talking. I said, "How many children do you have?" She said, "I have eleven." The room got quiet and I said much to my wife's horror, "Wow, you must have a hell of a uterus." My wife nearly fainted from my lack of diplomacy and the woman lit up. She was very proud that her body could have produced eleven children like this. I had complimented her and it was not a very diplomatic thing to say. But when you are struggling to make conversation you'd be surprised by what you'd end up saying some times.

Q: Did you find when lecturers would come in or things would be from America, events from America, because this is still during the '70s, life isn't perfect anytime but particularly in those days we were still really struggling with the whole racial situation. Were there difficult issues to deal with for you?

WILLS: In a way no because I grew up in the south, mainly in the rural south, and we had racial problems in our part of the country. Yet, I had grown up in a family that was very tolerant and so I had no racial hang-ups myself and had a kind of instinctive understanding of the problems that come about when people of different races, different classes, different whatever live together. In a way it was an easier assignment for me than it was for my wife who grew up in a different part of the country and really didn't understand this stuff. If you grew up in the American south at least when I grew up, you understand racial politics osmotically. It comes into your pores because it's all around you and that was the way South Africa was too. In that respect it was similar. For a long, long time people have focused on race; race was really a big deal. Now it's becoming less big.

JOHN J. TAYLOR
Political Counselor
Pretoria (1977-1980)

John J. Taylor was born in Arkansas and attended Vanderbilt University before joining the US Marine Corps and eventually the Foreign Service. Overseas Taylor served in Ghana, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, South Africa and Cuba. He also served in INR, the NSC, as the deputy assistant secretary for intelligence coordination and as the chief of mission in Cuba. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

TAYLOR: I was offered the job of political counselor in South Africa. In light of my interest in Africa and especially given what was happening in South Africa, I was delighted to accept. I stayed in South Africa until 1980. For three years, we moved back and forth between Pretoria high on the veld and beautiful Cape Town on the sea. The Carter administration was only a few months in office. It was taking a more forceful rhetorical position against apartheid and the South African regime. John Vorster was the prime minister. Early on, Vorster had a meeting in Geneva with Vice-President Mondale, who took a very strong position against apartheid.

The National Party leaders decided that the Carter Administration was launching a campaign to bring down the Government and end apartheid. When Vorster returned home, the white dominated media went into a feeding frenzy attacking the alleged American threat against South Africa. At the same time, Washington increased pressure on Pretoria for progress on the Namibian question. The issue had been before the UN for many years. During World War I, first the British and then the South Africans had occupied Namibia. South Africa of course ran the territory as an apartheid state. UN Resolution 435 called for independence for Namibia. South Africa finally agreed to discussions on Namibia's future with a UN "Contact Group," including the US, Britain, Germany, and Spain.

In sum, a great deal more was going on than our embassy in South Africa had ever experienced. The U.S. Administration was pushing a vigorous anti-apartheid policy, demanding progress on the Namibian issue, and in a related policy joining the British in an effort to promote negotiations

over the future of what was then called Southern Rhodesia. Meanwhile, the South Africans were carrying out various covert projects to destabilize the new Marxist Governments in neighboring Angola and Mozambique. Until 1976, the US Government had been involved in the former project, providing lethal aid to Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA organization. The Embassy was also focused on uncovering evidence that South Africa was embarked on a nuclear weapons project. Meanwhile restlessness in the black community was increasing as was re-examination of the future by the white elite. All that made for a full plate for the embassy and especially the Political Counselor.

Q: Where were you actually located in South Africa?

TAYLOR: I was part of the small embassy team that moved every year from Cape Town to Pretoria and back. Pretoria was the executive seat of government and the Parliament was in Cape Town. This was the arrangement made at the time of Union after the dreadful Boer War. The High Court was in Bloemfontein. I arrived in Pretoria a year after the uprising in Soweto, which was the most dramatic confrontation between the black community and the government since the slaughter of demonstrators in Sharpsville in the early 1960s. In fact, the Soweto uprising was much more violent and lasted much longer than the earlier troubles. By 1977, the black community throughout much of the country was militant and active.

In my political section, I had two officers who followed internal affairs. Steve McDonald was one. Steve, an ebullient and gregarious man, was a superb officer - just the right man for the job. He had a wide range of contacts in Soweto and other townships around Pretoria and Johannesburg. He regularly played basketball on the courts of Soweto, and at his home frequently played the guitar and sang soulful ballads for his black and white South African friends. These close personal ties between an embassy officer and the non-elite black community of South Africa were precedent breaking. Unfortunately, after this tour in South Africa, Steve resigned from the Foreign Service, but he continued to work on African affairs for various NGO committees and organizations interested in that country and U.S.-South Africa relations. He is still active in that field today.

From the top down in the State Department virtual unanimity prevailed about our policy. Before I left Washington for South Africa, I met with deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs, Bill Edmondson (later our ambassador to South Africa). Bill told me that our job in the political section was first of all to get out and report on what was happening in the black community. The second priority was to understand the political dynamics within the Afrikaner community and the National Party, and the possibility of significant change. I was told that with all our contacts we should continuously and strongly underscore the American Government's strong opposition to the Apartheid policies of the South African regime. Of course, the regime and most of the white population viewed that position as the equivalent of a declaration of political war.

Soon after I arrived, I found that within the embassy, a spectrum of views existed. Some people, like the military attaches, had close relations with important segments of white South Africa. The attaches and their South African counterparts regularly socialized and naturally became friends. Some American officers felt a certain sympathy toward the regime. To some extent, that was true

of the CIA station as well. Some American administrative personnel in the Embassy also did not understand why we were so critical of the South African government. These people lived, as we all did, in white communities that were not too different from those in America - except everyone had at least a maid servant. We all had white South African neighbors and friends.

I instituted a weekly brown bag lunch to which all American embassy staff were invited. We used the occasion to bring people up to date on what was happening in our relations and, as we saw it, within the country. I think that effort was fairly successful; We usually had good turnouts. We continued this practice through most of my tour whenever I was in Pretoria. We did not have such meetings when we were in Cape Town, which was so small that such a program was not necessary. The ambassador, the DCM, a political officer, three secretaries, a communicator, and myself were the only embassy personnel who made the annual trek to Cape Town. The other embassy sections and personnel remained in Pretoria.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

TAYLOR: Initially, it was Bill Bowdler. He was succeeded by Bill Edmondson in 1978. Afterwards, Bowdler became Director of INR, then Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs. When the Reagan Republicans took over the White House, they gave Bill something like two hours to clear out of his office. It was like a Bolshevik revolution. They blamed him for coddling the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Bowdler and Edmondson, were both fine ambassadors in every respect. Both Bills were effective in carrying out Carter's mandate to put pressure on the South African government to reform and demonstrate to the black community our support for peaceful change. At the same time, we needed to work with the South African government on a number of key issues. Among these was the future of Rhodesia and Namibia. Shortly after my arrival the UN "Contact Group" on Namibia sought to open negotiations with the South Africans.

Several US/British delegations also came to South Africa to talk about Rhodesia. Andy Young, our UN ambassador, led a couple of these teams. Their objective was to encourage the South Africans to urge the leader of the white Southern Rhodesian government, Ian Smith, to negotiate an end to the Emergency (the guerrilla war) and a transition to a majority-rule government. I accompanied some of these delegations to Harare where talks were eventually begun on the holding of one-man-one-vote elections.

The political section reported the ongoing dialogues with the South Africans on both Rhodesia and Namibia and provided analysis of Pretoria's position and recommendations on how we might move things along. The United States did not have representation in Rhodesia or Namibia so we also reported on internal developments in those territories.

Q: How did you find dealing with the South African foreign ministry, especially on the Rhodesia and Namibian issues?

TAYLOR: The South African diplomatic corps was very professional. We had a productive

relationship with them. My South African colleagues were highly educated and strictly oriented to problem solving. I worked most closely with Neil Van Hearnden, who was the foreign minister's principal aid on the issues of Rhodesia and Namibia. I saw Neil at least once a week at lunch; sometimes if the issues could not wait for the weekly lunch we would meet in his office to discuss hang-ups in the negotiations. Neil was definitely a pragmatic diplomat. As in any negotiations, "the devil is in the details;" and we were the detail men, seeking to find compromise language that all the parties could accept. His approach was always a positive one, and, I think, so was mine. Neither one of us was confrontational or ideological.

The foreign minister himself, P. W. Botha, was a character – flamboyant and swashbuckling. At the time he reminded me of Von Ribbentrop. But he was not a die-in-the-wool defender of apartheid. He was in fact a realist also, but a good actor as well. Occasionally, he would let slip something - in his speeches or comments - which suggested that despite his bombast and bullying attitude, he did not agree with the white apartheid code. He seemed to understand that the days of apartheid were numbered. In our assessments of the evolving situation in South Africa, we would occasionally point to Botha as an example of the weakening of confidence in the system on the part of the Afrikaner elite. Botha came from a prominent Afrikaner family. He was an intellectual who understood the dynamics and realities of the South African situation - social, economic, political, and international. Pik played a key role in persuading the Rhodesian regime to switch its fundamental strategy, abandoning white rule and instead banking on the success of a white-supported, moderate black-led political party. As far as their own country was concerned, Botha, Van Hearnden, and other members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia, including politicians, journalists, and university professors, understood that the death of their apartheid system was also a matter of time. But, still, they hoped to delay the day of reckoning for many years.

Q: On the Namibia and Rhodesia as well as apartheid, did you run into many ideologues who were less interested in solutions than they were in their soap-stand?

TAYLOR: The average National Party MP was still a "bitter ender," believing wholeheartedly in the goodness and workability of the apartheid system. The Prime Minister, John Vorster, was among them. The average Afrikaner man-in-the-street was even more benighted. In South Africa, the Afrikaners and the English both had hoary democratic traditions. Thus representative democracy, the rule of law, and freedom of speech existed for the white community - at least as long as one did not become involved in stirring up the black community.

Q: Why did the South Africa want negotiations to succeed? Wasn't it in their interest to maintain the status quo?

TAYLOR: It was calculation of enlightened self-interest on the part of people like Pik and my friend Neil. Other Afrikaner elites, including many in the *Broderbund* (a semi-secret organization of the Afrikaner elite), were also able to see that at least the Afrikaner had to start moving gradually away from apartheid. The most prominent leaders of Afrikaner South Africa – religious ministers, politicians, teachers, etc - were tapped to join the *broderbund* - something like being tapped for "Skull and Bones" at Yale. It was this group that informally determined the position of the Afrikaner community on any issue of great public debate. The head of this group, while I was

there, was Chancellor of Rands Afrikaners University. It became clear to me in my conversations with him and his peers that a decisive segment of the elite had seen the 1976 uprising in Soweto as a watershed. The uprising together with increasing international pressures, such as the militant rhetoric of the Carter administration and economic and financial sanctions, were changing the mind-set of intellectual Afrikanerdom.

Unlike South Africa, the black opposition in Rhodesia had taken to arms and a full-scale guerrilla and terrorist war was raging. With the advice and support of Pik Botha, Ian Smith began to support the emergence of a black elite class that would be less radical and more amenable to political compromise. The leader of this new black group was a Protestant Bishop named Muzorewa. The Bishop received assistance from both the Smith government and Pretoria in building a political organization. Pik and eventually Ian Smith believed that Muzorewa could win an honest election. Pik and the Afrikaner elite decided to follow the same strategy in Namibia. There they decided to accept independence for Namibia but they expected to continue control through a mainly moderate, black dominated, multiracial political movement - although the leader was white. As in Rhodesia, the South African Government believed that this puppet party could win a popular election in Namibia against the nationalist guerrilla group, SWAPO. The moderate, white supported black parties in Rhodesia and Namibia were seen as potentially leading a new bloc of African nations that would be friendly to South Africa. Botha and van Heerden both thought that the days of absolute white rule in Rhodesia and Namibia were numbered and that the longer the liberation movements went on, the more radical they would become.

Ian Smith had implanted special branch (intelligence) operatives throughout Rhodesia - in every village lived a paid supposedly secret agent. These agents served as the "eyes and ears" of the government. In my lunches with Neil, we would discuss what was happening in Rhodesia as the elections neared. He would tell me with increasing confidence that the Muzorewa group was making headway in its struggle for power. The Special Branch agents were reporting that the Bishop would win a free election. The Lancaster House negotiations in London were concluded with the Rhodesians and South Africans convinced that the Bishop could defeat Mugabe and Nkomo - the two prominent black leaders of the long insurgency. As the election began, I can remember Neil telling me that the Bishop would certainly win; the only issue was his margin of victory. As it turned out, Muzorewa was slaughtered at the polls; he got something like 8% of the vote. It seems the villagers had told the special branch agents what they thought they wanted to hear - they would vote for Muzorewa. The Bishops' defeat shocked the establishments in both in Rhodesia and South Africa.

This result in Rhodesia influenced the South Africans to hold back on the Namibia negotiations. In 1979, we had been close to an agreement on holding elections in Namibia. South Africa had felt for sometime that its allied political organization in that desert state, the "Turntable Alliance," could be victorious in a free and open election. The South Africans held a unilateral election themselves without benefit of UN monitoring. It turned out that 110% of the Namibian population voted!! This election "victory" further emboldened the South Africans to believe that their adherents would win a free election in Namibia. So they began to be more accommodating in the negotiations with the "contact" group. But after the very poor showing by Muzorewa in

Rhodesia, the South Africans pulled back, recognizing that they had very badly judged the situation in Rhodesia and probably in Namibia as well. Ronald Reagan's victory in the 1980 Presidential elections also encouraged them to believe that American policy would become more friendly. Negotiations continued off and on over the years. In 1988 the negotiations on Namibia and Angola took place in Havana, where I happened to be the chief of the US mission or Interests Section. But, again, that is getting ahead of the story,

Q: Tell us about Andy Young's visit. How did the embassy react?

TAYLOR: The trips were successful. Andy was very open; he got along very well with the Afrikaners. He was not confrontational even with the hardest line types. He was philosophical and very effective in the negotiations. The South Africans in turn respected him. Thus Andy played a valuable role in bringing the South Africans along on the Rhodesia issue. He gave them confidence that although the Carter Administration's rhetoric was stronger than that of any previous administration, it nevertheless would try to be helpful and not adversarial or confrontational. The U.S. was not going to go beyond public pressure and persuasion. Actually, the Administration in fact did not apply any major economic sanctions, even though it had legislative authority to do so. I think Andy Young was helpful in showing the South Africans that we were interested in solutions and progress, not in specific actions that might have been confrontational and which might have defeated the end purpose. We wanted solutions that were also best for South Africa.

Q: Other people in discussing South Africa have often referred to the "Night of Long Knives" - an era of black retribution. How did the embassy in your day see an end game?

TAYLOR: When I arrived, our contacts with the black community rapidly increased. As I mentioned, Steve McDonald was especially effective in getting to know black South Africans, from regular students to leaders such as Steve Biko. All of us in the political section established contacts in the black community. The ambassador as a matter of course invited black South Africans to social functions and lunches at the residence. The three consulates in the country also gave these contacts a high priority. Increasingly, we saw the unofficial black political leadership as well the professional and intellectual elite as remarkably pragmatic in their thinking about the future. Surprisingly, they were not embittered or looking for revenge. They had every right to be angry, but generally they were not. Militancy was increasing among younger blacks and black consciousness was being raised generally by militants Steve Biko. In context, however, Biko was not radical. The radicals were represented by the Pan-African Congress (PAC) that called for nationalization of all white farms and businesses and even the forced emigration of the white population. Biko was arrested about one month after my arrival just as I was on my way to see him in Port Elizabeth. He was killed the next day while in Police custody.

Ambassador Bowdler attended Biko's funeral outside of Pretoria. The funeral was attended by tens of thousands watched by a thousand or so policemen and riot squad officers. Our security officer and Rich Baltimore were going to escort the ambassador to the funeral. The day of the affair, we were sitting in my office discussing the arrangements and how the ambassador would get to his seat, etc. I warned them that if they used our portable radios to communicate with each

other or the car, this might seem suspicious and provoke a reaction from the security forces. They agreed, and the security officer also decided to leave his gun at the office. Of course, none of us could guess from which group trouble might emanate: the black attendees or the security forces. Rich suggested that if the police moved in swinging batons, his colleague (our security officer) should grab him and shout, "I've got this Kaffir!" If, however, black rioters were running amuck in their direction, Rich would grab the security officer and shout, "I've got this one!"

The funeral passed without disorder. The ambassador's picture by the gravesite was on the front pages the next day.

As to the ultimate outcome of the struggle, I came to believe South Africa could and probably would avoid a "night of the long knives," a civil war with, in the end, the whites fleeing into a final bastion in the Cape. We can discuss that further when you like.

Q: What was our evaluation of the Biko episode? Did we think it was governmental policy or the doings of some over-eager local policemen?

TAYLOR: The police and the government were intent on intimidating the black leadership. Early on I made a trip to the Eastern Cape to call on black leaders, including Biko. After I arrived at the airport in Port Elisabeth, I went to pick my rental car. At the desk, I was told by the young woman employee that two men had asked whether a man named Jay Taylor was renting a car with her company. She had told them, yes. As I left with the keys, I could see in the terminal window two men following me. I got in my car and drove around the parking lot. I was clearly being followed. I had an appointment to see a colored activist before my appointment with Biko. The police followed me all the way to this meeting and the ostentatiously waited outside the man's house. They were obviously trying to intimidate the black leaders with whom I had appointments. The gentleman I visited that afternoon was arrested the next morning. I was scheduled to see Biko that same morning, but when I arrived at his office, I was told that he had been arrested the night before. Two days later, we learned that the day after his arrest, Biko had died as the result of a beating. Of course, it seemed possible, even likely, that Biko and the activists I had seen in Port Elisabeth were picked up because I had made appointments with them. The intent presumably was to intimidate the activists and discourage me and my colleagues from making such contacts. Since black dissidents like Biko were regularly detained in any event, we decided to continue our contacts with them, if they were agreeable.

Q: Did we do anything after we heard what happen to Biko?

TAYLOR: We let the regime know in no uncertain terms that we considered this a heinous crime. The State Department called in the South African ambassador in Washington and Bowdler told Pik Botha that the killing was an outrage that reflected either a malevolent government or an out-of-control police force. Of course, the South African Government denied that they had anything to do with the death; they claimed he had died of natural causes. The Justice Minister, Jimmy Krueger, was an unreconstructed Afrikaner who strongly supported apartheid; he publicly proclaimed, "The death of Steve Biko leaves me cold." But the killing it was a turning point in terms of energizing international pressure on South Africa and activism in the black community.

Q: Did we believe at the time that the security apparatus was a force upon itself, not necessarily responsive to the political leadership?

TAYLOR: They were basically responding to the political leadership. But they had considerable leeway, as usually the case. They had secret covert units. These were exposed during the investigations of the 1990s. Some of these units had pretty much of a free hand. The justice minister, for example, might not have known precisely when an assassination was planned and carried out. By the 1980s, the security services had gone beyond arrests and beatings. Bombs were being sent to ANC leaders in Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola. The South African Defense Forces (SADF) were mounting raiding parties against ANC facilities and people in Angola and Mozambique and even Zambia. BOSS and military intelligence sent Letter bombs to ANC leaders in exile. The SADF increased its raids into southern Angola in pursuit of SWAPO fighters and to eliminate their bases. South Africa increased its military aid to and support of UNITA, the Angolan insurgents, in order to hinder SWAPO's operations in Namibia and to challenge Cuba's military presence in Angola. The Cuban military presence had originated in 1975-1976 as a response to SADF intervention in Angola in support of UNITA and its leader Jonas Savimbi. The UNITA leader, incidentally, at this time put himself forward as an anti-communist fighter but originally he had been a Maoist," purporting to be more Marxist than the MPLA.

"BOSS" was the fitting acronym for the Bureau of State Security. "Boss" was also the appellation that blacks traditionally used when addressing white males, not just their employers. The BOSS headquarters was in the same building in Pretoria as the US Embassy. The security services were large; in addition to the bureau of state security, intelligence and covert teams existed in the police and the military.

We had several excellent attaches during my tour there. One went on to become a respected academic specialist on Africa. But a few considered South Africa an important strategic country in the U.S. global "Cold War" against the Soviets. They viewed the maintenance of a white government as vital to our security interests even if we did not agree with its internal policies. We had a standing order that no Embassy official or members of his or her family was to travel to Namibia. This ban was intended to demonstrate our opposition to South Africa's continued occupation of Namibia and its failure to carry out UN Resolution 435 that called for independence. I was the exception to this rule. I went regularly to as part of my responsibilities. One day, we learned that our army attaché had, without approval, accepted an invitation from the South African army and toured its military camps in Namibia. He felt that he had to accept the invitation to get a better understanding of the military situation there in light of the ongoing negotiations. I felt that in light of his blatant breach of standing instructions, the attaché should be sent home. The ambassador, however, after giving the officer a severe lecture, let him finish his tour in Pretoria.

Shortly after this incident, the Ambassador dispatched me on a two-week tour of all South African military bases in Namibia. The bases were primarily along the Namibia-Angola border where the guerrilla war was being waged with SWAPO, the black Namibian nationalist

movement, and across which South African Defense Forces launched raids and sent military supplies to UNITA. The South African military provided me an escort and transportation, usually via helicopter. Learning that I was a helicopter as well as fixed-wing pilot, the South African pilots let me ride in the co-pilot's seat and sometimes take the controls. Sometimes I traveled in huge lumbering anti-personnel carriers called "Hippos," which were especially designed to absorb and deflect land mines. Later, during the suppression of the black uprisings in the 1980s, I would see on television these great metal beasts bullying their way through Soweto and other townships.

Q: What was our view of the military situation in Namibia?

TAYLOR: It seemed the South Africans had the military situation pretty much under control, unlike in Zimbabwe where guerrilla groups were able regularly to mount night raids and then safely scurry back across the border. Terrorism was a regular and violent reality in northern Namibia, an area called Ovamboland, but only sporadic in Windhoek and the rest of the country. In Namibia, the white farmers, none of whom lived in the northern part of the country, did not have to worry about being ambushed as in Rhodesia. Nevertheless, the South African presence in Namibia was a drain on the country's resources. Only a few deaths a month among the white conscripts began to create a backlash. Within South Africa, whites were free to express their opinions, and the parliamentary opposition and white intellectuals in general constantly hectored the Government about Namibia. Sentiment was growing among South African whites in favor of an exit from Namibia.

Q: What was the embassy's view of boycotts?

TAYLOR: Different views existed on this subject. Some felt that the burden of the boycotts would fall on those least able to bear them; namely the black community. An economic squeeze on the country would likely increase unemployment primarily among blacks. This embassy group supported a policy that focused on persuading the South African business community to institute policies of equal recruitment, training, pay, and working conditions for blacks. Almost all American businesses in South Africa subscribed to the so-called Sullivan Principles, which incorporated these goals. In some American and British-owned companies, blacks were increasingly employed in supervisory and senior positions. Those Americans against sanctions believed that the withdrawal of US investment would just make the economic situation worst for the blacks.

Most of the black leadership in and outside South Africa, however, supported boycotts, financial sanctions, and any other legal measure that would apply economic pressure. If the black community suffered as a result these measures, they believed that the community's standard of living was already so low that additional unemployment would only have a marginal effect. I personally thought we should avoid an all-out economic war on the country and instead apply selected but especially painful sanctions - as in the banking world.

Q: Was our embassy prominent in trying to bring change as compared to the representation of other countries, particularly Western European ones?

TAYLOR: In terms of political pressure on the South African system, I think we did play a leading role. This was because the South Africans felt they could survive a European effort to totally isolate them, but over the long term and perhaps sooner they would collapse if the US opted for such a policy. On economic and financial sanctions, the Europeans were in the lead. The Europeans also generally took a stronger stand on Namibia.

Q: You mentioned that Steve McDonald of your staff was the officer primarily responsible for liaison with the black community.

TAYLOR: Yes, as I said, he was exceptional. We also had a more junior officer, Rich Baltimore - an African-American - who also concentrated on black South African affairs. He was likewise an excellent officer. He had recently received a law degree from Harvard. One FSO in the section spoke Afrikaans. He maintained contact primarily with that community and also with other white groups, reporting on their attitudes as well on parliamentary politics. A fourth officer worked across the board, as we all did occasionally. We also made a point of knowing leading MPs, key government bureaucrats, journalists, writers, professors and other members of the chattering classes. In addition, like FSOs everywhere, we exchanged views on subjects of the day with our diplomatic colleagues. We covered the waterfront pretty well.

Q: Were these contacts primarily for source material for reporting?

TAYLOR: Yes, but they were also elites whom we tried to influence. We assessed views across the board on internal affairs and also on subjects like the negotiations on Rhodesia and Namibia. The objective was to understand the dynamics of political life in South Africa, perceive trends, and where possible increase understanding and support for the views of the United States Government and of the American people. I also served as the Ambassador's advisor and reporting officer in regard to the on-going negotiations with the government on the two neighboring territories as well as on other non-economic subjects. The ambassador made representations to the foreign minister and I worked with Van Heerden and others in the Ministry on a range of issues, including not only the question of internal oppression, but also on: South Africa's armed intrusions in neighboring countries; its relations with these and other African countries; its nuclear program; its position in the United Nations; and its position on issues of concern to us in international organizations. But we did not get involved in any discussion about a possible *quid pro quo* for any significant change in the government's domestic policies.

Q: Were we suggesting to the black community that the time would come when it would rise to the country's leadership?

TAYLOR: They did not need us to tell them that. The black leadership believed that victory was only a matter of time. They were remarkably optimistic. This attitude really began in 1977 or perhaps even much earlier. Biko presented an outstanding example of this up-beat attitude.

Q: Did your government contacts indicate any unhappiness with the killing of Biko? Did any of them see it as a major mistake?

TAYLOR: Many white intellectuals felt it was both horrible and stupid. I am sure Pick Botha felt that way. Neil Van Hearnden was extremely angry with his "stupid fellow Boers." He could not understand how the police and the Justice Minister could be so dense as not to see the repercussions of their actions. He and other Afrikaners realized that the murder had consequences, particularly internationally, which far outweighed any temporary benefit it might have had domestically. They were correct of course. Biko became a martyr at home and abroad.

Q: Were you at all concerned that Baltimore and McDonald in their continuing presence in Soweto might be stirring up trouble for the U.S.?

TAYLOR: We were not out of order in these activities. Certainly we were not breaking the law. The South African regime would periodically protest our visits to Soweto and other areas and our contacts with black leaders. It would, for example, protest to the ambassador about meetings that I held with various leaders of the black community through out the country. I was accused of making provocative statements in these meetings that encouraged unrest. But the regime could never present any evidence of to back up their charges.

Q: How did you and the ambassador and other members of the embassy handled the social activities - the 4th of July celebration, dinners, etc.?

TAYLOR: The Ambassador and other Embassy officers made a point of inviting to their social events - and working lunches - a cross section of people from all South African communities. We paid no attention, of course, to apartheid. I found lunches to be the most productive was to get to know persons of interest. During my three years in South Africa, I probably hosted two or three hundred lunches.

When the ambassador hosted a large reception, the Political Section would provide him with a list of potential invitees that always contained a large percentage of black citizens. The same process was usually used for smaller affairs, such as dinners. We not only wanted to be inclusive but also to clearly appear to be that way. I do not remember any white South Africans refusing to accept invitations to mixed social affairs. One outstanding USIS officer in Johannesburg was an African American. He and his young family found life in apartheid South Africa frequently irritating and sometimes oppressive. They could of course go where members of the local black community could not - by showing their diplomatic passports. Nevertheless, his presence would sometimes raise eyebrows and indirect signs of disfavor. Our Harvard law graduate, Rich Baltimore, however, was a bachelor, and a very sophisticated young officer. He found dealing with apartheid an interesting challenge. For example, for a time, he had a white girl friend from the French embassy. He enjoyed escorting this young lady to restaurants or movies where all the other customers were, of course, white. He laughed at the glares and curious glances he would receive on these occasions. Rarely was he ever challenged to show his passport because the theater, hotel, or restaurant staff always assumed that no South African black would have the nerve to do what he was doing. Once, while driving from Cape Town to Pretoria with his French girl friend, he spent two nights in hotels on the road. In both cases, he had advance reservations and in neither case did the desk clerk challenge him, even though he was probably the only black

who had ever stayed at these hotels, especially one with a white female companion. White beaches were other places he integrated. So Rich “had a ball” challenging the system, but for African-Americans who had families the situation was different. They had a tougher time.

Q: Did you have African Americans coming to South Africa to make political statements or to raise some hell about apartheid?

TAYLOR: A considerable number of African-Americans, both prominent and not, did come to South Africa after the beginning of the Carter administration. The prominent sought to use the opportunity to bring the plight of South African blacks to the world’s attention and to give encouragement to members of that community. These visitors also helped to foster a perception in both the white and black communities that the U.S. was becoming more and more active in the global drive to end apartheid. It was during this period that I first met Jesse Jackson. As political counselor, I traveled with him to Johannesburg and Durban, where he spoke to mixed groups. He was, of course, a powerful speaker. He was candid in his assessment that changes in South Africa would eventually come, and the faster, the better it would be for all concerned. I don’t think that this kind of tour would have been possible before 1976.

Q: Did you have any American, black or white, entertainers who used the stage to make statements?

TAYLOR: In the late 1970s a movement began in the global arts community to put South Africa on the proscribed list. So we had few American entertainers. The boycott of South Africa started with the international cultural community. One year, South Africa did host a world boxing championship, which became a big occasion. It was held in a large rugby stadium. The African-American boxer beat the South African champion, an Afrikaner. The black community took delight in the outcome. The white community feared boycotts in the sports arena - most especially rugby, which was an obsession - more than other anti-apartheid action abroad..

Q: Was Buthelezi in the picture during the time we are discussing?

TAYLOR: Buthelezi was certainly a political force; he held the middle ground in between the regime and the militant black community, led by the ANC, which at the time was, as you know proscribed. Other militant black groups contended for influence, like Biko’s Black Consciousness Movement, which had not yet been banned. Buthelezi was the leader of the Zulu tribe; he was not in the line of ascension to the Zulu throne, but he was related to the royal family. His ancestors were something like chancellors to the hereditary king of the Zulu nation. The king, however, was only the nominal leader of the tribe. Buthelezi was the real political leader. He was a well-educated man, but on special occasions appeared in the stunning leopard skin cloak of the traditional Zulu warrior.

He participated in the local elections even though they were held under apartheid ground rules. Buthelezi was also chief minister of Kwa Zulu, the Zulu “homeland.” Most of the black community strongly opposed the homelands as a key component of Grand Apartheid with a capital “A.” But Buthelezi viewed his election in Kwa Zulu as a step forward. He continued,

however, to attack apartheid and the central government. He believed that working within the established system might be a quicker way to end apartheid and white control than the path chosen by the ANC. We were in contact with Buthelezi and his Inkatha Party primarily through our consul-general in Durban.

Q: In your contacts with the universities - and USIS' - did we notice any change in outlook among the white students?

TAYLOR: Yes. USIS travel grants were given not only to promising young black leaders, but also to white student leaders and young white politicians of both the National Party and the opposition. The white universities in South Africa were excellent academically but, except for Stellenbosh, the major Afrikaner college, also hot beds of anti-apartheid thought. They were the spawning grounds in the white communities for the "new South Africa." Professors in these institutions also generally recognized that refusal to change would lead to more and greater violence and to international pariah status for the country.

Responding to these pressures, domestic and foreign, the government proposed a new constitutional arrangement. Many in the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. viewed this proposal - put forward by the new Prime Minister P.W. Botha, as a token gesture totally without significance. Of course, the black community in South Africa felt the same. The Ambassador and I agreed, however, that P.W.'s "reform" was a first step away from grand apartheid. It moved the white regime from a set hard position onto the first gentle decline of the famous slippery slope. The government's objective was to try formally to incorporate the "colored" and Asian communities into the political life of South Africa. In the new dispensation, there would be three parliaments: a white one, a colored one, and one for Asians. The status of the black community did not change. The assumption was that the "homelands" would continue and that was where the blacks should and would find their political life. It was a strange, Jerry-rigged, three-ringed parliament, which obviously did not please anyone; it was an effort by the regime to show that it was not opposed to having people other than whites involved in the political life of South Africa. In addition, the Nats hoped to co-opt into the system the colored and Asian populations. The National Party had excluded the former ethnic category excluded from the voter rolls in 1948.

The three-ring racial parliament did not make sense of course, but still we saw it as a first step toward an unraveling of the system. It also promised to split the National Party. The most conservative wing of the Party vehemently opposed giving any political rights, even nominal ones, to any non-whites. That was another reason why we at the embassy were more positive about the regime's proposals than most others. The arch-conservatives in the Party saw the new dispensation as we did - that is as a first step toward if not onto the slippery slope.

It meant, we believed, the eventual end of a system for which the Afrikaners had fought for centuries - a purely white, Afrikaner-dominated country. The right wing of the right-wing National Party understood that to grant even the small accommodations suggested by P.W. Botha was to start the beginning of the end of apartheid and all that the "Nats" had cherished. The government's proposal, in the view of the extremists, violated the fundamental principle of South African governance - only whites had political rights. That principal was at the core of the

conservative philosophy. Once the Party allowed a token departure from the principle, the ultra-right correctly understood, the rationale of the whole system would rapidly erode.

In the end, the archconservatives lost and new parliaments for coloreds and Asians were duly elected, with those two communities in theory having the same political rights as whites. This took place shortly after I left, but at the time the debate was going on, it was clear to me that deep fissures over the future of apartheid were opening in the white community. The Afrikaner intellectual elite were looking to a process of reform that might take many years, but they were intent on eventually finding a “new dispensation” that most black South Africans could accept. They understood that the “crumbs” that the regime was offering would not be adequate and that more progressive action would be required.

Q: Did the Indian government - most of the Asians being Indian - play any role?

TAYLOR: No, in fact no Indian embassy existed in South Africa. The two countries did not have diplomatic relations - or for that matter, economic relations either. It was only in the UN and other international bodies where India expressed its very negative views on apartheid and conditions in South Africa. A sizable Indian population live in South Africa, descendents of workers in the cane fields in Natal. Today, they are an urban population, mostly involved in commerce. Like the coloreds, the Indian community did support the National Party in the first post-apartheid elections in 1994.

Q: What role did Nelson Mandela play during your time in South Africa?

TAYLOR: Mandela was the most admired figure in the black community, even though he was in prison where he had been for about fifteen years. Winnie Mandela, his wife, was prominent and we had contact with her. She was frequently at the ambassador’s residence - that is, when she was free to move about, which was not always. Shortly after we arrived, she was “banned” - a quaint legal device by which the regime isolated certain people from normal life, including human contact. Sometimes, “banning” took the form of house arrest. At other times, it simply restricted the number of people that the “banned” person might meet at any one time. Their writings and even their photos could also be banned. While I was in South Africa, Mandela’s picture, for example, could not be published anywhere in the country.

Q: If you went into a house in Soweto, would there be a picture of Mandela on the wall?

TAYLOR: Yes, practically always in the homes of leading black citizens like doctors, teachers, and political leaders. But also frequently in the ordinary shacks of urban and rural blacks.

Q: When you left South Africa in 1980, what were your views about that country’s future?

TAYLOR: I wrote a “swan piece” in Cape Town at the end of my tour as political counselor. Entitled, “The Next Trek,” it was essentially optimistic. During my three years in the country, as I described earlier, I detected a major although quiet shift in the thinking of the South African white elite, most especially, the Afrikaner elite. They were trying to find a solution that would

accommodate the demands of the non-white populations for political rights. It was evident to me that this white elite understood that some profoundly new “dispensation” had to be offered. Domestic and foreign pressures were just too great. The average Nat member of Parliament was not suffering from any such angst. But the social and intellectual elite, as represented in the Broderbund, the corporate community, and even the military officer corps, reflected a new calculation of enlightened self interest that would eventually, I thought, open the door to profound change.

Many liberal observers, including some American correspondents, thought that the Afrikaners could not and would not adapt, violence would eventually increase, this would lead to greater repression, this would provoke greater resistance, and on and on. Shortly after I left South Africa, the *New York Times* correspondent, Joe Leylyveld wrote a book, *Move Your Shadow*, in which he predicted such a scenario leading to a bloody climax, probably with an Algeria-like outcome. But the white elite increasingly understood this would be the result of standing pat. Thus they were seeking to move away from the homelands policy of Grand Apartheid but in a gradual way. In 1980, even the most liberal “Nats,” people like Pik Botha and Neil van Heerden, believed the reform process should and could be drug out for two decades or longer. They wanted to hold on to power as long as possible, but they also hoped for more time to build up the black middle class.

These Afrikaners realized, however, that the end result would have to be black majority rule. Among the Afrikaners, to the right of the arch conservatives, existed a fascist-like element. If Grand Apartheid was to fail, these right-wingers preferred a partition of the country, with a separate white/colored or all-white nation carved out of South Africa.

I thought violence would increase over the next decade. But while average Afrikaners thought of themselves as “bitter enders,” they also had a strong tradition of accepting the decisions of their communal leadership as to how best to assure the survival of the Afrikaner people. Moreover, while maybe ten percent of whites were relatively poor, the majority of whites enjoyed the *Liker Lieu*, “the sweet life.” Most had: at least one maid; a car; hearty meals every day; good schools for their children; excellent and free universities; endless opportunities for sports; a beautiful country to tour of mountains, game parks, and beaches; and marvelous weather. If they thought this “sweet life” could be protected, they would eventually accept whatever solution their leaders proposed to end the ballooning, ever more violent struggle for political power with the black population. And the elite, I was convinced, would in the end agree to hand over political authority to the black majority in return for a promise of stability and a non-vindictive, non-confiscatory national policy. The black leaders, I thought, would likewise see this solution not as a concession on their part but an act of enlightened self interest by the black community.

In sum, I believed that in the short term more violence would certainly erupt, but nevertheless a promising future for South Africa was quite possible. The leaders and indeed the peoples of all communities in the country wanted to avoid a “night of the long knives.” Six years later (1986), at a dinner at the Arlington home of Bill and Donna Edmondson, who had returned from South Africa, I bet the other guests at the table that in five years there would be a black president of South Africa. That year was a particularly violent one in South Africa, with major uprisings in

the townships, brutal enforcement of martial law, and government incitement of black-on-black violence. Tens of thousands would die before the drama would end. But my prediction was off by only three years. I lost the bet. Still, it was a moral victory.

The year I retired was 1994, the year of the first democratic, one-man-one vote elections in South Africa. As we all know, Nelson Mandela was elected President and the ANC took command of parliament and the central government. Five years later, I wrote, produced, *and directed a PBS documentary on South Africa called, Ubuntu, African and Afrikaner*. Broadcast of Ubuntu by PBS stations across the USA began in 2000 and continued to be rebroadcast through 2003. If I may, I will later insert here the text of a brief PBS promotional mailing to member stations in 2002.

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Q: I don't suppose that the AIDS epidemic had yet reached the consciousness of South Africans?

TAYLOR: No, it had not. In 1980, Western countries were just beginning to recognize and examine this deadly epidemic. The disease of course existed then in Africa, or even perhaps started there, but it was not recognized as the horrendous scourge it would become.

Q: How did we deal with the homelands?

TAYLOR: We had no official dealings with them at all. The homelands were set-aside on a tribal basis. They elected their own government officials, but we did not recognize them as leaders of sovereign states or legal governments as Pretoria did. In my travels, I would visit these areas and talk with "homeland" officials, but most other embassy officers and their families were not allowed to travel in these territories. I was the principal American embassy contact with "homeland officials" except for those of Kwazulu, who were covered by the consul general in Durban.

JAMES O'BRIEN HOWARD
Agricultural Attaché
Pretoria (1977-1981)

James O'Brien Howard was born in Alabama in 1915. He received an A.B. degree from Birmingham Southern College in 1936. He then went to Iowa State University and completed his M.A. degree in 1937 and his Ph.D. in 1939. Mr. Howard began his career with the Department of Agriculture in 1939. He became a foreign affairs officer with the Foreign Agriculture Relations department of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1953. His foreign assignments include positions in Portugal, Egypt, Sweden, and South Africa. Mr. Howard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Then in about 1977 you went to South Africa. Is that right?

HOWARD: That's right.

Q: You were there from 1977-81. Now this is a whole different atmosphere from where you were before. What were you doing there?

HOWARD: I wasn't excited when asked to go to South Africa. Again, I suppose about 99 percent of the people in our foreign service were not favorable to the South African government's policy of apartheid.

Q: This was doing the high apartheid period.

HOWARD: Yes, and as a product of an Alabama farm who knew racial intolerance firsthand and whose neighbors and so forth had been party to it, I felt very strongly on this. But Agriculture wanted me to go there and my wiser friends in the State Department in Stockholm said, "Look, Jim, we have a full staff there and all of them feel just like you. It is a job. You are asked to do it and you go ahead and do it." So, Winifred and I went. You can only wear your conscience on your sleeve a certain amount of time. The rest of the time you have to go on living.

From a standpoint of creature comforts, South Africa was as pleasant as any post we ever had, perhaps the most pleasant. We had a nice house and two competent servants. The weather was ideal. On a cold winter day Winifred could go out on the terrace by 10:00 and have a cup of coffee sitting in the sun. There was a country club just down the road. It was good living and not a bad place to wind out our career.

Q: What were you particularly working on there?

HOWARD: South Africa is a significant agricultural producer and exporter, so they were interested in some of the same products, the same markets as we, but they were also significant importers from us. Fruit, for example. They were a big exporter of fruit to Europe. These same voices that were trying to boycott Caesar Chávez were also trying to boycott South African oranges and apples, etc. in Europe. As soon as these boycotts started on South African oranges, they just changed the name to Swazigold...Swaziland being a black independent nation within South Africa. It was the darling of my friends in Sweden so they would import these Swazigold oranges with great gusto.

The Department of Agriculture had continuous problem in Europe, particularly with the Germans, about regulations on insecticide, pesticide, residue left on fruit. You are going to spray apples to keep the bugs from eating them. Only a certain amount of that residue can be on them when they reach the consumer or you are in trouble or prohibited entry. They don't like you to use certain pesticides. Well, of course, our agricultural producing interests were contrary to those consuming interests to a certain extent, although our consumers in this country felt somewhat like that. So we were constantly negotiating with these Europeans, particularly the Germans, to not put into affect regulations that would make it impossible for our fruit, which met U.S. standards to come in their country.

Okay, the South Africans faced that same problem. They were exporting oranges and apples to those same countries. So we would work together with the South Africans and other countries, the New Zealanders, etc., that exported fruit to Europe to try to keep them from making these regulations that we thought were unjustified from the United States.

Q: Was it the feeling that these regulations were really designed more to protect the domestic producers?

HOWARD: This was a complicated issues. Most of them, I think, were designed to protect their consumers. But we thought they could protect their consumers in a way that still would allow us to get good wholesome fruit to them that would have a decent shelf life. There may have been a little internal European Community politics in it. The Italians raised fruit and the Spanish raised fruit and they were quite willing to see our fruit disadvantaged in that market.

Q: Who were the Ambassadors when you were there and how were they dealing with the problem? This was mostly with the Carter period wasn't it?

HOWARD: Bill Bowdler was Ambassador there for just a few months after my arrival, and we

had a pleasant relationship. He was succeeded by Bill Edmondson. Bill Edmondson and I worked together for three years. I never had a more pleasant and fruitful working relationship with anyone regardless of organization. He was just a fine officer who knew his job and did it well and was considerate of his people. We remain good friends to this day.

Q: I know Bill and also have very high regards for him.

HOWARD: Let me use this story to illustrate how an agricultural attaché can be particularly useful to an embassy. The US is doing all it can within its limitations of international diplomacy to discourage apartheid and encourage the black leadership of South Africa and we needed all the information we could get. Now many of these blacks lived in these homelands. I, as an agricultural attaché, had a legitimate reason for going to those homelands and studying their agriculture. Agriculture was about all they had.

So I made detailed reports on the agriculture of the major homelands of South Africa. They were appreciated not only by Bill Edmondson and his immediate staff, but in the State Department.

One illustration. I wanted to go to Natal to Quazulu, the homeland of the Zulus. The South African government was reluctant to have me go in there without them. Bill Edmondson's advise to me was, "Jim, you can let them help you but you don't ask their permission. You can go."

Well, the man who was responsible for it in the South African government happened to be a guy who I was playing golf with and we got along famously. He said, "Jim, I will set up a program for you. Whatever you want to do." I said, "One thing I want to do is meet a chief." You meet with individual black farmers and you meet with the white people working with them, but I had never met a chief to get that point of view on agriculture in the homelands. He thought it was a good idea. He really laid on a good program doing what I asked him to do.

The chief they chose was the King of the Zulus. We have heard a lot in this country about Boudelaize, the Prime Minister, but we haven't heard much about the King of the Zulus, whose name is King Goodwill. King Goodwill was not nearly as bright as Boudelaize, but he spoke good English and he was no fool. He entertained me for a nice lunch. The economic counselor of the Embassy was with me. I was quite impressed by the role the King played. For example, as we were served, people coming in baring dishes would stoop low because the King was sitting. Some of the lowest people would come in literally on their knees. The chief agriculturalist, who was my immediate guide, was pretty high up and would bow slightly, but they all showed this great deference for the King.

The King was very cordial. That item in the corner of the room is a knob carry. King Goodwill presented me with it when I left, one of the weapons of the Zulus.

Q: A head knocker.

HOWARD: That's right. This is a ceremonial piece with beads representing the various elements of their culture. I don't know how many Americans have had lunch with King Goodwill. It was

quite an interesting experience.

Q: Did you find that our rather adamant antipathy towards apartheid, particularly during this period under the Carter Administration, which was very heavy on human rights, have much effect on your effectiveness in getting your work done?

HOWARD: Yes. But let me say first that I found apartheid to be more complex than I had expected, but I found it even more insidious than I had realized. So I had not the slightest reservation about our government's policy. When I would invite agricultural leaders of South Africa to my home, they would come, but they would not reciprocate. This was not true of the business community. I had good relations with the farmers organization. The head of the organization had me down to his home, a farm in the country where his mother, who is British, and still remembers the fighting of the Boers and her being put in prison by the Boers and she was English. She had never forgiven them. Those relationships were very pleasant.

I have traveled all over South Africa. I had a Blazer, a government vehicle, to get out over the rough country. Winifred and I traveled the whole country. The farmers were without exception open and delighted to have me. We had wonderful discussions and they would arrange whatever I wanted. It was fine. This was not a personal thing with the agricultural leaders, it was their government's policy to be cool towards the U.S. government in those days.

Q: Well, you left there in 1981. Where did you see things going at that time?

HOWARD: There was no way I could see the status quo remaining. The black population was growing. Let me give you a small story. One of the U.S. products that we were exporting there in considerable quantity was rice. The rice growers of Arkansas and Louisiana had an office there that was running this program. Rice was pushed in the white community because they had the money to buy rice. But while I was there, even in those four years, that program was shifted based on good market research and they began to put on radio programs.

BERNARD LAVIN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Pretoria (1977-1981)

Bernard Lavin was born in New York in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Boston College. Mr. Lavin entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Nigeria, Indonesia, and South Africa. Mr. Lavin was interviewed by Mike Brown in 1988.

Q: South Africa is a long way from Asia, but there may be some similarities. Do you want to tell us about it?

LAVIN: Sure. South Africa is something very special in many senses of the word. First of all, how did I get there? I fully expected to go to Thailand as PAO. I had been given hints by people back in Washington that my name was at the top of the list, both the area list and personnel.

And I told my wife, let's get ready to go to Thailand because it looks like an almost sure thing. However, John Reinhardt had different ideas. He wanted to make his own assignments. I found that instead of going to Thailand I was to go to South Africa as PAO. Well, this came as a shock. I had very little idea of what South Africa was like and very little experience in the area. But off we went to South Africa.

I found it to be a very frustrating assignment but very rewarding. Why was it frustrating? Well, living in South Africa was sort of dream-like; the finest of housing, very good medical facilities, excellent food. But that was for the white segregated community in which we lived. So often in the course of our work we would go out to the black townships and see how people lived out there. That was a shattering experience.

For instance, I went out to visit a township and I asked to go to an elementary school and a high school and so forth. And a black South African friend brought me to this little elementary school that was a one room shack. There were no desks, no chairs. There were only long benches. There wasn't even a blackboard. There wasn't a piece of chalk. The only educational instrument that they had was about 15 or 20 bottle tops of coca cola bottles which they used for helping the children learn how to count.

In the course of my service in South Africa I tried to specialize with university students both black and white. And, of course, the university students at the segregated University of Pretoria were the most conservative of all. I met some of them, became very friendly with a few and tried to introduce them to black university students - and succeeded in a number of cases.

One day I was talking to one white student who defended the apartheid system in South Africa. He claimed that South Africa had a separate but equal system of education and that the two societies could develop separately and freely and equally. I asked him if he had ever been to a township in South Africa? And he said, "It is against the law for any white South African to go into a township." And I commented that I had often visited them. I told him that the white segregated schools are more beautiful than I have seen in many places in the United States, magnificent campuses, excellent facilities, the finest of teachers, excellent programs, the best that any young student could ask for. I also said that I went into an elementary school in a township. I described to him what I saw there. He was silent. He had no reply. He couldn't have. He said, "Well, I haven't seen that." And I asked if he would be willing to go to a township with me and bring along some of his other student friends from the University of Pretoria. I promised to try to get the permission of the government in the visit. Well, he never went. He didn't want to-

Q: He didn't want to see it.

LAVIN: No, he didn't want to have this image destroyed, i.e., that the blacks were enjoying the same privileges as the whites. So I found it very difficult to work between those contrasting

cultures and their mutual perceptions.

Taking another example, I will never forget the night that I visited the home of a very fine black South African doctor who lives in Soweto. He had many of his friends over. We had a heck of a party. Even though I knew where his house was, because I had been there many times, I had difficulty finding it because the visibility was almost zero. Black South Africans in the ghetto use paraffin for cooking and paraffin sends up a tremendous cloud of smoke. Well, the cloud of smoke was so dense I could hardly find the house even with the headlights on in the car. As we headed for home after the party, there on the horizon was the shining, magical city of Johannesburg where the blacks are not allowed to live. A land of contrasts! The South African government prohibited foreigners from visiting townships, but the Ambassador insisted the staffers visit the townships for legitimate official reasons. I was never stopped or questioned but others were.

Anyway, in program terms it was so difficult for us to do anything to help the black South Africans and especially the students without being accused of perpetuating the white apartheid system of control of South Africa. To walk the line was very, very difficult indeed.

Fortunately, we had a golden opportunity in the form of a visit from a team from the University of California headed by Professor David Ryer. They explained what they do at the University of California to help minority students. They developed a very successful tutorial system to help minority students in mathematics and science. As I introduced him around in the community, both to the white and to the black professors, we thought "Wouldn't it be wonderful, if some kind of a program like that could be developed for black South African students to make them more competitive, particularly in those few white universities where they were accepted in small numbers?"

Well, I talked to one of the professors at the University of Witwatersrand and described the program to him. I said that we could get a project going where white and black South African professors could develop a system based on what the University of California does. Well, we did it. We had that team go around to most of the universities, and they set their roots in every place. And I learned later that the program not only caught on but flourished. The difficulty was the Ministry of Education officials were very suspicious about what was cooking here. So we had to try to steer around the Ministry in order to get this thing done.

So the program took off and I understand that later AID became very interested in it, and many millions of dollars were made available for that program. I'm sure it has developed and grown since then because I've heard about it since that time. But those were the roots of it. What it is now I'm not exactly sure because it may have changed direction. But David Ryer and his staff will remain in my memory as having done something extraordinary in conjunction with USIS and the use of American resources without strengthening the apartheid system and yet giving an edge to many black students who wanted to get into the university and couldn't because of their lack of training in math and science.

NICOLAS ROBERTSON
Public Affairs, Rotation Officer, USIS
Pretoria (1978-1980)

Mr. Robertson was born and raised in California. He was born in Wilmington, near the heart of the Los Angeles Harbor district. He attended University of California at Santa Cruz. Mr. Robertson first desired to be an academic, but then spent some time working as a chef on a ship. After returning home, he took the Foreign Service written and oral tests and passed. Mr. Robertson subsequently was stationed in South Africa, Barbados, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Venezuela, and worked as the Deputy Director of the Office of African Affairs in at the State Department. Mr. Robertson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Alright. You were in South Africa from when to when?

ROBERTSON: 78 to '79.

Q: And where in South Africa?

ROBERTSON: Pretoria, with time spent in Cape Town and Johannesburg, too.

Q: What was your job?

ROBERTSON: Junior officer trainee, a position which was pretty unstructured, and I was pretty unstructured myself.

Q: What was-

ROBERTSON: The ambassador was Bill Edmondson; PAO (public affairs officer) was Bernie Lavin, who had spent all his time in Asia. South Africa was exciting. As I said, I had always been a musician; I always played jazz a little bit. South Africa was the only place I ever went where jazz was popular. We had a small room in the embassy, in the USIS (United States Information Service), though we didn't have a library in Pretoria, and used this small auditorium that they had used for occasional concerts, and started playing jazz there, regularly, once a month. So I put a lot of time into playing music.

At the time I think Carter- the Carter Administration was really on a collision course with South Africa; very tense, official relations.

Q: This is over apartheid.

ROBERTSON: Yes. I got great support for the jazz. I mean, we played football stadiums in black townships; it was pretty good outreach stuff.

In policy terms and in narrow program terms I didn't do too much that was important. But even

then I could see the importance of the USIS library, that you could go to because you were a citizen, because you were a normal person. I mean, you know, a public institution which required nothing of you, a public institution which functioned like a public institution should.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: This was odd, obviously, for racial reasons in South Africa but even in Nigeria and even South America the idea of an open, functioning public institution which welcomed you was novel.

Q: Well how did it work in the various places? You were in Pretoria-

ROBERTSON: Yes. And then-

Q: Pretoria is sort of the heart of the Boers, isn't it?

ROBERTSON: It was, indeed, although Miriam Makeba is from Pretoria, as is Zeke Mphahlele, the writer. We always said it was culturally more important than anybody was willing to grant. I'd also say it had something that struck me at the time as interesting. The black townships weren't industrial townships; there were people who had come in from the nearby farms but yet I knew a lot of people who were second or even third generation living in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi. I think there wasn't this great influx of people like in Soweto or, I mean, it was a more stable society at the time.

Q: Well then, at the- well you didn't have a- you had an open thing, it wasn't a library, what was it?

ROBERTSON: The library was in Johannesburg; we moved to a new location while I was there. We had libraries in Durban and in Cape Town. Because we didn't have a building that lent itself to that in Pretoria we all did more at home, more informal stuff. This may sound trite, I suppose, but even at the time it was a small but crucial achievement: a lot of people met each other for the first time in our homes. I had one student group, a student group from University of Pretoria, which was an Afrikaans speaking university, the student leadership from there plus the secondary schools in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, a group of student leaders at my house who had never met each other and had no other real forum where they would have met each other. I think that was sort of the extent of my "policy" work. But, eventually all those little chips that everybody took out of the structure made the transition easier.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: You had people who knew each other.

Q: Well were you finding, I mean, did you run across hostility from the Boers?

ROBERTSON: You know, I didn't plan it but somebody told me since I was in South Africa, I

should really join a sports club. So I joined this sports club and practiced rugby. It wasn't really a plan but, I mean, I joined a white South African Afrikaans club and played rugby with them. That's their secular religion. Not that secular, come to think of it.

Q: What was your impression of the black Africans that you met there?

ROBERTSON: I was reading some of the ADST accounts in the Library of Congress, of other people who have been in South Africa. I think everybody said there was no bitterness here, there was no real clash here.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: I mean, there were not vast townships of people dreaming of rape and pillage and revenge. They were looking for opportunities, better lives for their children. It was violent – we arrived shortly after the killing of Steve Biko and the Soweto riots, and the violence grew worse in the townships over the years. It was a wonder that in 1994 they were able to arrange a transition so peacefully. It would have been easier for everybody if they had done it 20 years before - 20 years earlier, before the population grew a lot, and the violence and lawlessness was much worse in '94 than when we departed in late '79. I never could understand why the Nationalists (the ruling political party from 1948-94) felt so threatened. I mean, there really wasn't a continent of black people at their throats..

Q: Yes. Well, did the South African, I don't know what you call it, intelligence service or something sort of give you a rough time or not?

ROBERTSON: Actually, my wife's from Argentina so we had a Spanish speaker tapping our telephone. Norma was talking to one of her Argentine friends one day, using an Argentine expletive, and this voice broke in and said, "what does *boludo* mean?" They were hiring Spanish phone tappers but they weren't conversant with Argentine slang.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: Yes, they were irritated. There were a couple of other things that happened; I can't even remember them. I didn't really pay that much attention. It's, you know, rugby with the whites, jazz with the blacks. The greatest country in the world for jazz, drinking and sports. I mean, it had this overlaying issue, this overlaying tragedy, but it was an exciting country. And, oddly enough, after all that, South African whites constitute one of the largest foreign communities in Nigeria now.

Q: Well then, you left there-

ROBERTSON: I wanted to say somebody outbid me. I was naïve then, I didn't know about bidding and hustling. So I didn't stay; I ended up going to Barbados for two years; Barbados, and the eastern Caribbean. Ambassador Sally Shelton followed by a Reagan appointee whom I can't remember. Ashley Wills was the PAO; he's been ambassador in Sri Lanka and somewhere else, I

forgot. A beautiful place to live, not very exciting.

WILLIAM B. EDMONDSON
Ambassador
South Africa (1978-1981)

Ambassador William B. Edmondson was born in Montana in 1927. After serving in the U.S. Army for three years, he joined the State Department in 1951. His career included positions in Zambia, Ghana, Tanganyika (Tanzania), Switzerland, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to South Africa. Ambassador Edmondson was interviewed in 1988 by Arthur Tienken and in 1995 by Tom Dunnigan.

Q: In 1978, then, the President nominated you to be Ambassador to South Africa, a worthy promotion. Did you have a difficult confirmation process?

EDMONDSON: No, I did not. I was probably assisted by the fact that the day before, maybe even the morning that I went up, the news had come that the South Africans had accepted an agreement, proposed through a resolution in the Security Council, on Namibia. So there was a fairly good feeling that we might be on the road toward some solution there. I was fortunate - I was, by the way, not expecting to get South Africa - I had heard rumors of another possible post, so it was somewhat to my surprise that I was actually returned to South Africa.

Before confirmation, but [after] the nomination had been made, I accompanied Secretary Vance on a trip primarily to Rhodesia. We went to Dar es Salaam, and then to South Africa, and then to Rhodesia itself, for the first time in a long time, to talk with Smith and his people. It was then that the announcement of my appointment came out, so when I arrived in Pretoria, people knew that I was to replace Bill Bowdler. Bill Bowdler was getting ready to leave already.

I might confide a feeling that I had at the time... though I certainly had been interested, because it was an important post... We had arrived and had discussions with the Foreign Minister Pieter Botha. He had invited the delegation out to dinner and further discussions at his house. I left a little early in an Embassy car to get back and send off a cable on some of our conversations. I was alone in the car riding back to the Embassy, and suddenly a great feeling of depression came over me, that I was coming back to this country, facing all the problems of apartheid, the issues and so on, and for a moment I wondered, did I really want to do this? Of course, later, when I arrived, the adrenalin ran again, the issues are difficult but fascinating and important. But that was the atmosphere when I went out.

Q: I understand your feeling of momentary depression at the thought of going [to South Africa], but I think you'll admit it was one of the half-dozen Embassies we had at the time that were in the spotlight, in which there would be great attention focused, not only from our Government, but also from institutions and people in the country. Did President Carter give you any special

message to take when you presented yourself?

EDMONDSON: No, not at that time. I subsequently carried messages out for him. Essentially it was a policy that was pretty well established and set. In paying courtesy calls, of course there is the usual exchange where you present credentials; these are usually pro forma remarks on both sides. I made clear that my position was to represent the United States to *all* the people of South Africa, somewhat pointedly. But it was an easy sort of occasion.

Q: Going back to a question we discussed earlier, was your mission there affected by the demands on our companies and institutions to withdraw their investments. Did you feel that was hindering you in any way?

EDMONDSON: No, it wasn't hindering. In fact, I think it was illustrative of the pressures in the United States. It was easier, when we were taking our position with the Department of Foreign Affairs or other South African officials, to say, "Look, we're expressing the views of the American people, views that are also being expressed in Congress." I think they understood better our neutral position on investment, for example. I declined, as had my predecessor, the position of Honorary President of the American Chamber of Commerce, because we didn't want to be too closely associated. We did cooperate, and I would meet with them, and spoke to them on occasion, and we tried to be helpful to the businessmen who were there. But we tried particularly to encourage the activities that the majority of them were carrying on to improve their community service. That is, the idea of service, which they often practice here.

One of the issues that concerned the South African Government and *some* of the businesses was that the Carter Administration had applied a number of new restrictions, you could even call them sanctions, if you wish, but they were limitations on exports, and an absolute prohibition of exports to the South African military or police or any of the South African Government institutions involved in the enforcement of apartheid law. That led to some difficult problems. For instance, if the police department, and police were included with military, wanted to put in some new traffic lights in a city, technically those came under these regulations and there would have been a prohibition. This kind of issue would come up. What were called the "grey areas" issues were constantly debated, and there were other problems of that sort.

We also in the Embassy concentrated on reports of things that might be in violation of such regulations. For instance, we were very concerned at one point over the possible export of heavy duty tractor engines that might conceivably have been used to put into armored vehicles or tanks, even. Those would have fallen under the restrictions. This sort of thing was a matter of constant work, but not a matter of controversy, necessarily.

Q: Pieter Botha had become Prime Minister by this time. What were your relations with him? Were you able to meet with him... freely?

EDMONDSON: He became Prime Minister soon afterward, but when I first arrived, Vorster was still Prime Minister and then later became Executive President. Vorster and I had a very good, long conversation, which I reported in detail to Washington. My first conversation with Botha

was when he was Minister of Defense and he was still off on his kick about how the US had left them in the lurch in Angola, and he was very bitter about the application of military sanctions and embargo on military equipment. The US had had one for many, many years, but we had pushed very strongly in the UN for a UN resolution on this.

When I made my courtesy call on him, unlike all the other ministers - and South Africans by their nature tend to be personally courteous and outgoing and fairly friendly; most of them would come out from behind their desks and greet you, you'd sit down at a table and have some tea or something like that - Botha came out, took my hand, and went back behind his desk. So I sat on the front side, he on the back side of his desk, and he proceeded to lash out against US policy. I found myself getting more and more angry, the red creeping up the back of my neck, but trying to stay diplomatic. I had the feeling I was responding just as firmly, almost pounding my side of his desk, as he was his. It wasn't a very good substantive conversation. As I try to recall, there wasn't much reportable, except the attitude of Botha himself. He was very, very, very bitter about the United States and about our policy.

Subsequently I did have dealings with him on occasion. I recall, once I was in Pretoria and we had information of [South Africans] being active again in Angola and frankly wanted to warn them of the fact that we knew through intelligence sources what they were doing. I don't know what those sources were, and obviously couldn't mention them, but I suspect that they might have been from air surveillance and that sort of thing. I flew down from Pretoria. He hadn't moved up to Pretoria from Cape Town.

As you probably know, there are two capitals, really: the administrative capital, the regular capital people think of, is Pretoria, but the legislative capital where Parliament meets, is Cape Town. During the meetings of Parliament, the Cabinet and all the senior officers of the government and various departments would have been in Cape Town. Then there was usually a little period in between when they moved back and forth. [Botha] had just been named Prime Minister and he was still living in the house where he had been as Minister of Defense.

I went down and by the time I had arrived - of course we had shared some of our information with some of our allies, particularly the group of five who worked on Namibia, the "Contact Group" as we called it - the ambassadors of those countries had received instructions, while I was flying down, to associate themselves, or to authorize me to say that they associated themselves, with the protest that I was making. One of the officers of the Embassy in Pretoria alerted the Consul General in Cape Town, so when he met me I had his assurance that I could speak on behalf of the Contact Group and not just the United States, which made more of an impression.

To my surprise, Botha took it very well, I think probably very seriously. He was really quite friendly and very courteous, and after the session - it was about 11:30, it was getting toward lunchtime - he introduced me to his daughter, who had come in before lunch, and he asked me to stay for lunch, which I thought was very nice. I declined, because I had a business lunch. But he *could* be charming. On the other hand, I found Botha a very, very difficult man on other occasions that I had to meet him. Some of those may come up later.

Q: Were you able to meet with or entertain the anti-apartheid leaders who were not in jail?

EDMONDSON: Yes. Definitely. Frankly, some of the more junior people, or people who were more activists, would really prefer to come to the homes of more junior [American] officers. For instance, one of the political officers who followed Black politics in particular really got some of the more radical Black leaders. But he would invite me, so I had an opportunity to meet them and they to meet me without their feeling they were coming to see the American Ambassador. There were a variety of ways... You have to remember that an Embassy works as a team. I very much encouraged our officers to get out, to see these people, to see them in the townships, keep me informed...

We even had a policy, which I had enforced earlier as DCM, to make sure we went into the townships freely. Normally Whites or outsiders were supposed to get permission to go into the townships, but we simply went. Often we were tailed. Only once or twice did it look like somebody thought about stopping us or arresting us... no one did. (Journalists would have this problem.) I told them, "We are not going to ask for a permit. We are going to go in and see people." And we were able to do that.

Of course, there were many people who were anti-apartheid and very firmly so, and sometimes quite outspoken, who were not necessarily political people primarily. But we certainly invited them, heard their views, and also tried to have, as I mentioned earlier, mixed parties. At dinner parties we tried always to have some Blacks or Coloreds or others - in Cape Town, more often than not they'd be Colored - to our dinner parties, and the only occasions I can recall that would be strictly all-White were for instance, if we met with a segment of a Party that had no Blacks in it. It would be a lunch, say, we might do to get with a Party's leaders who by definition happened to be all White. But on a purely social occasion we really did try to mix as much as possible.

Q: Did this bring any resentment from any of the White guests at occasions like that?

EDMONDSON: It may have, but none where they ever expressed it. By that time enough changes - we haven't really discussed the change from the earlier period to the later period - had occurred that I think they had gotten used to it. I mentioned our earlier ambassadors had started having Blacks come to the Fourth of July party and others, but the Fourth of July party was particularly important, because in the old days, you would always invite the ministers, and I'm sure in the past Cabinet Ministers came. For a while, the government effectively boycotted those Fourth of July parties. The ministers wouldn't come, and senior civil servants wouldn't come. Gradually it got to the point where we'd get civil servants coming, and finally maybe a minister or two coming, and I entertained and got them to come.

Frequently you would have situations where there might be a businessman, or there might be someone in government *somewhere*, or there might be someone in the academic area who would come who had their own Black contacts, which was useful, because many of our Black contacts would come from those South Africans, liberal and other, who made a point of keeping up contacts with Blacks. There were very few, indeed, but still of importance to us. We would get others together and have them talk back and forth; sometimes the arguments would be pretty

strong. It was always fascinating to see, as they left, how they would say, "Well, we must get together..." It was interesting.

Some of these people we would invite were in fact not illiberal. They were not necessarily supporters of apartheid, either. They were people, I suppose, like the majority of many of the people in any society or country, who *went along*. They had odd feelings and misunderstandings, kind of like the South in the old days in our country, where contacts were only with servants, and that sort of thing. They really didn't know what educated Blacks were like. For them it was an education, and I think probably an enlightenment and pleasure - they really probably *did* enjoy this. For the Blacks, sometimes they felt a bit awkward. But often they were very outspoken: they said what they felt, for instance, some of the Black journalists.

These kinds of events done at different levels by Embassy staff people I think probably did some good. How big a factor they were is hard to say, but they certainly gave us a better picture of what different attitudes and feelings were like. It could be very surprising to hear some of the things they'd say; you felt you might be having a little bit of influence in certain areas.

Q: Perhaps some of those contacts that were made fifteen years ago are having their result today in what is happening in South Africa. At least one can hope so.

When you were ambassador, were you publicly criticized by the South African media?

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes! Very, very often, and it seemed to be increasingly so, at times. Early in my period there as ambassador, I arrived in Cape Town and presented my credentials there. My first speech was I think to a Rotary group, and I made it off the record. It was fairly quiet. People by word of mouth got an idea of what was being said, which was essentially what our policy had been all along: I explained that we had applied a number of restrictions on exports to military and police, our abhorrence of apartheid, our hope to influence the government to move away from apartheid, toward full political participation.

But I made a stronger speech fairly early in my period there, in Johannesburg, to the South African Chamber of Commerce. There, again, I didn't initially issue press release copies of the speech, but the press was there. Some of it was misinterpreted. Among other things, I explained that over the long term, apartheid could lead to increasing difficulties within the country, struggles from opposition. I used, among other things, [the phrase that] consequences could lead to problems like civil war, which really hit a button. I was called in very gently by the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to indicate their unhappiness with the speech. The press had various distorted versions. One of the Afrikaans journalists there, however, was one of my most constant defenders, effectively, because he heard what I said and knew what I didn't say.

But the Afrikaans press was very eager, often, to show a prejudicial view on the part of the Embassy, and of me particularly. I can remember once going to Soweto, where we made a book presentation to a new Center we had established there, I think it was Sintopton Week. The book, Marx's *Das Kapital*, was one of the books that was a prohibited book, so we didn't include it, since this was not, essentially, a local community thing. But I mentioned [the prohibition].

Interestingly, there was a Black Rhodesian journalist there who picked it up, and there was a slight difference of interpretation of what I had said. It appeared in the Rhodesian press and then played back, mostly in the Afrikaans press. I have clippings somewhere... I don't remember all the details now, but it distorted the point and made it look like a much more anti-South African speech than it indeed was. So the Afrikaans press really roared up and down on that.

The later period, after the election when President Reagan came in, a lot of South Africans could barely wait until I was removed as ambassador. They hoped for a much closer alliance with the US Government, which in fact didn't occur (but there can be differences of interpretation of policy, of course.) I was kept on [for months]... I was suggesting that I should be removed, and was hoping to get another assignment. It was not until July when finally, and rather suddenly, they suggested that I come home, which was fine.

At the Fourth of July party, my wife had arranged that we have something different from the usual cocktails, champagne, and so on. Those were all available, but we made it a noontime kind of picnic-party where we had hamburgers and hotdogs and cokes, and we had some of the servants wearing straw boaters, to make it a somewhat more gala occasion. People liked it and frankly I was impressed that we had a lot of Cabinet ministers there. Because we had advertised that it would be something like this, someone in one of the Afrikaans papers wrote, "We know the American ambassador is on the skids, because he can't afford to have anything but hotdogs..." something like that.

But they *looked* for these things. Well, I got to the point where I almost perversely enjoyed it. You get pretty thick skin in any job like this. I knew that I was doing my job right, I knew that not only many friends among the Black communities, but also among South Africans, including Afrikaners, not necessarily liberals, but Ferlisthe Afrikaners realized that we had taken a position, that rarely was it as strong as the Afrikaans made it out to be, and sometimes it was stronger than people elsewhere thought it should be. Yet, I was constantly being harassed, in a sense, but it didn't bother me. I rather even enjoyed it. It showed that from my point of view, I was doing my job.

Q: You weren't lacking for publicity, in other words.

EDMONDSON: No, sir. I remember one of the best speaking occasions I had I was invited to come down on a "Freedom of Speech" day at the University. This was after our airplane incident where we had a couple of our attachés declared *persona non grata*. There were big posters: "Ambassador Edmondson Coming!" There were little subtitles talking about spy planes and so on, so there was a good turnout. The students who were there were Black as well as Whites, and the Whites were known often to be rather radical.

I made a speech that got on television... I left a lot of time for questions, and the questions were hard ones and good ones - sometimes a little hostile. But I felt good about it because I was able to explain American attitudes and policy more fully than I had on almost any other occasion. I felt that the response was good. The questions got more substantive and less polemical as we went along. It was a really good feeling.

Q: Was that covered in the press at all, your speech there at the University?

EDMONDSON: Yes, it got television coverage. Portions of it. It came out very well.

Q: I wanted to ask you about that spy plane incident. How did the South Africans get access to our plane? What made them think that our people were spying.?

EDMONDSON: For many, many years there had been an attaché office in Pretoria, and for many, many years we had a plane. When I first went down as DCM we had what must be promoted as a DC-3, a Z-47. Subsequently we got a C-12, which is a small, more executive jet, very handy for certain things. The attaché office often used flights for, in effect, representational kinds of things, so there were South African military officers who had flown on that plane, and I'm sure they knew that it had a camera in it as well. They made a big thing of it, but they probably knew ahead of time.

I had also used that plane once when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary... Kissinger sent me out on a trip to liaise with the senior British representative, Lanview, who went out on a negotiation trip with regard to Rhodesia. Kissinger didn't want us to be directly associated, didn't want me to fly with them, and I had to fly separately. In the southern Africa area I was able to get the attaché plane to take me to places like Botswana and then over to Maputo and up to Dar es Salaam. The plane was then used when Steve Low was going into Rhodesia, since the commercial connections weren't particularly good. It would pick him up in Lusaka or Pretoria to carry him up there.

On one occasion the air attaché who piloted the plane did not observe my direct instructions. First of all, I was a little reluctant on that particular trip, because there could have been a commercial connection, but I knew it would have been a lot easier and quicker for Steve. So I agreed to check with Washington to make sure they had no objections, and they agreed that the trip could go on.

I instructed the pilot not to go across to the military side. They were always very eager to make some contacts among the Rhodesian military and see what they could learn - I sometimes thought they felt they could learn more than they actually could - whereas we had prohibited such contacts, except on a casual basis if they occurred accidentally. I told [the attaché] to park that plane on the civilian side of the airport and to return as soon as he'd refueled. He claimed, at least, that a storm front had come in and they were delayed, and he parked the plane on the military side.

We later had some information, I don't know the accuracy of it entirely, that the Rhodesians had perhaps put the South Africans up to the idea of looking into the plane. The plane had a locked door, but like one on an automobile you could open it with a screwdriver, I guess.

It so happened that the attaché was eager to fly over an area where we'd had some flights before and were suspicious with regard to South Africa's nuclear work, but we had other sources that

were far better than an airplane of that sort. (Obviously, from space you can see a great deal.) So I prohibited him from flying over that area, or creating further problems when he didn't have to.

For some reason [the attaché] was picking up our one Ambassador to the Else countries, Ambassador Norland, to go from Botswana over to Swaziland or Lesotho. He had a flight out to the West Coast first, and then he had applied for a clearance to fly from Uppington in the western part of Cape Province to Botswana, which was an unusual route that went over part of the Kalahari Desert, where we already had information of some activity by the South Africans, both from our own sources, and, interestingly, from some Russian sources.

There was no need for *us* to fly. And it was pretty well clear that they wouldn't have approved [that flight plan] anyway, so why ask? He asked and it was refused, and he had to go through the usual route of flying out of Johannesburg. As a result, while they were parked in Uppington, having applied to go and been turned down, the plane was broken into, by, presumably, South African authorities, because they got whatever was in the camera: some photographs, which were of normal kinds of things: approaches to airways, and so on, which are often available from other sources. But they made a big deal of it. They decided to declare [*persona non grata*] the air attaché, the assistant air attaché, who was the copilot, and who often piloted the plane, and the enlisted noncom, who was the flight attendant officer.

It so happened that they didn't tell me... it happened in this way: I had been back in the United States on consultation. When I arrived back in Johannesburg, I was met briefly by the DCM, who had been chargé, of course, while I was gone. I had a message to deliver to Botha from President Carter, a tough message on apartheid and some other matters. So I took the plane on immediately to Cape Town. The attaché told me that they'd had information that the plane had been broken into, but said it had been reported to Washington. I said, "Fine. I don't want to carry the cable with me on my person tonight. I won't be going into the office tonight right away, but bring it down." This was on a weekend. I delivered my message to Botha I think that morning. He was very angry, virtually almost threw it down on the coffee table in front of me and ranted and raved a bit.

It was while the plane was down there that they decided... I was called in by Foreign Minister Botha and told that they were going to declare these people *persona non grata*, that they were to get out in 24 or 48 hours, I forget what it was, but whatever it was it was unacceptably short, because they had to get back to Pretoria and pack up their equipment and their household effects. Actually I first said, "Let me report this to my government," which was the normal procedure so we could give them some sort of answer. I didn't have an answer to give them at the moment. I said that I had no knowledge that the plane had been engaged in any illegal or improper activity. The implication was that I would be given time to report and get back to them.

But I'd hardly returned before it was on the radio and television that Botha came out with the announcement that they were declaring these people *persona non grata*. We had by that time secure phones, which most [Embassies] now do, so I was able to get back. I learned that yes, they had reported this to Washington, but they had reported only to the Pentagon, not even sent a copy, as I had understood, perhaps incorrectly, that they had done, to the Department of State.

The first thing I did was make sure that the Department got a copy of the message, gave them an explanation, sent off cables, etc., and hoped for some instructions. But by this time, obviously, [the South Africans] weren't going to back down...

We had an assistant naval attaché, a Marine officer and a pilot, who could and occasionally did fly that plane. So I ordered him down to remove the plane, take it out, because I didn't know if they would try to violate diplomatic immunity and get into the plane, or not. He came down, flew it out to Botswana, and their air attaché came down from Kinshasa, picked it up, and flew it on back.

So we were reduced, and ultimately we pulled out that assistant naval attaché, and we left one officer, because we in turn had, to their surprise, apparently - they seemed very surprised - retaliated by asking them to remove their attachés from Washington. So that was the short of it.

Q: Did this linger on and affect your relations with the South African Government, or was it a one-time ...

EDMONDSON: Well, not really. There were lots of jokes about it. I can show you the cartoon downstairs that I was given when I left that showed me with some planes. (I had once had a pilot's license, so I was always interested in planes, anyway .) Things blew over in that way. They always resented it, but in effect I was not all that pleased to have so many attachés there anyway; I didn't think that we needed that many. I'm not sure that we got that much information from having them, and there was no reason... We did *not*, propaganda from other places to the contrary, engage in any kind of military coordination with the South Africans. The very presence of these people simply aided the impression that people had to say that we did.

I was happy that we were left with the Army attaché, who had had African area training. He'd been in Ghana briefly - when I was political officer there I had once briefed him. We got what I thought was a lot of very good reporting from him, in a matter-of-fact way... he did understand American policies... I thought it was just as well to operate with one attaché with as many as we'd had. I was unhappy with the incident, but I wasn't unhappy to see reductions in the number of attachés.

Q: It was, I believe, about this time that Jesse Jackson made a tour of South Africa. Did you meet with him during that period?

EDMONDSON: Yes, I went to the airport to meet him. There was a banquet being given for him that I wasn't able to attend because of a competing invitation. I did ask our political counselor to accompany him, to have a meeting with him, and to give him any assistance that we could while he was there.

Q: How did his tour affect US-South African relations? Or did it?

EDMONDSON: That's hard to say. Over a long period of time it was one of many, many things that adds in to impressions and policies. But I wouldn't have said it had a major impact, by itself.

Except - and this is a little bit difficult to describe accurately and not be misinterpreted...

African-Americans have a very strong interest nowadays in Africa, a very good, healthy interest. It's good to see [African-American] businessmen, Peace Corps people, and of course by then Embassy people taking part... And [African-American] people visited. (Some couldn't get visas. We tried hard and eventually got some in. Others we couldn't. This goes back a long time.)

The attitudes of Africans varied. For the most part Africans are very, very interested in Black Americans. They come to [the United States] and they want to see the Black community and they experience some wonderful hospitality. That is also true of Africans: they are eager to have African-Americans come visit their churches and communities and so on. One thing, however, is that they don't like to be preached to by Americans, whether White or Black. Some Black Americans, because of their own experience in the United States, tend to feel, "We can tell them how to do it." The truth is, we can learn both ways. Of course we Americans now can learn a lot from South Africans of both kinds.

I think there was a feeling that occasionally visitors from overseas, White *and* Black, I should say, tend to overlook the differences that exist among different African groups: the different countries, different communities, different races, different tribes, etc. When we tell them that they ought to get together - and this is, essentially, and *correctly*, a message that Jesse Jackson was trying to deliver: if they want to have an effect in the fight against apartheid, they need to work together - this is not always received the way it is meant. While the effect of Jesse Jackson's visit was good in most respects, there was among a few people a feeling of, "Why is he coming out to tell us what to do?" This is something that *all* Americans have to be just a little bit careful of.

Q: It was about this time that Andrew Young was removed from his post as our representative at the UN. Did that have any resonance in South Africa?

EDMONDSON: Not directly, because it was very clearly over the problems of Israel and the Near East. Andy Young was highly respected, and, interestingly, among Whites as well [as Blacks]. He had visited South Africa after being in a conference in Dar es Salaam or Maputo earlier, and had spoken to a number of businessmen, including Afrikaans-speaking businessmen, and they came away thinking, "Andy Young makes a lot of sense." It was always interesting to see that he had really achieved some respect among those people. After that, they looked up to him a great deal more in the UN. Of course, his deputy who later succeeded him, Don McHenry, was also very effective. He'd actually been in South Africa a number of times earlier, and as the American most responsible for working with the Contact Group on Namibia, he was well known. He carried on pretty much... so Andy's resignation didn't really influence that too much.

Q: Were you able to meet freely with Bishop Tutu?

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes, very easily, with no problems. Occasionally he came up to ceremonies at the Episcopal Church in Pretoria as well.

Q: Was he critical of our policies at that time?

EDMONDSON: Like many Black South Africans, they all hoped that the U.S. would and could do more, so critical in that sense, yes. But I think he was encouraged about those things we did that they did consider positive: the restrictions on exports to South Africa of certain types, and the fact that we did make an effort to get out to see and show our support for various elements of the Black South African society. He was unhappy after the election with the Reagan Administration. I remember his saying that he would come for a farewell thing for me, but that he wasn't going to be coming to the American Embassy any more after that. That was a symbolic act on his part. I don't think that applies any more: it's past history.

Q: Did we have a policy on South Africa's Homelands at that time? Did that affect your activities?

EDMONDSON: Indirectly, but not much. We refused to recognize the so-called "independence" - nominal independence - of those Homelands of South Africa declared to be independent. Of course, no other country in the world recognized them, either. We pursued perhaps a little bit more vigorous policy than certain other countries in consequence of this, because I didn't want anybody to be seen in any way as doing something that officially recognized those countries.

We would not recognize their passports: if they could come, they were South African, they could get a South African passport. In fact, they had worked out some system that they *did* get South African passports if they wanted to travel abroad. I put restrictions on travel just as we had done to southwest Africa and Namibia to make sure that no one mistook our policy, that we in no way would recognize any aspect of these so-called "independent Homelands." We did visit Homelands from time to time, and we could go to these Homelands, but if we did so, we didn't do it as an official visit on any of the officials there. We just went in as though it were a part of South Africa, because you weren't stopped.

With regard to the other Homelands, we regarded them as part of the South African system and we had, of course, a relationship with Chief Buthelezi, sometimes a bit tenuous, but we did go in for those affairs.

Q: Did you maintain relations with the Congressional Black Caucus during your time as ambassador?

EDMONDSON: Yes, but not in a formal sense, but as any other Congressmen. Indeed. Congressman Davis, of course, came out earlier, and we had difficulty getting him into the country: it was always a source of friction with the South African Government. Congressman Davis [was] unhappy when we couldn't achieve getting him in, but there was just no way of forcing another country to do our bidding.

Q: How useful was the visit that the incoming Assistant Secretary Chuck Crocker made to South Africa at that time?

EDMONDSON: It was useful on his part for him to get a first-hand view, I'm sure, and to explain the policies of the new Administration.

Q: Which, I gather, were warmly received by some of the Afrikaners.

EDMONDSON: Yes, it's a period that historians may continue to want to examine and argue about. "Constructive engagement," which was his term, in a purely theoretical sense made some sense, as I would argue. I was myself uncomfortable with certain aspects of it which made it *appear* that we were getting much closer to the South African Government. This needs to be explained a little.

There were elements in the U.S., in the Government, who often went to extremes in what they were saying about South Africa. These were usually people who were not in a position to pronounce on U.S. Government policy towards South Africa. I wouldn't cite names now, even if I could recall... but I remember some actually false statements made about what was happening in South Africa, whereas people like Don McHenry were always, *always* very precise. When Don McHenry spoke about South Africa, he knew whereof he spoke, and he could articulate U.S. Government policy very, very well. But there were people speaking out here, there, and elsewhere in other parts of the Government who went *beyond*... My feeling was, and this comes from somebody who was criticized for his own speeches occasionally, that it was terribly important to be very accurate and very careful in our expression of policy.

So one new aspect of the new policy of perhaps speaking a little bit more quietly, being less on a pulpit, I could understand and, to some extent, agree with. As one always does, you adjust to a new policy. But I had a feeling that some people felt that just by being nicer to the South African Government and removing some of the restrictions that the Carter Administration had had - and this caused a great deal of concern elsewhere - these kinds of things made it appear that "constructive engagement" was nothing but a closer relationship with the South African Government.

I think that ignored the feelings of many of the Black African States, whose assistance, I felt, was very important in things like the earlier negotiations on Rhodesia and then Namibia. It turned out ultimately to be important in Rhodesia that the African Nationalists involved be very pragmatic in the negotiations, say, with Britain; that was a little harder, maybe, with South Africa, but the extreme positions they took didn't always help negotiations. Very frequently, countries like Nigeria and Tanzania would provide advice to organizations like ZAPU and ZANU, SWAPO, ANC, and PAC that would be more moderate, would see how there were tactics and strategies that would be more likely to bring about an agreement towards independence.

Q: How close was the cooperation between South Africa and Israel? Did we have any evidence of their working together in the nuclear field?

EDMONDSON: It was closer in some respects than we felt comfortable with, but it wasn't as close as many perhaps suspected, either. The Israeli ambassadors usually were very outspoken about apartheid. I can remember one of them who led a boycott of the showing of the film *Golda*

that was to have been segregated. He insisted that the Diplomatic Corps join him, which we did, in not attending a segregated film session. There were other occasions, too, where the Israelis were quite outspoken.

On the other hand, as occurs in other parts of the world, the Israelis were interested in technical cooperation that was seen perhaps by them to be in their own self interest. We would have information from time to time of certain types of experts arriving in South Africa, and we assumed from that there was, indeed, a degree of cooperation, part of which, of course, was openly known. It was a kind of cooperation that we certainly did not regard with favor.

Q: Another delicate question: Do you feel the South African Government welcomed your departure, hoping that the Reagan Administration might appoint someone more sympathetic to their view?

EDMONDSON: Not delicate at all. Quite the contrary, they certainly did welcome it. The Government didn't say anything as such. The National Party Press and the Afrikaans papers certainly welcomed it. Foreign Minister Pieter Botha, on the other hand, was very gracious, had a very nice luncheon for me. My wife, who happened at that Fourth of July party we talked about, while rushing around to have fallen and broken her wrist and her nose, was treated with special courtesy. South African Government officials usually *were* very courteous, and I had a number of people I felt were particularly close friends: the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs while I was there, was always someone I felt I could deal with very frankly.

As always happens with diplomats, you nowhere trust everyone implicitly to the nth degree, and you take what they say with all the other evidence you can gather, and analyze it very carefully. But in terms of personal relationships with most of the diplomats, they were really fairly good.

Q: When you departed, were you convinced, or did you believe, that major changes were coming to South Africa?

EDMONDSON: My belief was that major changes inevitably *had* to come to South Africa. The question was how they would come about, and how much violence would be involved. I had developed over time a theory that has been picked up in a few academic circles, of what I called South Africa in the process of "violent evolution." Looking back to Soweto and other events, there were changes... Things had already changed even from my first period there, when I took my daughter on one of her vacations from college to see the post office in Cape Town where there were separate counters for Whites, Blacks, and Coloreds just to get stamps or money orders. It looked like a railroad station with different trains. Even a bench would be divided, with one end of the bench marked for Whites only, in Afrikaans, and the other for non-Whites, *nieblunk*. That had disappeared.

Towards the end of my first time there (I was chargé there four different times, and for quite a long period at one point), I went with some other diplomats to a luncheon at one of the banks. It was a very, very nice luncheon... They explained how their policies were going, and that they now had an area where Blacks could go and deal in their own languages - they had several local

languages there being spoken - but they could also go down below at the main counters. The Greek Ambassador and I, after we had said our good-byes (I think we were perhaps the last to leave), walked about a half a block down, and we'd gone out past an African guard. We left, but I said, "Let's go back and ask that guard what the upstairs there (what we had just seen) is for."

We went back and asked him. He said, "That's for Blacks." We said, "Can't Blacks go downstairs?" He replied, "Oh, no, Blacks have to go upstairs." So from the point of view of the Africans, it was clear that there was still a form of segregation, in spite of what the bank management might have said, or maybe even intended. We couldn't be sure, and we were obviously a little bit cynical.

By the time I returned, it was a real pleasure to go into the bank and get in line at a teller and find there were Blacks and Whites in the same line. Subsequently I went through South Africa on a visit elsewhere in southern Africa, on a USIA speaking tour, and noticed that even more, in the shops, particularly in the suburbs of Johannesburg, there were Blacks and Whites in the same lines. There hadn't been earlier, but [by then] there were Black sales attendants. There had been real change over time.

You could argue that that wasn't significant change; in any political sense that was certainly true. But change had been occurring, and there was an acceptance of change. I should have mentioned that even during my first tour I had talked to a couple of Afrikaners out in rural areas, and I can remember one man said, "There will be Black government before I die." (He wasn't that old, it might have been a long way off.)

The theory I mentioned earlier, of "violent evolution" was that there were periods of adjustment and readjustment. Soweto was an excellent example. The outbreak, of course, was over the enforced teaching of Afrikaans to all Africans in Soweto, and the strike against that by young people, and one boy was killed, and then everything broke loose. All kinds of grievances came out. You saw people, then, wringing their hands, even the very liberal White South Africans who were very concerned about apartheid, who wanted their government to move much, much faster, were also very concerned about this violence. You could see how they were being torn apart by this as they watched these things for the first time on television, which had for a long time been prohibited but came to show this kind of news, so people saw what was happening in their country. You could see people almost literally wringing their hands, worried about it, wanting to move away from apartheid, but not wanting this kind of violence to occur.

Of course it also happened that there was a reaction on the Black side. They began to feel, I think, "Who's getting hurt in all this? It's mostly Blacks."

So there was a reaction on both sides: there were Whites, who were saying, "We do have to make some changes, we've got to reform some things"; and there were Blacks, who were saying, "We're the ones getting hurt, let's find some other way to do this." Then there would be a period of adjustment, there would be some changes, there would be some advances, but after a while you had a lot of Whites lapsing back into the same old thing, and the cycle began again.

So you had periods of violence and peace. You had strikes... They weren't all Sowetos, they weren't all major, but there was a pattern that looked like it was cyclical of a sort. One felt that this could at some time break through into an absolute revolution, but the power [of the non-Whites] wasn't strong against the military power of the State. The ANC/PAC really had little chance, and I think they themselves came to that realization. One thought that perhaps, through reform, through evolution, there might at some point be a breakthrough, but it could either be a very violent one, or it might be simply through this process of evolution that was not always peaceful.

In the long run - after I left you began to see this - you had the ANC moving away from the idea of armed struggle, and having more and more contacts with Whites in South Africa... I had served before at Lusaka, where we had very close relationships. Much was made of our having established a formal relationship with ANC and PAC during Paul Herer's time as ambassador. But the truth is I think we always had a lot of contacts with the nationalist parties of different groups. We could see that they were using computers, they were calling up by phone... they had contacts not only with their own people, but with Whites. When finally you got a movement (so that you had this meeting I mentioned earlier in the car), you had the feeling that the ANC leadership had come to the realization that there were Whites who did want to have a change, to move away from apartheid, to have a society where they could all work together. I felt that over the long run there *were* strong elements that could be used to build a peaceful change of a radical sort, over time. And, in fact, that came to pass.

Q: After you departed from South Africa, you came back to Washington and joined the Inspection Corps, becoming Deputy Inspector General at the time. I believe the people you worked with were Bob Bloun and Bill Herrer. Had you found inspections useful when you were in South Africa?

EDMONDSON: Yes, I have to say, always useful. I will always remember my very first inspection, Dar es Salaam, where I spent about a third of my time alone in charge of the post. We had inspectors who came for one week... Nubigan was one of them; I can't remember the administrative inspectors, two officers. My wife was pregnant, we had a party, and then soon after that we had some problems...the child was soon born. The chief inspector sent a lovely bouquet of roses, which he must have had flown down from Nairobi. But, more importantly, being alone, and at my first post, there was an awful lot that I didn't know. I found that the inspectors were not looking for something wrong to pounce on you; they were looking to help you do things *right*. I remember they found a couple of things we were doing wrong, and some things we weren't doing at all. They very patiently laid out what we *should* do. I found it was a useful process, and that set my attitude towards inspectors ever since, when inspected later in Bern, Switzerland, and so on.

And so I do believe, and felt all along, that the inspection process is a useful thing. However, there are inspectors and inspectors; some are obviously better than others. I had a real disagreement with the last inspection in South Africa. (I had two, one as DCM and one as ambassador.) They felt we could save money by not moving the Embassy down to Cape Town when the government moved. I took really very strong exception to that.

I tried to stay out of it when I came back to the Department. I certainly took no initiatives until people came to ask me what my view was, having seen my response to the team earlier. I pointed out a number of reasons why I felt it was important that the ambassador *and* his deputy [should go to Cape Town].

[The inspectors] wanted to leave the deputy in charge in Pretoria, but deputies are, and most Ambassadors like to use their deputies as, alter egos: it's one of the most important relationships in the Foreign Service. It can be a tough one, especially for the DCM, but it's an enjoyable one. And if [as a DCM] you have a good relationship [with the ambassador], you do what you know the [ambassador] wants, almost like a husband-wife team, and it works effectively that way. You can *help* the ambassador, and help solve some of the problems the ambassador doesn't see, or be a middle person. The idea of leaving the DCM back would mean that he or she wouldn't have the contacts that are necessary with senior government people. [The ambassador] often wants to take the DCM along, or send him or her, and the DCM has his own set of contacts. It should be that when [the ambassador] is out of the country, [the government officials] look to that chargé d'affaires as the personal representative of the US Government, just as much as the ambassador. Maybe they feel better with the more senior-ranking person, but if that chargé is good, it makes no difference. And to leave [the DCM] in Pretoria to just be in charge there shows a total misunderstanding of that important role.

Now [it was important to send the] political officers [to Cape Town] because politics were going on in *both* capitals. We left the economic counselor and some of the senior economic officers in Pretoria, because most of the economic activities continued *there*, but they often made trips [to Cape Town].

So, I was interested to see that [keeping the Embassy in Pretoria while the Parliament was in session in Cape Town] was one of the recommendations that was *not* accepted. (I think the recommendation was made several times and never accepted.) I think it should be up to the ambassador to have certain sway over how the Mission is to be organized. But I still felt that the inspection process was a very important, very helpful one.

ALAN W. LUKENS
Consul General
Cape Town (1978-1982)

Ambassador Alan W. Lukens was born in 1924 and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended Princeton University. In 1943, he entered the U.S. Army, serving with the 20th Armored Division in Europe. Following his service, Ambassador Lukens returned to Princeton, receiving his degree in 1948. He went abroad for a year and upon returning worked towards his M.A. at Georgetown University. Ambassador Lukens then joined the Foreign Service (USIS) in 1951, serving in Turkey, Martinique, France, Morocco, Senegal, Kenya, South Africa,

and the Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November of 1989.

Q: Then we move to what must have been a much more difficult post, and this is as Consul General in Cape Town. You were there from '78 to '82, also you straddled the Carter and Reagan administrations with quite varying policies toward South Africa. I wonder if you could explain? First, what the job was, and then talk about what you did and the situation.

LUKENS: The job as Consul General in Cape Town is kind of a curious one because the Embassy shuttles back and forth when Parliament is in session in Cape Town. So when the Embassy is right there, the Consul General becomes sort of a glorified administrative officer. When they are not there, there is more to do on one's own. It's a very large area. It's interesting, because in the Eastern Cape is where most of the black leaders come from - Mandela, and the others and Steve Biko. It's where almost all of the colored population are. It's where a lot of the industry - in Port Elizabeth - we had Ford, Goodyear, General Motors, and so on, and a lot of other companies. And, of course, it is the headquarters, more or less, of the British South Africans, the English speakers, and the more liberal people. It also is the home of the Afrikaner Intelligentsia. So it's an absolutely fascinating place to work, as well as being very picturesque.

I was very much an activist, if you want. I got to know a lot of the black leaders. Alan Boesak is one of my close friends. He is now one of the leaders you see in many of the parades. And Alan Hendrickse, who is head of the Labor colored party, and some of the labor leaders in the Eastern Cape - many of whom are still in jail. Under the Carter administration and under Ambassador Edmondson, this kind of outreach was encouraged, and it was fascinating. I was not particularly loved by the Afrikaners. I used to get hate letters, "Why don't you go off to Iran with the hostages?" and things like that because I was disliked by them, but fortunately I didn't really have to deal very much with the Afrikaners at all, with the government. That was all done in Pretoria.

Q: How is South Africa divided? I mean are there equivalents of states?

LUKENS: Yes. You have about four large provinces, the Cape Province, that I covered, which is the largest one in area. And then you have Natal, which is English-speaking also where Durban is; then the two large Afrikaner - Afrikaans-speaking provinces, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

Q: Whom would you deal with in the Cape Province?

LUKENS: Basically I didn't have to. I dealt with everybody there was. There was an Administrator in the Cape Province who was the sort of local governor. I knew him, and he was pleasant, although not terribly friendly. There were mayors, and there were lots of local officials, but basically the people I dealt with, were not in the government at all.

Q: This is interesting. I mean you really felt at that point that the government was not your number one priority.

LUKENS: No, because you had the Embassy. This is the difference, being Consul General, instead of being in an Embassy. The Ambassador took care of the government, as much as anybody could take care of the South African government. And I felt it was my job to get out and meet these different ethnic groups, and leaders. I think it was probably, of all my jobs, the most interesting one, the most active.

Q: What was your estimate of South Africa at that time?

LUKENS: Well, it was a frustrating place to work. I mean you just got tired of hearing the same old story; people that called themselves "liberals" - the English-speaking liberals - weren't liberal by any stretch of the imagination by our standards. They were frustrating and nothing was being changed, but they were also scared of going too far and sticking their necks out. There was a world apart, between whites and blacks. No matter what anybody said, there were various ways to bring them together, including in our own house. But you were really dealing with totally different communities. One of my most interesting periods, I think, was in Port Elizabeth when I was asked to settle a Ford strike. I'd gotten to know the black leaders and, of course, all the Ford executives, and they couldn't produce Fords without Black workers. They'd stopped; and in the old days, what had happened in South Africa when there was a strike; they'd throw all the black strikers in jail; and then they'd hire more whites. But the Blacks had gotten so that they had all the skills of the job, everything but management, so they couldn't produce Fords without them. So both sides wanted to stop the strike, but they wouldn't talk to each other. Neither one would go over and talk with the other. So we finally had a meeting in my hotel room and we had an eight hour session and hammered out an agreement.

Q: Was this sanctioned by the Embassy? Because this is exactly what we're not supposed to do.

LUKENS: ...it sort of came about by accident when I was up there and I agreed to do it. But I told them about it afterwards.

Q: I was going to say, you could never ask and get permission to do this.

LUKENS: Ambassador Edmondson was a little surprised. He seemed to support it, and Dick Moose, who was Assistant Secretary, when he heard about it, thought it was fine. And the Ford people were happy in Detroit. I don't think the local whites were because they lost out on the agreement. The Africans were very happy. Before I left they had me into a very private fantastic ceremony in the black township which I wasn't allowed to go into. I had to sneak in there, and they met me and drove me in. They had a big party and gave me a farewell gift. It was quite impressive.

Q: Was there a marked change as far as what you were doing and how you operated in reporting, and all that, after the Reagan administration came in?

LUKENS: It was more of a subtle one. I think it hit the Embassy more quickly. Of course, we did change Ambassadors. I was there for a while with Herman Nickel, but he's not a right-wing ideologue by any means. He's a nice fellow and very open too. There was certainly a change in

emphasis. The problem was not so much the personalities in our relationships, it was the perception on the part of the Blacks that Washington had turned against them, and was no longer interested. And after the administration changed, it was very much harder to get black leaders to come around and talk, because they felt they had been kind of let down. Of course this was exacerbated by the white leaders, thinking that now they could do anything they wanted and nobody would criticize them in Washington; which, of course, wasn't really the case but it was their perception and it was borne out to some extent.

Q: There was - I guess it's finished now - but there was a major campaign about this period called...what was it called? Disinvestment, or something? Would you explain what that was.

LUKENS: ...little bit later. Disinvestment was basically getting American companies out of there. It came about from pressure within the United States by stockholders, and colleges, and everything else, to get those companies to stop dealing in South Africa. Now it was unfortunate because the companies, basically following the Sullivan principles, had set the pattern of what companies should do.

Q: Sullivan principles being...

LUKENS: Sullivan principles were named for the Rev. Leon Sullivan, a Baptist minister from Pennsylvania. He became a little bit of the front man for American companies which felt (that is, the better representatives of American companies), who felt that the best way to preserve investments in South Africa was to lead the way - a liberal way - and train and promote black Africans, help with housing, do all kinds of things like that. Get away from the old tradition and try to instill American standards in some of these American companies. And they all got together and agreed to these principles; equal pay for equal jobs. I can't remember them all but that was the general idea, and they were called the Sullivan principles after Leon Sullivan and the major companies all agreed to these. And that gave everybody a handle to go in there and see if they were indeed doing that. Some did it more than others. But while there were cases of nothing happening; one could be very cynical and say plenty of companies didn't do very much, the fact that they were doing this meant that they were the leaders, certainly vis-à-vis the South African companies, in improving the lot of black workers, and in training, and in promotion, management, and in housing, and in other sorts of things, education. And so when disinvestment came along, the pressures on American companies from their American stockholders for these companies to get out, it basically meant backing out of there, and in a sense losing the leverage that we had because these companies behind the scenes had a lot of clout with the government, and the government didn't want to see them go. And they could say, "Listen, dammit, let these labor leaders out of jail," and that sort of thing. And it worked pretty well behind the scenes, and we played a big role. It was one that I did often, in doing this, and I would, for example, point out where the government was doing something dumb, or an American company wasn't waking up to what it could do. Report to Washington and Washington would get on the stick with Detroit or wherever it was and word would come back for the American company to wake up. So you could do quite a lot until the disinvestment campaign came. What has basically happened since is that these companies have sold off to South Africans at a big loss. And just because they don't want to be bugged anymore by stockholders back here. And when they look at their whole profit-loss

sheet, they figure, well, so they lose five per cent in South Africa but it doesn't bother them the rest of the time back here. So that was disinvestment, but that more or less came after I was there, so I still had the American companies there and that was one of the most interesting parts.

Q: At your Consulate General, and at the Embassy, were you sort of playing the equivalent to a war game in figuring out how you could see the whole situation play out in the long run in South Africa at that time? Where did you see it headed?

LUKENS: I think we were taken up too much in kind of day-to-day operations. We probably should have sat back and done more long term thinking. Various academic groups would come through, and write the old books "five minutes to midnight" it's all going to happen, and then not very much would happen. It was a very agonizingly slow change that went on and when there would be a slight bit of liberalization or letting blacks into another restaurant or something, the locals there would say, "This is just fantastic. We're really opening up." And it would be really very slight.

Q: We're now talking in 1989, and I think two or three days ago the white beaches have been opened to the blacks. So it shows you how slowly this thing is moving. What was your impression of the police and the officialdom in your area?

LUKENS: Well, they were tough and mostly unpleasant. They were mean types, reminding one very much of the war with the Germans, Nazi types. I think that's going to be the biggest problem in the future. One of the biggest problems. De Klerk is going to have to clean out the security apparatus and he's going to really have to make changes. But, fortunately, they didn't have much success, they spied on us, they listened in to our telephones, and occasionally they bugged us. I had a black officer. They made life very tough for him, and he finally left. They were really obnoxious. There was no question about it. I hope de Klerk can get his hand on them because if he can't, you've got two different operations. You're going to have the government liberalizing, and you're going to have the security backtracking.

Q: Is there any other development that you care to mention?

LUKENS: Well, I just continue my interest in South Africa. I continue to speak about it and follow it closely and meet South Africans when they come here. I think it's fascinating, and I hope that there are some changes coming about. I think that what Crocker and now Hank Cohen have done on Namibia is extraordinary and it's going to have its ripple effect in South Africa itself.

Q: This is the granting of independence in Namibia after a long, long time, but it's happened.

LUKENS: It's happened and I think you will begin to see the pace of change pick up in South Africa. It has already, but it's going to take a long time until it really is settled.

RICHARD C. MATHERON
Ambassador
Swaziland (1979-1982)

Ambassador Richard C. Matheron was born in California in 1927. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948 after graduating from the University of California at Berkeley. His career included positions in Vietnam, Italy, Nigeria, Zaire, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, as well as an ambassadorship to Swaziland. Ambassador Matheron was interviewed by Lee Cotterman in 1989.

Q: Speaking of Swaziland, in my review of what I knew before, which was not very extensive at all, I picked up the idea that Swaziland and most of the neighboring African nations rely on South Africa for almost all basic needs, including railway transport routes, power, lots of foods, steel, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery, construction materials, and even jobs for thousands of their people. If that were true in the time you were there, could you readily agree on the current sanctions that we have instituted towards South Africa today? How do you feel about that?

MATHERON: I have mixed feelings. I basically think sanctions are not a very effective way of trying to bring a change in internal affairs of countries. I believe that sanctions would not only be detrimental to neighboring countries, but also to the black population in South Africa itself. However, I subscribe to the position taken by Secretary [George] Shultz, or rather the commission he set up to study our relations at the time of sanctions. The point they made was that the United States' President should show real interest in changing the situation in South Africa. It is in the interest of the United States to bring about rapid social change towards majority rule in South Africa. If, in fact, the President of the United States really showed that he cared about it, was personally interested, that would be a lot more effective than sanctions.

But I can say now, quite frankly, that I believe that President Reagan paid only lip service to the anti-apartheid movement, but there was no indication that his heart and soul was in it. My perception is that he didn't care. The South Africans knew that. The South African whites knew it, the South African blacks knew it, that there was not a strong commitment on his part.

Q: During your time there, Mr. Ambassador, the dependence of other nations around South Africa probably did exist and probably still does today.

MATHERON: Oh, yes, very much so. In fact, the economies were very integrated between South Africa and the neighboring countries. Even many of Swaziland's products consumed in Swaziland would go out of Swaziland into South Africa for some processing and back into Swaziland. I remember one American family in Swaziland who really felt determined not to buy any products from South Africa. The mother, head of household, after a few weeks, threw up her arms and said, "There's no way that you can do this. The Swazis don't boycott South African products. I can't even get jam or jelly made from Swazi fruit that don't go across the border to be turned into jam." So she sort of gave up on the project.

Swaziland produces electricity, South Africa produces electricity, but the grids are tied together. So sometimes when we had a power outage, it was not because of a power failure in Swaziland, but a power failure in South Africa. The South Africans have enormous influence in the country. On the whole, South Africa has provided a great deal of development in the region.

LANE KIRKLAND
President of AFL-CIO
1979-1995

Lane Kirkland was born in South Carolina. After serving in the Merchant Navy, Kirkland attended Georgetown University. After graduation Kirkland began to work for the American Federation of Labor and stayed there for his entire career, eventually serving as president. Throughout his career with AFL, Kirkland worked with a variety of countries as well as the International Labor Organization, lobbying for labor rights worldwide. Kirkland was interviewed by James F. Shea and Don R. Kienzle in 1996.

Q: Were there other international issues in which you were extensively involved personally? South Africa or Israel?

KIRKLAND: South Africa. We had AALC programs there. We were not allowed to keep a representative there, so we [ran the program] from a neighboring country. He would make trips down there from time to time. Mike Lescaux was mainly responsible for it. He is now in the [AFL-CIO] Paris office.

The one time that I was down there in recent years, prior to the big change, was as a member of a high level ICFTU delegation to South Africa to meet with the black trade union people there and sound them out about what the position of the international trade union movement ought to be on the issue of sanctions and other questions of assistance to them. I was on that delegation with Norman Willis and a fellow from Norway and a German. We met with the different unions. We made a tour. Piroshaw Camay arranged a visit to Alexandria Township without permission, which was supposed to be a no-no. We went to that township and spent a little bit of time there, and we were detained by the cops, who arrived fully equipped with their hippos, these armored personnel carriers, and they surrounded us. We had a dicey few minutes there. A crowd of people from the township, all these black workers there, were watching while the cops were interrogating us. Norman Willis went over to the edge of this crowd and began to lead them in song. He invited them to join him in singing the Gilbert and Sullivan tune [which goes], "When constabulary duties are to be done, a policeman's lot is not a happy one." If somebody had thrown a rock or anything, all hell would have broken loose. Fortunately no one did. And this fellow who was in charge of the police unit was on the phone to his superiors and they obviously told him to let us go. They didn't particularly want an incident. So we drove on out and we had five or six cars. We went a few blocks and then we were stopped by another police detachment. The policeman leaned into our lead car and [asked], "Just what are you doing here? Do you have a

permit?" "No. We were just driving around and we got lost." "Oh. You were just driving around and you got lost." And he stood up and he started counting the cars. One, two, three, four, five, six. And Norman Willis leaned his head out [of the car and said], "I can see why you made lieutenant." But we survived that.

After our meetings. . . The AFL-CIO was already strongly pushing sanctions; in fact, we lobbied the sanctions through the Congress against the resistance of the Administration and the State Department.

Q: Do you feel that the sanctions played an instrumental role in the transformation of South Africa?

KIRKLAND: Yes, I do, but the issue that we were down there to determine was whether there should be support from the ICFTU for sanctions and so forth. The upshot of it was that the answer was yes. They wanted them.

Q: Did the member countries generally impose sanctions on South Africa?

KIRKLAND: Yes, I think some of the European countries did. The United Kingdom did not because Thatcher was opposed to them, but the TUC called for them and advocated them.

Q: The Australians must have gone along with sanctions.

KIRKLAND: Yes, I'm sure. Bobby Hawke was there then, and he would.

FRANK D. CORREL
Mission Director, USAID
Maseru, Lesotho (1979-1982)

Deputy Assistant Administrator, Africa Bureau, USAID
Washington, DC (1982)

Frank D. Correl began his extensive career with USAID in 1959 in the International Corporation Administration [ICA], the predecessor of AID. His served abroad in Korea, Vietnam, Morocco, Lesotho, and Sri Lanka. In Washington, DC, he served on the Philippine Desk, in the Near East and Asia Bureau, in the Office of Personnel, and in the Africa Bureau. Mr. Correl was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

CORREL: I was most concerned about our single largest project, the Southern Perimeter Road. This was part of the anti-apartheid strategy of not only the United States, but also of other Western donors. The United States had agreed to help with the construction of a series of roads around Lesotho on the principle that this network was designed to remove Lesotho's total

dependency on South Africa and its road network. As people generally know, Lesotho is totally surrounded by South Africa. Of course, it's inevitable that there will be a very close relationship between the two countries any way you look at it, short of having a blockade, and the Southern Perimeter Road was part of a multi-donor effort to reduce at least the transportation dependency on South Africa. Our road had been grievously over-designed. I don't remember the numbers exactly, but essentially something like 35 million dollars had been made available by the U.S., including funding for the design of the road. There was a provision for perhaps three million dollars worth of contributions by the Government of Lesotho. In taking a detailed look at the project, it was very obvious that this was grossly insufficient to get the kind of road built that had been designed. Thus, one of the first things I ran into was a great deal of pressure to get funding increased for the road and that ended up becoming a major imbroglio.

Q: What did you think about the objective of having the road that allowed travel within Lesotho without having to go into South Africa? Did it make sense?

CORREL: I remember being of two minds at the time. Economically, it didn't make very much sense at all. But, there were some important political imperatives, both from the point of view of the Basotho and then also from the point of view of the United States and the outside world. After all, 1979 through 1982 when I was down there were the heyday of apartheid. P.W. Botha was President and he may not have been quite as completely hard line as his predecessors, but he still was a solid, stubborn supporter of and believer in apartheid. I can see where it was very tempting to undertake a project like that.

Q: Did the South African government react to building this road?

CORREL: Certainly not in my time. I don't know that the South Africans ever really reacted to AID projects that we undertook in Lesotho. They might have prior to '79 when I arrived, but not once during my three years there was it a consideration that we would have to watch out for an adverse South African reaction. I think the South Africans figured that as long as what was going on in these countries didn't pose a threat to them, to hell with it.

Unfortunately, some of our closest contacts among the Basotho, people we remember quite warmly, were killed under mysterious circumstances, not all that long after we left Lesotho. The country has had much political instability since then and most recently there was armed intervention by the South Africans and by Botswana.

Q: But these factions were people in the same ethnic group?

CORREL: Yes, that is my understanding.

Q: Anything else you want to add on Lesotho before we move on?

CORREL: I think it worth mentioning that Southern Africa was getting much political attention

from the United States because of the problem posed by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Somehow, the way the U.S. did things seemed in much higher profile than some of the other countries.

Q: Were you involved in any of the regional initiatives in Southern Africa? Are they connected with the formation of the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordinating Committee)?

CORREL: No. The regional initiative in my time was the joint manpower project with the other two countries. There were other general discussions. SADCC came later.

Q: And the road, of course was a major project.

CORREL: Yes, it counted as regional. I remember one particular meeting, which was called by the State Department, because we had a visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Carol Lancaster, who subsequently became AID Deputy Administrator. In those days, she was in State and she put forth a whole number of ideas that I found awfully difficult to agree with.

Q: Can you mention what they are?

CORREL: One had to do with creation of an industrial capacity that would overshadow that of South Africa, in the interests of achieving regional cooperation and integration. As I understood it, the concept was one of essentially becoming a rival of South Africa's in a number of industrial and transportation things, which very honestly I didn't think was in the cards.

In addition to the countries mentioned, we also made a try at activities in South Africa, which was beginning to dismantle its rigid apartheid structure. I regret to say that trip proved a disappointment. We had explained our mission and approach to the USAID in Pretoria, but when we returned with our proposals, they said they didn't want to do anything connected with agriculture. Considering what the South African agricultural situation and farm labor situation had been like, this was just like saying "I'd like to live in this place, but I don't want to breathe the air."

Personal contacts are absolutely invaluable. Sometimes you just don't manage to do things through the usual channels. In Lesotho, we had the problem with the South African border post. Some of our people would run up against the color bar. This could pose difficulties, especially when we had medical or other emergency reasons for crossing the border, or when we had important program-related things to get done on the South African side and the Embassy could not help. At the Embassy, we were told that the situation wasn't amenable to improvement because the South African border post commander was "such a jerk." We at the mission quietly

invited the commander, a police captain, to come see what we were doing. We showed them our mission building and gave him a little briefing in my office about our program and the people who worked on it. Afterwards, we took him to my home for lunch. We told him that we had some contractors who had trouble getting across the bridge on occasion. And he replied that we should call him any time at all and he would ensure free access in and out of South Africa. Nobody else had such an arrangement, I believe. I thought that was a nice accomplishment and it really made life easier for the non-white contractors and their families.

HOWARD K. WALKER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Pretoria (1979-1982)

Ambassador Harold K. Walker was born in Virginia in 1935. He attended the University of Michigan and later Boston University to earn a PhD before serving in the US Air Force. After briefly serving with the CIA, Walker joined the Foreign Service and served overseas in Zaire, Nigeria, Jordan, Tanzania, South Africa and as ambassador to Madagascar and Togo. Ambassador Walker also worked in the Inspection Corps and as vice president of the National Defense University. Walker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Let's turn to South Africa. You were there from when to when?

WALKER: From 1979 to 1982.

Q: You mentioned your kids were in prep school. Where was that?

WALKER: They were in Northfield Mt. Hermon in Massachusetts. My wife and I came to see that one's child going away to boarding school, even if it's a good experience, is much worse on the parents than it is on the children. Ours had a good experience. Their school is a place that had a lot of Foreign Service children and people from international backgrounds. The faculty and staff are used to the particular problems of that group, e.g., making sure that students have their passports before they travel home.

Q: Where are they located?

WALKER: They're now both back here in Bethesda. My son is a lawyer and an IT Specialist with a group that has a contract with the Department of Justice. My daughter just got her Ph.D. in social anthropology and has been doing some contract work with the World Bank. She just got back from Benin.

Q: '79-'82. This was when the Carter administration was in.

WALKER: Carter was when I went to Pretoria and very soon thereafter Reagan came in '81.

Q: What was the situation vis a vis the U.S. and South Africa in '79?

WALKER: In '79, Carter was still President. We had been on a roll in the Rhodesian negotiations, very close to a successful denouement of that, and the Namibia negotiations, in which I had been involved, both of those, as members of the contact group in Tanzania. South Africa was always thought to be the tougher nut, that if we could resolve Rhodesia and Namibia first, there would be a momentum and perhaps a model of sorts that not only the whites in South Africa could see that the world wasn't coming to an end if these countries became black ruled, but the black rulers themselves would in power behave with the responsibility of having power rather than not. So when I got to South Africa, we had some issues in South Africa, but the focus was not trying to resolve those but to try to deal with Rhodesia and Namibia first. Nonetheless, there was a strong human rights dimension to our policy there in terms of trying to bring some change to the racial apartheid policy of the South African government. When I arrived, our contacts with the government, the Nationalist Party, were good but not superb. Bill Edmondson was ambassador at the time. He had previously been there as DCM. Just before he went there, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa with the southern Africa portfolio. P.W. Botha was the president. Although he was not as Neanderthal as some of his predecessors had been, he still not only had no notion whatsoever of majority rule, black rule, but very little acceptance of any serious black involvement in government. It was a classic apartheid policy in the sense that real power remained in the hands of whites and particularly in the hands of Afrikaners, and some leeway was given to the involvement of Coloreds, who were thought to be more Afrikaner than African but no role for blacks outside of the homelands, the areas that were to be set aside for their own "countries". So, it was a very difficult assignment in that human rights sense.

I nonetheless looked forward to the assignment. It was an assignment that had some professional important issues. Moreover, and every Foreign Service officer will look at it this way, it was an assignment in a country whose issues were paid attention to back in Washington. Foreign Service officers are concerned about that not only because that helps promotion but also, if you spend a lot of time thinking, writing, and researching an issue, you want someone who counts to read it. I was going to a place where I thought what I wrote and edited would be read.

Q: At the end of the Carter administration, what was the policy towards South Africa?

WALKER: The policy was strongly against apartheid, but that was secondary to Rhodesia and Namibia. Those were the first priority things to handle. The policy of "constructive engagement" with the regard of South Africa government was a new policy brought in by the Reagan people. The policy of the Carter people by contrast was public, adamant, clear opposition to apartheid. That did not mean backing that up with great resources to change things. It meant essentially a lot of rhetorical and other symbolic criticism. It meant a lot of proactive encouragement from Washington for the embassy to take proactive measures to demonstrate the American opposition to the policy of apartheid and to seek out and cultivate those who were opposed to it within South Africa. Principally, that turned out to be within the white opposition community, particularly among English speakers and what came to be called the Verligte wing of Afrikaners, the enlightened wing. Contact within the black community and the Colored community was

encouraged but not spurred. For all of the human rights activism of the Carter government, they were not unrealistic in South Africa and in many other parts of the world. This was my experience in Jordan and Tanzania. One was trying to bring about change perhaps more so or more seemingly so than under the Reagan administration, but the Carter people also realized that the U.S. had some interests and that actions have consequences and you want to be careful of not encouraging something that you can't deliver on.

Q: As you got there, how did you see Bill Edmondson's relations with the South African government?

WALKER: They were a bit strained, as almost any ambassador under the Carter administration would be. I think Bill was not always that warmly received by the South African government people from his days as DCM. They knew where he stood. He had to take some messages, as any ambassador would, of strong criticism in to the South African government as instructed by Washington and that did not set well with them. Bill also from his DCM days had a number of contacts particularly in the white liberal establishment that did not please the government. In addition, some specific things happened that caused the government of South Africa to want to distance itself from almost any American ambassador. There was a problem with a Defense attaché and use of his airplane for espionage activities. There was a problem that came up not long after my arrival what we were convinced were the South Africans attempting to develop a nuclear weapon. Bill had to bell that cat. That wouldn't have endeared him to them. In addition, our embassy at that time when I arrived was much more active in cultivating the black African community and the Colored dissident community than I had seen us do with potential opposition in Jordan (although still limited as I mentioned earlier). One, one reason was that despite all of the despicable racial policies of the South African government, they had a number of democratic procedures both in terms of parliamentary government and parliamentary procedure and the media and civil society, the judiciary that made opposition more accessible to diplomats. That said, they thought of themselves as in a crisis security situation which in their view justified some abridgement of those civil liberties which applied in any event only to the white community. But even there, there was intimidation of media, detentions of white dissidents. But there was open debate in parliament, criticism of the kind you would see very rarely in other parts of the world outside of what we normally think of as western democratic countries. Even within the black communities, there were no efforts formally to restrict our access to them. We had during the Carter days and maybe before some restrictions of our own. For example, we couldn't go to the homelands, particularly Transkei, because that was considered symbolically endorsing that aspect of apartheid policy. But our Political Section, actively sought out and cultivated oppositionists in the, We then had a political officer whose portfolio was the black community and the Colored and Indian community. We had another officer whose portfolio was Afrikaaner, including opposition within the Afrikaaner community. They had from the embassy and from Washington to do that. Officer Sim Moats, who handled the black community, had excellent contacts with and access to people including Bishop Tutu, Mandela's wife Winnie, to black trade unions, the black media, professionals... There was a doctor in Soweto who was a political leader and Sim knew him very well. That said, we did not have good contacts with the really very militant sectors of the black and Colored communities, who were generally already underground. Today, when I go back to teach at a couple of universities there during part of the year, some of my

students are children of those militant leaders who were in exile at the time. Fascinating students who, by the way, are first-rate academically. It's amazing to see how well they were educated in exile, which in any event, we did not have contacts with black organizations that were banned by the government, like the African National Congress and the PanAfrican Congress. We didn't have access to them because it wasn't legal to have those organizations. Still, we covered well the black protest movements in Port Elizabeth among the automobile workers. We sent Sim down there. But we did not have access to the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress. Today, some of those people's children are my students. The guy who today is the Minister of Finance is a Thatcherite economist these days and is taking South Africa on a model private enterprise path but he was at that earlier time a Trotskyite. He was the kind of guy I wish I had known and talked to, but it was difficult to do. But our access to opposition and potential opposition was exponentially higher than it was in most of the rest of the non-western world.

Q: Did you have problems with particularly your more junior officers in reigning them in? I could see where you have a situation such as apartheid, which is abhorrent, and young people are more inclined to say, "This is wrong. I'm going to show my solidarity with them rather than play the role of the United States representative."

WALKER: The situation was ripe for that, but it didn't happen. I think by comparison, I had a case we'll talk about later in Madagascar with a very junior political officer keeping her with some perspective. But certainly the situation in South Africa was ripe for our officer covering the black community, where he saw the injustices we only read about and met the people and talked to the people who were suffering. But I rarely had as DCM occasion to massage a report in the sense of making sure that it was not only accurate, which they always were. But I never had a problem with that - but was also balanced in the sense of being effective as an instrument to shape policy back in Washington. If you come in with a report that seems unbalanced, you're not going to have a place at the table. I used to have discussions on this matter with the political counselor from time to time, who is a man of great principle, Jay Taylor, and I don't say that to imply that he's not a man who understands the virtues of pragmatism as well. From my own perch, maybe from my own personal perspective, I was looking at a wider canvas in terms of things that we had to do.

Now, let me say that the reaching out we did in the non-white community was testing the margins in terms of both who we invited to our representation functions and our efforts to go out into the community as well. One of the key things the American embassy did at that time, more than any other embassy in town, and many of my contacts who subsequently became my lasting friends to this day in the non-white community told me - and this isn't my house exclusively; it's all the way from the ambassador's residence to all the members of the embassy in our representational functions - our invitations to them provided them not only a chance to meet and be met by others in South Africa but one of them said to me in his toast at a farewell dinner he gave to my wife and me, "You know, I found you made us feel safe." That was a good feeling. When we would invite them under the restrictions at the time, blacks could not be in certain parts of town at certain hours without a pass. In order to have a pass, you had to demonstrate that you had work there that was legal work. Well, we were inviting them not for work but to have a meal and it was our invitation that got them past these roadblocks.

But to get back to your question, we did have contacts across the spectrum with the exception of the militant guerrilla wing of the black community and the ANC and PAC. Most of them were out of the country. But we did have with the trade unions and the student groups and they were at the edge of what was legally permissible. So, in our assessments of political stability, we were able to report accurately and usefully on dissent, but we couldn't measure it. We couldn't say, "This dissent is at 60% or 85%" because we weren't sure we were getting everyone and we certainly were not getting the most militant ones.

Q: How were we seeing the ANC and its leadership? Was Mandela just a name?

WALKER: Mandela was on Robin Island. So far as we knew, he had very little influence on what was going on, except for great symbolic influence to people. He had no operational influence. The ANC was branded by the South African government as communist and terrorist. We didn't join in that. But the leadership was outside the country in guerrilla training camps in Zambia or Tanzania or in offices in other places like London which the South African government attacked clandestinely with letter bombs and other things. But if contact were to be made, it would be made there. That depended on the ambassador in these places. I understand that in London, our ambassador there was not keen to have the embassy getting in touch with the ANC people in London.

Q: We're still talking about the Carter period. What role were other embassies playing, particularly the western democracies?

WALKER: More safe than ours with the government, the French especially so. At a time when we had a voluntary arms embargo on South Africa, they were selling Mirages to the South Africans. The French ambassador when he had his national day, I was shocked to see him give part of his address in Afrikaans. That showed a virtuosity with languages but probably was not a politically neutral thing to do. But that pales in comparison to what one of our American ambassadors did, I learned, much before I got there and that is to go hunting on Robin Island with the president of South Africa.

Q: This is where Mandela was being held.

WALKER: Yes. The Brits were conducting good, classic diplomacy there. They were not out in front but they were not dragging their feet. The Germans... We did a lot in common in the contact group there - the British, the French, the Germans, the Canadians, and ourselves - on Rhodesia and Namibian matters still. Some of that got over from time to time to "What do you think is going on in South Africa and what should we be doing there?" But there was no multilateral diplomatic efforts with regards to South Africa with our European colleagues in the way that we did have a multilateral diplomacy with them on Rhodesia and Namibia.

Q: What were we doing regarding American industry there?

WALKER: A lot of the American companies had left by the time I got there. But the Sullivan

principles, which committed them to forms of affirmative action with their employees applying to the Ford Motor Company and some of the oil companies and banks and others, a lot of those left as a result of sanctions legislation that was to come later. But we supported the Sullivan principles. We supported them not only in our private diplomacy, in our discussions, every time we would have a representation dinner or take someone to lunch from the government, certainly with the white and black opposition, I can remember time and again laying out our rationale and hearing ad infinitum theirs, but we pushed for change. In our public diplomacy, in our USIS efforts there in terms of the scholarships we gave and the American visitors in the Visitors Program, and the speakers we brought in, it was very much of being on the side of the angels.

Q: When you had your night thoughts, when no one else was around, what did you think about whither South Africa? I was in INR in African Affairs in the very early '60s and the general feeling was that it was going to end of with the night of long knives with the blacks massacring the whites. What was the feeling when you were there about where this thing would end up?

WALKER: My personal feeling?

Q: Yes.

WALKER: A couple of general thoughts. I never thought that was going to happen. One of the things that is striking about South African blacks is their lack of bitterness. I concluded that did not grow out of powerless. They just aren't bitter people. Every person I have ever met who has come off of Robin Island as a former prisoner is much less bitter than they have any right to be. I have asked them sometimes, "Why?" I've asked people in very senior positions and students. One is the education sessions that Mandela and Sesulu and others on Robin Island had with the other prisoners. That was a university. The point they got over again and again is that "Bitterness won't pay. It doesn't pay not only for the future of our governing this country but for your own psychic balance." Another part of that is the notion that they have of community. So, I never felt that there would be revenge. The PAC had the slogan: "One settler, one bullet," but the PAC was marginal. The African National Congress was always an inclusive, integrationist organization. Back in the '20s... It wasn't anti-white. It was an anti-discrimination organization. So, that's one. I never thought it would be a bloodbath, partly because they didn't have the power. They didn't have that mindset.

The other thoughts I had when I was there... I brought with me from my assignments elsewhere in Africa and the world that this was a great country. This was a rich country. This was a developed country. I remember how struck I was when my wife and I left Tanzania, where maybe two or three international flights come in a week and everybody goes out to see the big KLM or PanAm plane come in to land, but at the airport in Johannesburg, one saw these big 707, 747 tails lined up like you see in a major developed. You realized this was a real country, a real modern country. Especially coming from Tanzania, where I'd seen what redistributive policies and an ideological socialist did to that country. My hope was that it would not happen in South Africa - populism gone amuck.

I remember one trip I made when I was in South Africa with the agricultural attaché. He was going upcountry to look at farming and I went along with him. We went to this tomato farm that

used the most modern agricultural techniques. You'd drive along these rural areas and see these big irrigation and water systems and grain and other things as far as the eye could see. You don't see that in a lot of parts of the world. So this was modern technology. They were producing enough food for themselves and for export and productivity was high. Even the land wasn't always that good. Anyhow, we went to this tomato farm. It was intense production techniques, packaging, and marketing. Then I saw the way the guy's farm laborers lived. It was horrendous. I can't imagine a horror film of medieval Europe in which the peasants lived more abysmally, stacked up two and three high in these wooden beds in these little shacks for the farmers to live in. Our own migrant farmers in this country live bad enough. But this almost made me vomit. It looked so horrible. It looked to me like pictures you see of slave ships, of people crowded in like that.

The day went on and we toured some more. We were staying at this farmer's house. As so often is the case with people who do pretty cruel things to their fellow man, if they don't see you in that context, they come across as rather decent people. We were having a conversation. You can't talk to any South African at that time or now without talking about "the problem." As with the Jordanians and the Israelis, they have thought this through step by step. So, after coffee, we were talking about these problems and he turned to me and said, "Well, tell me: what do you think we should do." Before I answered, I recall a number of thoughts coming across my mind. One was this horror that I saw that day. Two was the lessons of the "Art of the Possible." Three was what I had seen in Tanzania, a country ruined. So, I guess the thrust of my answer to him was, "Maintain your levels of production" because so much else depends on that as having the wealth to do a number of other things that had to be done, like build schools and good housing for those people out there. He was so taken by that. Then later that night, I regretted that so much. I was right. They needed to maintain their levels of production. Thank goodness that's what the current ANC government is putting the focus on. But I later was so ashamed of myself for not following through and saying, "But in order that the country have the wealth to do something about those abysmal conditions in which you have your workers living." I guess I rationalized it at the moment by saying, "If I get into that now, I'm going to lose him on some other points I want to make to him." But getting back to your question, one of the themes I was thinking about at the time is that I thought the political future of South Africa did not have this Armageddon scene. But it could have a scene in which the tremendous advantage South Africa has on that continent not only for its own people but for that region to maintain that engine of economic growth was undermined. One had to be careful that that didn't happen. And on the political side, my view at that time was that political change in order to maintain all of these things, in order to maintain political stability and economic growth, would have to be more gradual. So, I saw in the policy of Afrikaners Verichtigs, enlightened people, a kind of change that would by stages bring the non-white community into power, without destroying the country's economic growth. I think I was wrong on that, partly because we really didn't know the ANC. We didn't know the people on Robin Island. We didn't get reporting from Embassy London on people like Mbeki, who was the ANC representative there at the time, to understand that if power were more quickly brought to this leadership, it not only would be better for political stability in the sense of upstaging any demagogues who might want to do something more drastic, but that this was a kind of leadership that wasn't likely to plunge the country into economic disaster. So, my own view of the road ahead for South Africa was much more moderate than I would have taken had we known the

people who later came to power.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. You were in South Africa from '79-'82. We've been talking about the Carter period. Maybe we should get into both the election of 1980 and the rhetoric.

WALKER: There was quite an abrupt change coming out of the State Department.

Q: We'll talk about that.

Today is August 29, 2002. How did the campaign of 1980 in the U.S...? Were you following that closely in South Africa to see what it meant for South Africa?

WALKER: I think we all assumed that if the Reagan Republicans won over the Carter Democrats, there would be a change in focus and a change in tone from the Carter administration - and mind you, when you talk about diplomacy and the conduct of diplomacy in non-front burner places even though South Africa was more front burner than some other Southern Hemisphere places - you're talking about diplomacy whose design is mostly at the Assistant Secretary level. Under the Carter people, under Dick Moose as Secretary, there as well as the very active and effective participation of the field. We assumed that there would be a change the Assistant Secretary and that would affect, depending on the person, the conduct of diplomacy insofar as the Assistant Secretary for Africa would have a major input into the policy questions in Washington, it would affect not only the conduct but the content of policy. We're talking some 20 years ago. I don't remember spending a lot of time thinking about what the change in administration after the elections would mean for our policy in South Africa. Most of us as Americans in general thought about it in terms of what it would mean for issues beyond and more important than our own portfolios.

Q: Were your contacts in South Africa looking at this or saying, "Wait until after the elections?" Did you have the feeling that they were watching this? Did they care?

WALKER: I did not. When the election took place, I was a relatively newly arrived deputy chief of mission, not chief of mission. So, my contacts as DCM would not have been at the highest level. As a new person, I was just getting my sea legs in South Africa. So, I don't remember that. What I do recall, after the election and by the time I had met a number of contacts and during periods of chargéship, there was a great admiration on the part of the government of the day, the white Afrikaaner, the national party, for the Reagan administration and as it came to be for the way U.S. policy in South Africa was conducted. I remember very well when I was charge during one period and the foreign minister, Pik Botha, had an occasion to talk with me about President Reagan. It was on an issue that we may get to later in which the South African government was moving even further to the right on some issues than the Reagan administration, or Chet Crocker would have wanted. Pik said to me, "We just don't want to make things more difficult for 'that great man.'" He was talking about Ronald Reagan. So, there was a great deal of admiration. What that admiration was based on beyond an expectation that they could do business better with

the Reagan administration, I don't know. Whether it was based on ideological or political principles, commonalities, other than a general conservative one of gradual change, I don't know.

Q: How were you picking up the change from the African Bureau perspective and what you were getting? I would imagine that you all would be looking rather closely to see who was going to be the head of Africa and Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. This had been a crucial hotplate in our diplomacy. What were you getting from your colleagues about the change?

WALKER: On the question of who would be Assistant Secretary and how the batting lineup was being shaped, I don't remember we got much information or had much correspondence on that. My recollection is that it took a long time for the Reagan administration to fill its senior positions on Africa. I don't remember offhand how long it took for that to be filled. But I don't remember a long period of hiatus there. As to what the new team wanted, what it expected policy to be, we didn't have to wait long. I could go back and find out the exact dates. My impression is that it didn't take very long for Crocker, who was not by any means new to Africa or southern Africa issues and who was a man who was a thinker, an intellectual on these matters as well, for him to get out to the field what his own approach was, but not only his own approach, but to get himself out to the field and others on the senior team to come out. They came out and it was soon clear both from the correspondence we got in cables plus from what we got from the visitors coming out that one big change in the conduct of our policy in South Africa and indeed in all Africa would be that it would be much more closely held and directed from the Africa Bureau in Washington, and that the exciting and I think productive interaction between Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Moose and ambassadors in the field, particularly in the frontline states, was coming to an end. I was DCM in Tanzania and then DCM in South Africa, so during those times we were as a frontline state very much involved in the issues of Rhodesia and Namibia and to some degree South Africa. There was a continual interchange and dialogue between Washington and the field under Moose on these matters which I thought as a Foreign Service was a model of how diplomatic professionalism could be wedded to political leadership back at home in the conduct of foreign policy. It became clear very quickly from South Africa - and I'm sure it did from some other embassies in other capitals in Africa - that that kind of dialogue was not going to be a part of the system, not that Chet in any way discouraged inputs or even dissent but that it was not going to be a dialogue of equals in the search for policy that we knew before.

Q: Did your ambassador in South Africa, Bill Edmondson, leave immediately?

WALKER: He left very quickly and under embarrassing - indeed I would even say rude - circumstances on the part of the Reagan administration. He had, as all ambassadors do with a change of administration, submitted his letter of resignation. It takes time for these things to be processed and even more time for a new ambassador to be identified, vetted, nominated, and go through all of the procedures and get out to the field. During that period, we had a very high level visit led by Judge Clark, who at that time was head of the NSC, I believe, and some other people on his team. They came out and had absolutely nothing to do with the American ambassador. I remember we had gotten together under Bill Edmondson's leadership the normal briefings and appointments and representation schedule to be helpful to a visiting team, particularly to a high level team like that. They came in. I don't know the nature of the conversation that Ambassador

Edmondson and Judge Clark had privately, but I do know that in the meetings that we arranged at Judge Clark's request - and understandable request - for him with the state president, P.W. Botha, Judge Clark did not take the American ambassador to that meeting. That was a very clear signal - and I'm sure quite an intentional signal - that the new administration intended a dramatic change in direction because Bill Edmondson was not only a loyal implementer of the Carter administration's policy, he personally believed in it. He was a person who was an Africa hand, had assignments early on in Tanganyika Ghana; he had been DCM in Zambia; DCM before in South Africa. So, he had a point of view that was liberal and everyone knew that. But he was also a very professional Foreign Service officer and would have loyally carried out the instructions of his government while trying to influence them. But not even taking him to that meeting was a dramatic signal, as it was meant to be, by the Clark team to the South African government that there would be a dramatic change. A consequence of that, of course, was that it absolutely crippled the American ambassador for the rest of his stay there in the rest of his dealings with the South African government.

Q: You were chargé for how long?

WALKER: I was chargé for at least a year, possibly a little longer - after Bill Edmondson left. It was a difficult job to find an ambassador. I later found out from not only Chet Crocker's book but my discussions with him why that was so. Chet is a Republican, but I would think a Republican of the Rockefeller ring. Chet had a hell of a time getting agreement in Washington on who would be an ambassador to South Africa. He had his preferences, but all kinds of people - and some quite weird - were attempted to be thrust on him, including the chief of police of Los Angeles, who had a terrible reputation as far as race relations and respect for democratic processes are concerned. So, it took a long time to get an ambassador out there. During that period, I was chargé. It was during this time that the South African government decided that they wanted me to be the next U.S. ambassador to South Africa. I remember Pik Botha, the foreign minister, raising this question with me once in one of my meetings with him in the foreign ministry. He said, "We'd really like to have you come back as ambassador. How do we do that?" I was flattered, though I must say I wasn't chomping at the bit for that opportunity. It would have been a great career move for me to move up to an ambassador of a mission of that size and importance in our Africa policy. But I wasn't sure that having been in South Africa going on three years, I wanted to stay any longer for quite personal reasons. Professionally, it would have been a super move. Personally, I found it a hardship post. It was very difficult for me and for my wife, not to say that we couldn't sleep at night - we did sleep - and not to say that we felt a sense of isolation - we had a lot of friends there. For reasons I mentioned before, 90% white and Colored. But they were good friends and not all English speaking liberals, Afrikaaner liberals, Coloreds, and others. So, it wasn't a miserable time, but it was not a very happy time. Living in any regime that is so violating of human rights as that government and society was, you felt that you were really serving your country at some cost to your own psychological well being. So, I wasn't for all of those reasons thrilled about the idea of spending another three years in South Africa, although professionally it would have been a wonderful opportunity not only for me professionally, but as one anticipated, change would be coming at some increasing pace, of being in a position to make one's own contribution to that. As I told the foreign minister at the time, I knew at that time that my name had gone forward for another ambassadorship. That was to Togo.

Though that was by no means professionally as rewarding as it would have been in South Africa, nonetheless, I was looking forward to it. One, it was my first occasion to run my own ship. Secondly, Togo was going to be on the Security Council during that session which increased a bit the attractiveness of it professionally. Pik asked how they could influence that. He said, "I have this cleared with the state president and others. We want to let Washington know that it's you we want." Well, the first thing I did was to send an "eyes only" cable off to Chet Crocker saying, "Guess what the foreign minister talked to me about today. I want to give you a heads up. Pik asked me how they choose ambassadors. I explained that process, including the process of State making its recommendations to the White House through the Deputy Secretary's committee on these matters. Botha said, 'Well, we will send our ambassador in to see the Deputy Secretary, but it's too bad we no longer have our own contact in the White House.'" At that time, Richard Allan had been replaced. Pik Botha very clearly intimated that the South Africans were on very good terms with Dick Allan and they felt that if he were still there, they would have a much better chance of getting what they would have wanted in this case as far as my own nomination was concerned. I later asked Chet Crocker about this three or four years ago. He really couldn't remember. I asked the guy in Cape Town who was the South African ambassador to Washington at the time. He is retired in Cape Town and I see him, as I live there four or five months a year. I see him from time to time. I asked him about it. He couldn't recall it either. I know from the guy who was state's Office Director for at the time and from Desk Officer of South Africa. The South African ambassador went to see our Deputy Secretary and conveyed this message, that this is what they wanted. I got a cable back from the Department. I think it was from Chet. It said, "What you said they were going to do they, in fact, did do. They came in to see the Deputy Secretary today."

So, in any event, what happened, I later learned from Chet, was that he heard thunder on the right in terms of nominating the new American ambassador and proposed his own man, who he thought would keep him from having to accept some of the very right wingers being pressed on him. Chet's choice was Herman Nickel, who had been a writer for "Fortune" and "Time" magazines, who was intelligent and, as I later got to know Herman, very personable, but fully accepting the policy position that Chet was taking of constructive engagement in South Africa, a position I have no doubt that a professional career Foreign Service officer would have accepted and conducted as well for professional reasons. In any event, Herman Nickel was the choice of Chet not only because of Herman's competence but because he was likely to be able to survive the White House vetting process.

Q: Nickel came out.

WALKER: By the time Nickel came out, I had left. I left and a new DCM came out. That was Walter Stadtler. I had left, so there was no overlap between me and Herman Nickel. Walter came out at least a month or two before I left.

Q: While you were chargé, were you beginning to get things spelling out what "constructive engagement" meant? What did it mean?

WALKER: Constructive engagement meant what it means in our current policy with regard to

China or with regard to Russia. It means that you have your eye on a policy objective but you believe that that policy objective can best be achieved by working with and persuading the government of the day rather than blatantly opposing it with the view of, if not replacing it, making it weaker. So, constructive engagement with regard to South Africa was a policy of trying to work with the South African government in bringing about as much change as possible in South Africa's internal racial policies and particularly with regard to its policy with regard to the independence of Namibia. There were other dimensions to it, too. Constructive engagement was a policy that was also consistent with the wider foreign policy objectives we had in southern Africa vis a vis the Cubans and the Soviet Union. That is, trying to manage change in the racial policies of South Africa and in the independence of Namibia in such a way that did not benefit the larger Cold War objectives of the Soviet Union or of Cuba.

Q: Were there any issues that came up in the time that you were charge that stick in your mind?

WALKER: In the sense of differences with Washington?

Q: Dealing with the South African government. Was there a period in Washington while you were there of marking time while Crocker got in and got settled in?

WALKER: I don't recall any. I don't recall that there was a long period of time between the time that Dick Moose left and Chet Crocker came in in which we could wing it.

One of the things I remember rather vividly as occurring early on after Crocker's team took over - I don't remember how long it was - is that it had to do with removals from one of the squatter camps outside of Cape Town. The embassy was down in Cape Town at that time. It was cold. It was in the winter. It was raining. This was another episode of the authorities going in and knocking down the shacks that these squatters had put up and forcing them out with literally nowhere to go. I reported this - or I signed off on cables. I don't remember if I wrote it or not - for the human rights tragedy it was. I don't recall exactly what recommendation I made, but it was a recommendation to show publicly in South Africa and be in the position to show publicly internationally, including back in the U.S., that the U.S. embassy in South Africa condemned or was highly critical of what the government was doing in the squatter camps. I got back a very biting instruction from Washington that that was not at all what the business of the embassy was as far as the policy of the United States at that time. I remember that very, very dramatically because I got burned.

Another thing I remember about the change in policy was some of these visitors who came up. One of them was a delegation - I can't remember who led it. On this delegation was a young fellow named Allan Keyes, a black American, a Republican. We had briefings with him. We assumed they wanted to learn something about South Africa. They didn't want to learn about South Africa. They wanted to instruct the embassy about South Africa and the new view of South Africa. It was particularly true of Mr. Keyes. In his presentation to us on constitutional issues, which I thought was pedantic but pedantic in a sophomoric sense - it was the kind of thing that you'd expect to hear from undergraduates who were recently exposed to theories of constitutional law. We were lectured about what kind of constitutional arrangements the embassy should be

pushing for in a new South Africa. I thought that that was, one, not the best way to handle the coordination of diplomacy in terms of tapping the contributions that professional diplomats might be able to make. But I also saw it as a cold wind of a new ideological bent to the right in our policy with regard to South Africa.

Q: When somebody like that comes out and they're not your boss - these are people coming out who are part of a visiting delegation - what do you do, sort of smile and say, "That's very interesting" and tuck it away but there is nothing you act on?

WALKER: Any delegation that comes out, you assume they come out to learn and you try to arrange a program for them that will be as instructive as possible. You also assume that maybe you can learn something from them. You listen and hope that a dialogue will ensue between. It was the latter part of that that was absolutely missing.

Q: Did you find that you had problems working with the younger officers who I would assume were engaged in wanting to do something about South Africa, particularly the apartheid, and have a Reagan administration come in, I would think there would be unhappiness and you'd have to work to make sure that they were professional about this and not sounding off?

WALKER: I didn't find that at all. We had officers in the embassy, particularly in the Political Section, such as Sim Moats, who followed black politics and had a lot of contacts from Winnie Mandela to Bishop Tutu at that time. That was his portfolio. He did very well in that not only because he had empathy for the position of blacks in South Africa but because professionally he took great interest in it. We had another officer who followed white politics, including Afrikaanderdom, and including the liberal or Verigte wing of Afrikaners. He had an interest in that. In neither of those cases did I get a scintilla of indication that they could not conduct the Africa policy of a new administration that was duly elected in a democratic way in the United States or that they would not do it. I never had any problem with their doing that. The same holds true with other parts of the embassy where we had younger officers, in the Economic Section, the Consular Section, and USIA, where we had an Afro-American cultural affairs officer whose sympathies were understandable for a number of reasons with change in South Africa. But I never had a problem as either DCM or charge of trying to get these officers to act professionally, because they were professional. We had some different points of view that didn't begin with the Reagan administration on some issues of how we would interpret events, how they should be analyzed and reported, but that's part of the vigor of an embassy. But I never had any close approach to the sort of thing I think you're talking about.

Q: Did you get involved in negotiations over Namibia during the time you were charge?

WALKER: I did. First of all, there was the contact group of a number of countries - the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and Canada, who were set up to work very closely in a coordinated diplomacy with regard to the South Africans on Namibia, as we had done earlier on Rhodesia. As charge, when it came the United States' time to host those meetings, I hosted them in our embassy and I attended them in other embassies. So, I was very much involved in the coordinating end on the contact group. But even more than that, I got very much involved in our

bilateral diplomacy with the South Africans on Namibia. We did a lot within the contact group and did a lot bilaterally as well, and particularly Crocker, who was well up on this. I must say, Chet came to trust and to value my input, my contributions, to our Namibia diplomacy with the South Africans or as he stated in his later book on our Namibia diplomacy. I supported that diplomacy not only because that was the diplomacy of the U.S. government, which I represented, but in my own view, it was necessary to bringing about movement towards independence in Namibia that the U.S. to work very closely with the South African government in doing that. So, I spent a lot of my time - sometimes 90 minutes on the telephone - with the foreign minister who had called me to talk late into the evening or an hour or two in the foreign ministry. So, I got very much involved in the implementation or the conduct of our diplomacy on that not only in trying to present accurately to Washington what the South African position was on this and to the South Africans what the U.S. position was, but in making from time to time some recommendations on tactics for us to use. I remember one occasion when Chet was coming out for a meeting with the South Africans. The contact group wanted to arrange a contact group meeting which Chet would attend with the foreign minister. I suggested that we do that because it was important for reasons that Crocker understood very well to maintain that contact group. But also we had reached in some aspects of the negotiations where we had to reassure the South Africans of the United States position and use our leverage with the South Africans to get them to do some things. I suggested in that context to Chet that, "When you come out with the contact group meeting, I arrange a discreet occasion (not to say a secret one) when you can meet separately with some key members of the South Africa Foreign Team?" In this case, it was what we would call the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a very senior military person to have some discussions on something that Washington believed - and the embassy certainly supported that belief - that we might get the South Africans to do that could move things forward in Namibia. That tactical recommendation I made was accepted enthusiastically. I remember getting a cable back "eyes only" from Chet saying, "This is exactly the kind of maneuver that we want to do to move things forward with the South "Africans."

Q: Did you have the feeling that this last period before you left there that the South Africans were warming to the idea of getting this Namibia thing off the plate and settle it?

WALKER: No, I didn't. Things got worse after I left. The South Africans put in even more force. That diplomacy went on for a number of reasons. There was a conflict within the South African leadership itself of what was the best way to go in Namibia and on internal change. As in any government, there were progressives and reactionaries. I don't recall any feeling that things were moving towards a resolution of Namibia very quickly. The South Africans had not had the occasion to see yet how costly greater military involvement on their part would be. They hadn't got burned enough.

Q: Did Nelson Mandela come up at all?

WALKER: No, Mandela at that time was still on Robin Island. There was never a question of any release of him. There was great resentment about our seeing his wife, Winnie Mandela, but we continued to do so. There were people calling for his release who we saw. But he didn't come out. What did not emerge during my time was any sense that the government was moving in any

foreseeable future towards release of Mandela or towards black majority rule. The whole emphasis was to create conditions in which that aspect of apartheid, “petty apartheid,” as P.W. Botha called, it which was humiliating to people; could be reduced, but the notion of maintaining a system in which whites maintained political power and with it economic power was never broached. They never acknowledged that humiliation of non-whites was the core of and inseparable from “grand apartheid.” The movement at that time was to provide institutional mechanisms for certain people who were not in the white community, namely Coloreds and Indians, to have mechanisms in which they could legitimately take part in government but always as very junior partners. Some refused to have anything to do with that. Others saw it as an opportunity for self-advancement. Others saw it as half a loaf to push things further along. That’s about where we were when I was there in 1981.

KEITH P. McCORMICK
Political Officer
Johannesburg (1980-1983)

Keith P. McCormick was born in California in 1944. He attended the University of California-Berkeley, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy as well as the University of Geneva. He served in the US Air Force before joining the Foreign Service. Overseas McCormick served in Luxembourg, South Africa, Thailand, and New Zealand. McCormick was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kenney in 2000.

Q: In 1980 you are off to?

MCCORMICK: I went to South Africa to join the political section. I stayed there three years, from 1980 to 1983. When I arrived my job was transferred from Pretoria to Johannesburg. It was an embassy job, but we decided it is harder to know what is going on in certain areas from Pretoria than from Johannesburg. Black leaders, business, and NGOs are there. So I lived in Johannesburg and reported through the consul general there, George Trail.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa when you got there in 1980?

MCCORMICK: Tense. Recovering from the 1976 Soweto riots. A guerrilla war on in Namibia. Refugees arriving from Rhodesia. But I did mostly internal politics. I loved it. The Ambassador, Bill Edmondson, was a very good ambassador. He knew I knew the country and he gave me a very long leash to go out and develop good information. Being at the consulate, I had a great advantage. I escaped a great deal of the work that kept my colleagues in the embassy with paperwork, while I was out on the street all day. Of course that makes you look a great deal better than you are. The wire services and newspaper correspondents there had such a fever-pitch of expecting revolution that they were constantly jumping on little tiny things – they often missed the larger stories, but they caused a stir in Washington. So I would be sent off for days at a time to track down information that we wanted, and of course I would up with much better contacts than anyone else because I had the time to develop them. You can't develop those contacts after

you need to know, you have to build them up beforehand. So the system worked much more effectively than what I have seen in other embassies where FSOs are increasingly behind their desks because of paperwork, trying to know what's going on out there without being out there. I had a huge range of contacts. Contrary to what people had told me, I found I liked everyone in South Africa. I liked the Afrikaners, I liked the black nationalists, I liked the English, I liked the Indians, I liked the Coloreds - I didn't find anyone I didn't get along with. I found it much easier than I would have thought as a white middle-class foreigner to establish contact with black activists.

Q: In other words you have to get someone you can talk to so you aren't rushing out and catching somebody on the street.

MCCORMICK: Exactly. I also had the tremendous advantage of coming off this year of study with a great deal of background. That made it much easier to get past all the natural suspicion of a U.S. diplomat. Black activists in particular were used to talking in a very guarded fashion, a kind of code. There was no reason why they should open up and spell out everything to a foreigner in words which would get them into trouble. Government people often did the same, for different reasons. What I found was that the historical and other work that I had done researching those movements and their background (both black movements and the Afrikaner political rise and its background), all of this allowed me to speak in a perfectly comprehensible way without spelling everything out in English which would cause them to draw back and close up tight. I hope the bureau is still investing in those study years; they're worth their weight in gold.

Q: In effect, spelling it out would make an over-commitment.

MCCORMICK: An over-commitment was dangerous. So you needed to know the codes. If they made an allusion and what they meant was to try and tell you that this was going to be the party line now, if you ask, "Well, who is that you are talking about and tell me the story of how that person won his conflict within the party against this other person or what that means," they'll just dry up.

Q: Well, let's take Soweto.

MCCORMICK: Southwestern Township. The word is actually an acronym, because of course it is the classic monument of this massive social engineering that the nationalist government did when it came to power in '48 and created an orderly, sterile, segregated, ultimately miserable township to replace the old Sophiatown slums. Not in Johannesburg, it is actually miles away out in the veldt.

Q: Could you go in there without having South Africans (I'm talking about the government) checking you out?

MCCORMICK: You could go wherever you wanted. There were no restrictions on foreign diplomats on where they went and who they talked to. I would not conclude from that that it was

without their being aware of it. But no, there were no restrictions on our movement.

Q: How did you make your contacts?

MCCORMICK: Well, the idea of being sent into Soweto was a little bit daunting because, remember the riots are still pretty new, and this is the equivalent for an American of going into some very rough slum areas and I felt a little bit ill at ease. The place was dangerous. Some of the leaders I wanted to meet would be perfectly happy to meet in Johannesburg. We could have lunch, a cup of coffee, or whatever. Eventually I would go to their homes, which I found quite interesting. But others would meet you only in the equivalent of back alleys. Some of them were unpleasant, and of course those might be the ones most valuable to know, so you rely on other people to vouch for you and you just have to be very careful to build up a reputation for not being some kind of spy or just the careless type who gets someone in trouble by talking too much. By the time I left South Africa, I was struck by how comfortable I felt in Soweto and other black townships, and how much I had been in people's homes. I'm not sure that has always been my experience in every country, and of all places to find yourself invited into homes - I'm including illegal taverns and shebeens, speakeasies. That starts slowly. You don't walk in on day one, especially a white middle-class foreigner, and do that. Soweto was pretty raw. But I was struck by the extent to which so many American preconceptions about Johannesburg were out of date. People had told me it would be like segregation in the Jim Crow days. A lot of that was actually ignored by the time I arrived in South Africa. You could certainly take a black guest to dinner at international-scale restaurants. You would not be able to do that in a small café out in a small town in the countryside. In Johannesburg, nobody cared about so-called "petty apartheid" any more.

Q: What would you say the mood and the attitude of the leaders in Soweto, the ANC, type of...

MCCORMICK: Well, there is no doubt that Nelson Mandela's African National Congress was the most important organization commanding the loyalty of black nationalists. The Pan-African Congress, led by Robert Sobukwe was the second largest, a distinct minority. On the other hand, while I was there, there was a sharp rise in a movement which they called black consciousness. That was generating support, among the young in particular, for the PAC's approach. The African National Congress, the ANC, was an inter-racial movement. It was not a racist or a counter-racist movement. It was socialist; it was communist oriented. The Soviets controlled their purse and their military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. But it would have described itself as a Marxist, non-racist movement, anti-apartheid. And many of its leaders were Indian, colored, and white. The PAC, by contrast, was a militantly racial movement. The killing of Steve Biko led a lot of younger blacks to throw their lot in with this radical, throw-the-whites-out group, with their motto of "one settler, one bullet." The two groups couldn't stand each other. Then, as you remarked, there was a third movement, Inkatha. Technically speaking, Inkatha was not a political party but a cultural movement, which allowed it to get around all kinds of laws and bans. It was probably 85% Zulu, the other 15% coming from those tribes which identified with the Zulus because they had been Christianized later, educated later, and remained more tribal, so they were looked down on by the other tribal groups as being kind of backwards. So the ANC was the key. In retrospect, we know that it emerged as the government now in the post-apartheid era. That was

not self-evident in those days. The embassy maintained a lively debate on these three groups and which one would emerge on top, if any of them would.

Q: How were we seeing the ANC? What were they after, as we saw it, in this '80-'83 period?

MCCORMICK: We maintained a dialogue with their leadership in exile. That was easy. You would call to make an appointment with them in Lusaka. Inside South Africa it was a little harder. You had to gain their confidence and see them with a certain amount of privacy, but you didn't want to push this to the point of being PNGed. The Africa Bureau tended to see them as a government in waiting, and was trying to wean them away from their Communist allies. I personally never trusted the ANC. It was not a democratic movement or a terribly nice one. But it never decided to make a really major use of terrorism, and that was they key. It made it easier for us to deal with them and ultimately made it possible for the ANC to turn itself into a responsible government under Mandela.

Q: You arrived during the end of the Carter administration and then we had the Reagan administration. Was this seen with a certain amount of apprehension by yourself and others?

MCCORMICK: It was seen with apprehension by South African blacks. A number of white South Africans thought Reagan would be pro-South African and turn a blind eye to apartheid. Nobody really knew that much about him and how he would act. However, at that time black activists were focused on a problem of their own, because they were trying to lead a movement of increasingly unruly, dangerous, and alienated young people who wanted action. They wanted to do something. Being unable to mount any organized resistance, like the idea of somehow storming the Bastille, what they did was to turn on their elders, on the educational system in particular, and they tried to boycott them or destroy them. So they wouldn't go to school and wouldn't allow anyone else to go to school. They thought it would bring the country to its knees. They called it "making ourselves too heavy to carry." Well, that's pretty double-edged stuff. The serious leaders knew it was a kind of suicide and they were desperate to regain control. If they didn't, they thought, there would be chaos and they would become irrelevant.

Q: I was thinking this is probably a good place to stop and we have already talked about dealing with Soweto and dealing with the ANC leaders. We will pick up dealing with Afrikaners, the university people and I suppose it should be the more liberals. Then your impression of the implementation of our policy of constructive engagement. Also the Sullivan boycott. Then how the embassy was seeing things and what we were doing in development at that time.

Q: This is the 8th of September 2000. Let's talk about those things I mentioned before. How about the Afrikaners, were we able to tap into them?

MCCORMICK: We had difficulty understanding Afrikaner politics and Afrikaners. We approached them in a negative and biased spirit, looking down on them as if they were a bunch of rednecks (which by the way has the opposite meaning in Afrikaans, a naive city person whose neck is red instead of tan because he doesn't get out in the real world enough). We didn't speak enough Afrikaans. We didn't really want to see the Afrikaner point of view, we wanted to have a

cartoon preconception about them. At one meeting, I recall the assistant secretary, Dick Moose, actually saying that he didn't think that they were very rational, we shouldn't waste much time on figuring out their motives and rationale. I can't imagine a statement I would disagree with more. We needed to understand the South African government's strategy and policy and internal dynamics and its fears and plans.

Q: Were you able to talk to Afrikaner leaders without having it turn into political lectures on their side, and political lectures on your side?

MCCORMICK: Yes, I found no difficulty at all in talking to Afrikaners. They were highly sensitive to prejudice, but the minute you signaled, through perhaps just a bit of the use of Afrikaans, or something else, that you weren't approaching with the usual anti-Teutonic prejudices of the English-speaker, they were actually quite open. I rarely encountered the kind of harangue we had been warned about. Actually, I thought they kind of longed to be understood. The government put a high priority on good relations with the United States, which is why American diplomats like me who stayed in contact with the representatives of "terrorists" didn't just get thrown out.

Q: We knew what we wanted. We wanted to see a color-ban-free South Africa and no problems but because of the educational system and background, was there a feeling that if the native Africans took over that the whole place would fall apart? Or were we looking at a situation where we felt these things would work out?

MCCORMICK: That was a very real concern. As diplomats, our primary job was not to change South Africa's internal situation, but to deal with its external policy. Most of us spent our time trying to think how to get South Africa to use its leverage with Rhodesia toward a peace agreement or to let their territory of Southwest Africa evolve into an independent Namibia. But a lot of my job was to encourage them in this experiment that they seemed to be gradually beginning of moving slowly away from apartheid and eventually perhaps considering some form of mixed or even majority rule. Imagine how daunting that must have seemed to them, to think of turning everything your family has built up for hundreds of years over to an angry, poor, and enormous Third World population. Just for a start, such things as public schools would probably become impossible, financially impossible, to keep at First World levels. But the key was always law and order and democracy. We kept telling them that as long as a majority government was democratic, it didn't really matter whether they were competent, because they would have and use the same white expertise the country always had as long as there wasn't the kind of bitterness and reverse oppression which would drive them out.

Q: Were there pretty strong divisions in the black politics?

MCCORMICK: Well, we talked about ANC and PAC. Black politics were dominated by the tension between those two movements and the tension between the reformers and the revolutionaries. It was very difficult for some Soweto leaders with whom the embassy maintained contact through its self-help programs, for example, to keep doing what they were doing, which was reformist in nature, against the criticism of some black leaders who wanted to

“shut the country down.” And of course there was a lot of tension among the language groups or tribes. Different parts of Soweto spoke Zulu or Sesotho or another language, and there was little love lost between them.

Q: You keep talking about Soweto. Was Soweto where the action was? Were there black settlements elsewhere?

MCCORMICK: Soweto dominated black political action and thinking. However, we also needed to know what was going on in other black townships and the countryside. Attitudes in the villages were very different, and it's easy to be naive when you live in the city, surrounded by people who speak English. And you needed to contact individual people who had been banned, sent out to some little place in the middle of nowhere to cut them off from political activism. We did a lot of traveling, to every corner of the country. You have to. It's one of the reasons I joined the Foreign Service in the first place, to do exactly that, but if you don't get out and around you soon get out of touch. I traveled to almost every corner of the country, and we've got to keep our officers doing that and not allowing them to get bogged down at their desks -- especially in Africa where everything looks very different once you go outside the air-conditioning zone.

Q: What about communication? What was the way these people kept in touch - BBC, Voice of America?

MCCORMICK: South Africans were always in close touch with the world. There was never anything like the Radio Free Europe culture, with its censorship and samizdat and so forth. Until the 1948 elections when the National Party came to power and began the policy of apartheid, it had always been a very open society, with a free press and a free judiciary. Most of the English press was violently anti-apartheid, so anyone could pick up newspapers like the Rand Daily Mail and get an attitude very critical of the government and the kind of reporting you wouldn't get in a closed society. South Africa was not a closed society. Information flowed fairly freely. There was the BBC and so forth, but the picture I would paint was of a country where power was held with a strict monopoly but where the civil society was actually quite open.

Q: Did you ever have confrontations with the police officials on various things?

MCCORMICK: Very rarely. I went there expecting it. Even though so many of the preconceptions about South Africa that I was taught in Washington turned out to be such nonsense, I kept expecting the police to interfere with us. This just didn't happen and we often asked ourselves why because we knew the perception in Washington was of a much stiffer police state. I suppose it was because the government wanted good relations. After awhile it stopped occurring to me to think of the police as any kind of danger to me. I was much more afraid of my contacts. I knew a number of senior officers in the police, including in the secret police. One of them told me when I first arrived that if I ever had a problem with a burglar, to shoot first and not take any risks, and they would make sure that no trouble came of it. They assumed I owned a handgun.

Q: Did you have people, particularly from the African-American movement or whatever you

want to call it, in the United States - Jesse Jackson and others, come to make a certain amount of political hay?

MCCORMICK: Yes. Perfectly normal. Some of them were frustrated because they expected apartheid to be crude and visible, like throwing people out of restaurants because they were black. At the kind of restaurants they went to, people would roll their eyes at that idea. The vicious side of apartheid was more subtle.

Q: If you were in Israel, you would get the reverse, but I mean they would be coming looking for something. Did you get that?

MCCORMICK: Absolutely. Visitors came with a scenario in mind and looked for evidence to confirm it. Their mistake was thinking that South Africa was not a foreign country with its own dynamics but a kind of replay of the civil rights days in America. It wasn't and it isn't. Its political dynamics had more in common with those of Israel. The whites were torn – they didn't want a police state, they wanted a peaceful and democratic country, but they were afraid of drowning in an African majority. In the end there were the imperatives of the economy. Harry Oppenheimer, who died last month, was the voice of the liberal business community there, which thought apartheid was ridiculous and just wanted to get on with a color-blind, free-market state.

Q: What about the American media? Did you feel the reporting was pretty good?

MCCORMICK: I thought the reporting was awful. I was very disappointed in it. The individual correspondents, with whom we maintained close contact, were all highly intelligent and understood a lot of these paradoxes. They were trying, just as we were, to inject reality as we saw it on the ground into the preconceptions of their editors in the U.S.. Nevertheless, I found reporting on South Africa to be very poor. It was full of misconceptions. It focused on little eruptions of violence which had no political relevance and missed important, larger stories.

Q: The reporters you met and exchanged information with, I assume you were trying to tell them what was happening because there was no particular reason not to have them aware that this was an important element in the formation of policy. Was it happening in their minds? What were you getting from that?

MCCORMICK: I recall reporters expressing their frustration that they were expected to write to certain preconceptions. One of these was the tendency to see all of black South Africa's interests as analogous to African-American interests, whereas in many ways they are actually more analogous to Native American problems and issues. There isn't the history of slavery, there was a history of being driven off their land by settlers in wagon trains. For many black South Africans, the real problems had and have to do with development issues, but the media didn't pick those up because they're complex and they didn't fit the paradigm. They wanted to cover a revolution, and that wasn't going to happen. Meanwhile, they missed the real story of why and how both sides began to change their strategies.

Q: From what you are saying, this helps explain why so many of us thought there would be a

night of long knives. But we were sort of surprised that the actual transition to a black African government worked fairly well and you weren't prepared for it.

MCCORMICK: The embassy was more prepared than most. It's true that within the mission and the bureau, I was by far the most optimistic about it, and we used to joke about that – that I refused to think in terms of bloody revolution. I never gave any credence at all to the idea of a night of long knives. Things don't work like that in South Africa. Many South Africans would say it was different from the rest of Africa and I thought they were right. For example, the picture I painted of a country trying to hold onto western standards, or let's say trying at a minimum to keep the economy functioning efficiently by not sliding totally into the incompetence that dictatorship brings. For example, the gulf between older and younger white South Africans as to how much they were willing to sacrifice in their own lives in order to maintain the white monopoly on power. For example, the sense South Africans had of "riding the tiger" – how do you get off safely? For example, the amount of energy – most of it missed by the press -- that Afrikaners put into their thinking about a safer future.

Q: Was there concern or were you seeing a brain drain of the best and the brightest, particularly white South Africans?

MCCORMICK: That was never a critical factor in South Africa as it was in Rhodesia. There were just too many white South Africans. The image of them all wanting to flee to America or Australia was just not true. I never thought that was crucial. What was crucial was the question of whether they were going to have a modern economy or be shackled by the inability to use talented black labor. What was interesting about a government fighting to remain a part of the Western world was how much of their economic policy resembled the very Third World countries they despised. Remember, the National government that came to power and instituted apartheid did so, to a large degree, in order to lift the Afrikaner people, from a very poor, oppressed and down-trodden, sort of farm and laboring class, really 1930 dust bowl images, into a prosperous modern people. Afrikaner nationalism had a strong socialist element to it, a statist and dirigist element. Perfectly natural; no one ought to write about South Africa who doesn't understand what "Hoggenheimer" means. Against that was the liberal, English-speaking, business community. That's why one important wing of the embassy was always dead set against economic sanctions. They reasoned that the economy and the business community was the very backbone of these forces pushing for reform, and that if economic sanctions weakened that business community we were weakening the very middle class effort that was the hope for a peaceful transition. So we had strong debates about whether economic sanctions would be a useful lever or a disaster.

Q: What was the status at that time? Did we have sanctions at that time?

MCCORMICK: We did not. We had a vigorous American economic presence in South Africa and when you looked at it closely, it looked very good. Most American companies paid decent wages; they followed the so-called Sullivan Principles, which you mentioned, about fair treatment; they promoted black managers; they integrated cafeterias. They, in general, set a good example. I was surprised because I'm pretty cynical about such companies and my personal bias

is I would expect to find that they were simply exploiting the situation. I didn't find that.

Q: We knew what we wanted. In a way it must have been pretty frustrating for you all. In other words, if you have to deal with a problem, it is best to know the reality of it. Even if you are both on the same side - you both want to get rid of apartheid - you better understand what this was all about rather than to create a boogy man.

MCCORMICK: It was very frustrating for several of us in the embassy because, by our foreign service training, clearly the way you know what is going on here and predict the future is to get close to the power brokers. Those power brokers are Afrikaner and to get close to them you have to understand the dynamics of Afrikaner politics. You need to know, for example, how real is the threat from the Afrikaners who had broken away to form a separate party on the right – were they a serious electoral threat? You need to know what sort of intellectual proposals are being floated in private among Afrikaners about where they might go. You need to know what the security forces, what the military and the police are advising. You need to know that the average black person in the townships fears the coming of a police vehicle but is relieved to see an Army presence. That is seen entirely differently - far less threatening and violent. We were handicapped in doing that by the concern that we would be perceived in Washington and the U.S. as somehow being too much in bed with the government. For example, there was a very important philosopher who argued that the Afrikaner people had survived two great treks already - the first one being the Great Trek into the physical wilderness in 1832 and the second one the great trek into the economic wilderness of the cities when they fled their poverty-stricken farms in the 1930s. Why could they not survive a third great trek into the political wilderness of giving up their monopoly of power? Those were very powerful and influential images and it seemed to me ridiculous not to follow that debate. His name was Wimpie de Klerk and his brother became the president who released Nelson Mandela.

Q: Well, how did you feel - you mentioned Dick Moose, who was the head of the African Bureau? Did you feel that at the top of the African Bureau- You were there from when to when?

MCCORMICK: I was there when the new assistant secretary, Chet Crocker, came in. Suddenly things were different. Crocker came in with expertise in Southern Africa and a strong commitment to what he called constructive engagement with the South Africans, as opposed to simply walking away. We took lots of flack for this because constructive engagement is the same phrase used by people who defend business involvement in a lot of countries that you wonder about. He was intellectually consistent about this and ran a very successful policy on that basis for several years.

Q: Did you feel that your reports were going in to a bureau that was more willing to listen to what you were saying?

MCCORMICK: Yes, definitely. Crocker was interested in facts and far more open-minded when they challenged preconceptions.

Q: Under the Carter administration, you had the feeling that you were almost cut off because

there was a curse of political correctness.

MCCORMICK: I think that is right. Both parties came to the subject of South Africa with intellectual baggage, but political correctness was the curse of the Carter administration.

Q: There were elements within the Republican party to the right that were harking back to the southern anti-black.

MCCORMICK: There were. They made the same mistake of not wanting to see South African blacks for what they were. There were preconceptions on both sides but I would say, in general, it was easier on the professionals during the Crocker era. The Republican right wing couldn't stand him.

Q: Well, hadn't there been something about "the first one was going to be an African?" The African Bureau ran across a problem of somebody getting involved with "mother's milk" working for Nestle.

MCCORMICK: I don't remember that, although it sounds like something I would have been terribly interested in. At the time I was probably quite focused on the country I was posted in.

Q: What about things non-governmental organizations were doing, like giving covert support to develop political movement, mimeograph machines, typewriters and the equivalent thereof?

MCCORMICK: Yes. The embassy ran an extensive self- help program to give support to people doing all kinds of constructive things, from books for libraries in black areas to equipment to begin establishing an NGO. There was no attempt by the apartheid government to interfere with or disrupt these programs. The programs helped us to establish contacts. One important drawback was that we could not extend them to so-called homeland areas where the need was greatest, because it was our policy not to have anything to do with the homelands because we didn't want to look as if we recognized them. That's pretty tough on the people in these places. I opposed that policy. It was like refusing to help the victims in order to punish the government. We also had a firm policy that U.S. diplomats would never go there. That meant we had no idea what was going on out there. These places were dumping grounds for "excess" labor, and it was wrong not to be aware of what conditions were like in them.

Q: Sort of like not talking to the PLO.

MCCORMICK: Like not talking to the PLO. Well, pressure was building up, among the rank and file officers like myself, that this was silly. We might have a policy of non-recognition, but does that mean we should never send anybody in to look and see what is going on? So we had an extensive debate over changing that policy. Eventually, the embassy won, and in 1982 we were given permission to make the first tentative visits to the homelands. I was tapped to do it because that fell in my area.

Q: So what did you see?

MCCORMICK: Well, the first thing we saw was, it was very difficult on the ground to distinguish between the homelands created by South Africa and the bordering states created by the British. Botswana and Bophuthatswana, for example, didn't look very different. Lesotho and Qwaqwa looked very similar on the surface. We also found, that as you would expect, creating little miniature states entrenched a political class and we found that those ranged from fairly popular to completely unsupported and corrupt. There were a lot of these homelands. Dozens of them scattered all over the country with a large black population. The dilemma was how to aid the people in them without becoming party to the policy of stuffing unwanted people there instead of sharing power with them.

Q: How do the homelands work? Was this where the women stayed while the men went to work in Soweto.

MCCORMICK: That is right, an overstatement, but that is exactly what they were.

Q: Well, was there a political movement in these areas?

MCCORMICK: No. That was another question the embassy had. How do we know, for example, are these places potential bases for some kind of a geographic black authority that would be analogous to the Palestinian Authority, or is that nonsense? Are they bases for guerrilla movements, or a reservoir of conservative black thinking? Are they ecological and economic disasters? What we found is more the latter.

These areas were where the development problems that South Africa faced were being shoved off and postponed. They exactly the problems faced by any developing country and you can't put them off forever, quarantining them out in the country is just going to mean that South Africa ten or twenty years down the line is just going to face bigger, unsolved, developmental problems. Then we have the dilemma - shouldn't the United States be doing something now to help South Africa deal with the developmental problems that it would face some day as a majority ruled state? Or should we do no such thing because that is just helping prolong the situation?

Q: By the time you left, did we have any feel about what we were going to do with these?

MCCORMICK: Not in the short run. But we began to integrate developmental problems into our thinking about South Africa and its future. That was all for the good, because when majority rule did come the U.S. would want to turn around and pour assistance into South Africa, and these areas would be the greatest challenge. Under Crocker, we at least knew more about what was going on and understood the place a great deal better after 1982. We also knew there wouldn't be a Rhodesia-style guerrilla war beginning in the homelands.

Q: What about crime overall? Crime has become quite a problem in South Africa today, I'm talking about 2000, but in the early 1980s, was one of the benefits of apartheid keeping crime down?

MCCORMICK: I suppose it was. At least, it kept crime out of the white developed areas. Soweto always had a high crime rate. It was an enormous area with the kind of atmosphere which Alan Paton describes in "Cry, The Beloved Country." But the overall rate was lower. The high crime rate today affects both black and white communities. Not only whites, but blacks also, used to feel far safer from crime than they do today. It was not a major problem for the embassy.

Q: It is today.

MCCORMICK: It is, they are very security conscious, as everyone is there, black or white. But in the early '80s that was not a major threat or problem.

Q: It sounds like you had a police force that would come down heavily on crime.

MCCORMICK: Yes, although they fewer policemen per capita than the U.S. does. I just don't remember worrying about it, though people would complain at cocktail parties.

Q: What about other embassies and their non-governmental organizations? One thinks of the Swedes, or the remains of the German Socialists, and others taking a very strong interest in Africa per se, and I was wondering whether they were working in these particular fields, too.

MCCORMICK: Some were. The Australians and the British. The Swedes placed all their bets on the future government. They thought the ANC was a revolutionary movement which would come to power by force. They were not willing to do anything to improve the internal situation in the meantime. It left them without any influence or knowledge about what was going on internally. That is what Crocker meant by "walking away from the situation."

Q: How about the French?

MCCORMICK: French policy was much more practical. There was considerable cooperation, nothing like the romantic Swedish view. Other countries were even more so. The South Africans' most intimate relations with the Israelis and Taiwan – the league of outcasts.

Q: We had this very close relationship with Israel, particularly the intellectual community in the United States which had a heavy Jewish influence, but is violently opposed to South Africa. Did this cause a bit of a problem for reporting officers?

MCCORMICK: We were not encouraged to get into that area very much. I don't know whether it was because there was concern about embarrassing Israel or because Washington just didn't want its embassy getting into the military field.

Q: It was the military.

MCCORMICK: Relations between South Africa and Israel were primarily military and strategic.

Q: Well, did you get any feel from anybody, from our attaches, about the South African military?

MCCORMICK: Oh, yes, the role of the military was important. In Rhodesia, we missed the important fact that the Army was out in front of the government in its willingness to allow majority rule as long as it was constitutionally done. In South Africa, we knew the military was more pragmatic than the party. The navy didn't even bother with segregation since it was impractical aboard a ship, and the army didn't bother with it in the war zone in Namibia. They cared about survival of the state. If apartheid is a threat to a continued South African state, get rid of it. The security police gave different advice since they were focused on maintaining control of the townships.

Q: When you were there, who was the president?

MCCORMICK: P.W. Botha.

Q: How was he viewed?

MCCORMICK: By South Africans? A relative liberal, in their context, a *verligte*. He was from the Cape, where attitudes toward race are not as hard as in the North. He was also a pragmatist. He focused on South Africa's domestic issues more than President Vorster, who had been extremely active in the rest of Africa. But generally, his regime was moving the country gradually but inexorably toward some kind of accommodation or even transition.

Q: Were you able to get out and look at - I think of the Boer farmers out in the countryside running little plantations?

MCCORMICK: That is still an accurate image in some places, but then it is equally accurate to talk about "Boers" as industrial magnates and sophisticated academics.

Q: I'm talking about just getting out into the country.

MCCORMICK: When you went to the countryside to try to get a feel, for example, for the depth of the seriousness of the right-wing challenge to the National party, which was strongest out in the countryside, I had difficulty finding that sort of paradigmatic, archetypal Afrikaner. I'm sure they were there but either there are a lot fewer of these people than we think or I didn't find them. But I did come across some very hard-line views in smaller towns, convinced the government was being sweet-talked by the West into committing suicide. But we had to be careful we didn't fall into the journalists' trap, of looking for a story to match your stereotype.

Q: This, of course, is the problem. Most of us in the Foreign Service may not be liberal in all of our politics but we think of the south of the 1930s or '40s even, as being a certain way, and you get surprised by race relations in many places. It just wasn't the way we thought it was.

MCCORMICK: One idea that was quite important to get over was that it is hard for Americans to see Africa as a permanent home. We think of it as something temporary. Always a little dangerous. You keep an eye over your shoulder and if things get too bad you might have to leave,

like Lebanese traders in Liberia. Well that is utter nonsense, of course, for people who have been there for 350 years. They have no place to go and wouldn't want to go anyway. In a peculiar way, they are much more comfortable with being a white minority in a black majority than we would be. They'd like to be a dominant minority, of course, but it's like the difference in racial attitudes here between the South and the North. Afrikaners and black Africans understand each other very well, and neither of them is going to leave and go live somewhere else.

Q: As you were there sort of as an observer, a predictable metamorphoses between the foreign service officers that came out after going through and saying, "Gee whiz, things are quite different" and changing not the basic attitude or being opposed to this but a little more understanding?

MCCORMICK: Oh, very much. Most people in the embassy thought we were always struggling to insert reality into the preconceptions in Washington, though things were so much better after Crocker took over.

Q: You left there when?

MCCORMICK: I left in 1983, and came back to Washington. My family wanted to return to Washington. I didn't; I liked the overseas assignments, but that wasn't what was best for the kids. That point has dominated my career: I have four children, all of whom need very good and demanding schools, so I was never able to go to some of more exotic places I was interested in. So I went back to Washington as desk officer for East Germany.

Q: When you left, whither South Africa as you left there?

MCCORMICK: Not to any kind of revolution. To the end of apartheid, and eventually an unavoidable transition to some sort of shared rule. I gave apartheid 20 years, and was wrong by half. But I always thought the whites would voluntarily relinquish their monopoly on power and form a kind of racial coalition government. I certainly came away with a very strong belief that the future would not be driven by violence and would not be driven by the strength of the ANC, either as a revolutionary movement or as a guerrilla force. It might be driven by economic issues, including sanctions. But much more likely, it would be driven by the simple fact that nobody wanted civil war. Looking back, South Africa's emergence as a peaceful, democratic state, its safe transition, and the fact that I was able to play a small role in encouraging it, is one of the most important satisfactions of my life. When you are a small and proud and frightened country, wondering if the leap of faith the world is yelling at you to take is suicide, it makes a great deal of difference if the representatives of the most successful country in the world are telling you, You can do it, it is going to work. You're going to be all right.

Q: When most of us come back to Washington, we are full of all sorts of knowledge that we want to impart. Were you able to impart any of that?

MCCORMICK: Well, actually, I did. Usually Americans have a limited interest in hearing all of your great expertise. South Africa was different. Everybody had an opinion; everybody had an

interest; everybody did want to know. Many people were quite surprised by observations from the ground. Two years later, I was sent on a tour around the western part of the country to talk about South Africa. This was after the debate on sanctions heated up. My job was to go find some television station, radio station, newspaper, or anybody else who would interview me and ask “What does the State Department think about South Africa?” I found interest much higher than I would have thought.

Q: Did you find yourself up against people who are so committed to the cause of the black Africans that you ended up sounding like an apologist of the regime?

MCCORMICK: Perhaps, perhaps, because the dominant attitude was a sense of injustice, not a desire to actually be involved improving, but a desire to think that somehow it would all be changed by a convulsion of history. I was saying I didn’t see anything like that happening. If we want to change things there it will take a sustained, comprehensive American involvement, which is just what people didn’t want to do.

JOSEPH C. WILSON, IV
Administrative Officer
Pretoria (1981-1982)

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.

Q: You were in South Africa from 1981 to when?

WILSON: I arrived there in January of 1981 and I left in July of 1982.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa when you got there?

WILSON: When I got there, in terms of politics, the apartheid regime was firmly ensconced. The regime thought that it had free rein from the American administration and that there was not going to be much pressure brought to bear by the Americans. At the embassy the ambassador and the DCM had been sorely embarrassed by this scandal on their watch.

Q: This was the GSO?

WILSON: This was the GSO who had been accused, and was later indicted.

Q: Did anything happen? There's not a very good history of following through and putting people in jail.

WILSON: In his case, he was indicted, and there is still an outstanding warrant for his arrest. But there is no extradition treaty with South Africa that covers his crime. He retired, and my understanding is that because he was never been convicted, the Department never bothered to stop his pension. He retired in South Africa and has collected his pension ever since; I understand he's still alive. It is now 20 years later; he was 63 then, so he must 83 or 84 now. But the Justice Department and the State Department are still trying to get him. I think he's actually taken on South African nationality or he has got a long-term residence permit and the South Africans are leaving him alone.

Q: Did you find that he was an embarrassment? Were you untangling things?

WILSON: I spent most of my time untangling things and just putting the operation back in some sort of order. We rationalized the way we did management there. We put procurement under control and put everything back in the right warehouse. We had installed some accountability and we basically tried to insure that there was some integrity in the operation.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

WILSON: Bill Edmonson was the ambassador when I first got there; he was there for about my first year; Herman Nickel arrived just before he left. The deputy was Howard Walker, who went on to be ambassador to Togo and then Madagascar. Our embassy - in Pretoria - at that time was on two floors of the same building that housed the South Africa police. We were basically in hostile territory in a building that was occupied by some offshoot of the South African security apparatus, right downtown. It was an interesting time.

Q: As far as our embassy is concerned, I would think there would be considerable discomfort by being cheek by jowl with the police.

WILSON: At that time the South Africans had a great way of basically seducing Americans. They are fundamentally nice folks so long as you don't start talking about their "caffer" problem. They like to have barbecues; they like to entertain; they're very jovial and they're very friendly, and so to a certain extent they're very seductive for Americans. We didn't have a lot of African Americans there; we lived pretty much in white communities, so to a certain extent we didn't have the feeling that we were in hostile territory unless you had, as I did, a lot of employees who were Africans who lived in segregated townships. Then you saw the situation somewhat differently. This was the time when we were just at the beginning of constructive engagement. Up until that time been focused principally on Lancaster House.

Our ambassador and our DCM were concerned about the politics of South Africa, but it hadn't yet translated into the same sort of hostility as we got later when we moved to imposing sanctions on the apartheid regime - e.g. disinvestment, etc. In terms of working in the same

building as the South African police, you didn't really have any sense of their presence. You didn't see a lot of uniformed South African police. It was basically where the bureaucracy was housed. Later on, there was a bomb that went off next to the building. Then we finally got FBO to agree to provide the money necessary to move the embassy to a more secure place. Interestingly, if you talk to people who had been in South Africa in the 1950s and come back in the 1960s or in the 1970s, they would tell you about the demonstrable progress the blacks had made in the intervening years. They had gone from having to step off the sidewalks when a white was on the sidewalk, to actually manning the cash registers in stores and actually being allowed to shop in some stores as well. So there had been an evolution in South African society, not nearly enough and not nearly fast enough obviously. Pretoria was probably the most conservative of all the cities in which we had representation; Cape Town probably the most liberal.

Q: You were stationed in Pretoria?

WILSON: I was in Pretoria, but we also had responsibility for three consulates, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The embassy moved down to Cape Town for six months every year, because that was where the legislature was. So when the legislature was in session, the embassy would move there. The ambassador and the DCM and political officer as well as a few others would move to Cape Town.

Q: As administrative officer, you were dealing with an essentially black work force.

WILSON: I had a black work force. I had a white landlord class.

Q: I would have thought that you would have been a very good source for telling it the way it was as opposed to political officers who are pretty well trapped with the political class. Did you find yourself sort of a source of 'well, here's the way it really is?'

WILSON: The political counselor at the time was Dennis Kehoe, who was later killed in Namibia, and the political officer was Reid Hendrick, who is now deputy chief of mission, I think, in The Hague; he is a very good friend of mine. In fact, both of them were very good friends of mine. Dennis was also a father of twins, so we had that in common. Dennis and I used to work pretty close together. Dennis and Reid and I would talk all the time. When we started working on "constructive engagement," which was in April of 1971, when Chet had been appointed but not yet confirmed and when Eliot Abrams had been appointed but not yet confirmed. Bill Clark, Judge Clark, had been confirmed as Deputy Secretary and he came out to South Africa. Dennis and I worked together on that trip. I handled the logistics and Dennis provided the substance in the briefing papers. Interestingly, the South Africans tried to get Judge Clark to go to Namibia. They commandeered the motorcade that he was in. Instead of taking him to where we thought he was going, they took him to the airport and tried to bundle him on an airplane. Dennis had gotten split from the motorcade, so that he was not at the airport as the South Africans were telling the Judge that he was going to get on. The Judge, to his great credit, said, "No, I'm not getting on the airplane; I'm not going to one of the bases in Namibia." The foreign minister or some other high official turned to him and said, "But you have to. We've already flown the band out there." But the Judge, to his great credit, didn't get on the airplane. He

did not succumb to that. The South Africans were running operations in Angola out of Namibia which meant that in addition to keeping Namibia occupied, they were also running operations in support of Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA. The trip did not take place.

Dennis, Reid and I worked very closely together. They were very interested in knowing my staff better. They wanted to know about the townships that they'd been in. My staff basically reported to them on what the Africans would think about various issues. At that time, we didn't have that much structured contact with the black community. We really couldn't go into Soweto and we couldn't go into the townships out of Pretoria, even just talk to people. Our consul general had contacts with leaders, but as often these were with the white liberal class as it was the African.

Q: Were there problems of with having Americans - the professional Foreign Service people - not being seduced too much by the white society or/and also not being appalled by apartheid. I would think this would cause quite a morale problem.

WILSON: We had a lot of morale problems in Pretoria, but I think they had much to do with having an absentee ambassador by virtue of the fact that he would have to move to Cape Town for half a year. The political section of the embassy was so focused on the politics of South Africa that there was not the same camaraderie or the same leadership given to the embassy community as a whole. The person who was left in charge of the embassy, while the ambassador was in Cape Town, was not a person who felt that taking care of the community was part of his job requirements. Typically, it was the economic counselor who would be forced into this job.

There was always the question of "is South Africa a hardship post?" "should we get differential?" "should we get this or that," "should we get R&R because, after all, we are in this apartheid system, even though living is pretty good down here." There was always that dichotomy as well. Curiously, given the relative living comforts, morale was not very good, but I don't think that it had as much to do with living in the apartheid regime for most people as it did just not having a real sense of strong community. We were spread out all over Pretoria. A lot of the people who were assigned to the embassy were people who had spent time in small African posts and were used to a closely knit embassy community. Pretoria did not have a closely-knit embassy community; we didn't have the same social demands or social opportunities as you might find in other African posts. I think, that said, when you left South Africa, either on R&R or just to get out of the country, people would come back and say, "I've got to tell you, I had no idea of how oppressive this society was until I got out for a couple days." So to a certain extent people adapted to the circumstances. For those of us who had spent a lot of time in black Africa, it was pretty appalling when my neighbors would come up to me and tell me - and this is a direct quote - after knowing me for five minutes, "You need to understand our situation: our "caffers" - black workers - are not like yours. You can't teach ours."

We had an African nanny working for us. Joyce was her name, and she was just wonderful. She was big and strong. One time, a neighbor came by and complained to us that she had pushed their kid off his bicycle. I asked Joyce about it. She said, "Yes, he came up and started harassing me." I told the neighbor to get her child under control. We never saw those neighbors again. But it was that sort of indignity that Africans would suffer almost routinely - although I think the situation

in the early 1980s was better than it had been in the 1970s, but obviously not as good as it needed to be. Johannesburg was a melting pot. Tensions were higher in some instances. At the same time there was more opportunity to mix. I played fast-pitch softball - they played softball and baseball - and I played on a team. South Africa has traditionally sent a softball team to the world series of softball which is played in the United States every couple of years.

I played for the Northern District team champion, and we ended up playing in the national championship. We were, I think, second or third in the national championship. Softball was one of the few sports in South Africa that was fully integrated, and even though it was fully integrated, the Northern District team had nobody of color on it. The only teams that had people of color on it were the Durban and the Cape Town teams.

Q: You left there in 1982?

WILSON: I left there in 1982.

CHARLES L. DARIS
Labor Attaché
Johannesburg (1981-1984)

Charles L. Daris was born and raised in Massachusetts. After serving in the U.S. Navy, he completed his bachelor's degree at the San Francisco State University. In 1964, he joined the Foreign Service. In addition to serving in South Africa, Mr. Daris also served in Afghanistan, Vietnam, France, Morocco, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Washington, DC. Mr. Daris was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1998.

DARIS: From the Hill I went to South Africa. I was labor attaché at our consulate in Johannesburg. The job was a regional one so I covered not only South Africa, which was my main account, but also Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and Namibia. It was a pleasant three years for us. We were able to travel to the other countries in the region and my wife and baby daughter Christine were able to join me for much of it. We traveled inside South Africa a lot. South Africa is a fascinating, beautiful country, geographically diverse. Politically it was morose but my job covered perhaps the only sector where there was some political movement. That was in the Black trade unions, which was the only sector in the country where Black political expression was occurring. That was in fact the reason I took the job, because it did have substance and it did have promise to witness change.

I found the world of labor arcane and I was not very comfortable in it. The Department gave me a few weeks of labor orientation and sent me on details to two American trade unions back when I was slated to do the Casablanca labor job, but I never felt I was anywhere near being a labor expert. Nevertheless, I enjoyed Johannesburg and I think substantively it was probably the best political reporting job in the country at the time, certainly far better than following Afrikaner or white liberal politics.

Q: Did you have any contacts at that time with the ANC to the extent that they had people around actively?

DARIS: It was illegal of course for anybody to admit being ANC in the country, but there were people I was in touch with who subsequently held high positions in the ANC after Mandela was released and when the ANC became legal. The most noteworthy was Cyril Ramaphosa, who was a Black trade unionist I sent to the U.S. on a visitor grant.

Q: When you traveled to your other regional countries, Lesotho, Swaziland and I'm not sure what else you said, did you have contact then with some South Africans who were in exile or who were out of South Africa, or did you tend to focus more on labor in those countries when you went there?

DARIS: I did not seek out declared ANC elements outside of the country. We did not do business that way. The contacts that we had with the ANC were handled differently. I should say that most of the ANC in the neighboring countries were in the radical and military elements of the organization and were conducting acts of violence in South Africa so that for me, as labor reporting officer, would have been doubly inappropriate.

Q: The labor job at the time was in the consulate in Johannesburg as opposed to the embassy in Pretoria which of course is pretty close. Why was it done that way? Why weren't you in the embassy?

DARIS: Rabat-Casablanca and Pretoria-Johannesburg were analogous situations. The distances were similar, the commerce-government juxtaposition was similar. The labor unions were much more present in Johannesburg and in fact I'm not sure there were any labor unions worth visiting in Pretoria. They were either in Johannesburg or in the industrial cities to the south.

Q: Within how many years after you left Johannesburg was Mandela released and things began to change? That must have been six, seven years or more?

DARIS: I left in 1984 and Mandela was released around 1990 or '91.

Q: So that's only six or seven years.

DARIS: You are going to ask, could I have predicted that and no, I not only could not have predicted it, I could never have imagined that things would go anywhere near as well as they went. South Africa is not without problems, but it was really a political miracle - if such things exist.

Q: At the time you were there that was the period of, what did we call our policy, constructive engagement?

DARIS: Yes. The Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Chet Crocker, was the architect of that

and in the context of the world view of the Reagan administration, constructive engagement was as clever a way as we could have contrived to soothe a difficult relationship with a government we were trying to change.

Q: Chuck we have been talking about your assignment as regional labor attaché in Johannesburg and I think this was a period in the early '80s?

DARIS: That's right. It was '81 to '84.

Q: So it was in the Reagan administration, the period of constructive engagement with South Africa. I guess the other question we wanted to be sure to talk about today a little bit is your involvement with the application of the Sullivan principles as far as U.S. companies operating in South Africa were concerned.

DARIS: The Sullivan principles were not a U.S. government program but they were largely endorsed by the administration at the time and served a useful purpose for putting pressure on American companies. Many of those companies didn't need pressure incidentally because their employment practices in the context of South Africa were more enlightened I think than most, although that was not always the case. Pushing Sullivan was also putting pressure on the government of South Africa, so it was a focal point in my approach to my work and in general I found it quite useful.

Q: The Sullivan principles were really a set of objectives, or a set of ideas that companies voluntarily tried to apply in their operations in South Africa, is that right?

DARIS: Yes, that is right. They were workplace codes of conduct with the obvious intention being to level the playing field race-wise, to the extent that was possible in apartheid South Africa. The focus of it really was back in the States, particularly in New York where very active working groups followed treatment of black workers and issued reports on performance under the Principles. It was a very active campaign, rather well organized, to put pressure on American companies that were not adhering to the Principles by ginning up pressure from shareholders. There was also considerable activity to organize boycotts and threats of boycotts at state and local levels. It was quite an interesting situation and as I say I think that helped our efforts to push the South African government in the direction which everyone wanted to see it go.

Q: Did you anticipate the end of apartheid and all the changes that were going to place only five years or so after you left?

DARIS: When I left in 1984 I could not have dreamed that evolution could be so quick, could be so total, and could be so peaceful. It was astonishing, no question about it. I would never have dreamed, even in my wildest hopes, that things could have gone so well. It's not that the country is perfect now. I believe that it is irreversible, and South Africans are on their way to being able to maintain and sustain a multi-racial society and prosper. The country obviously is very rich, in

human terms as well as infrastructure and natural assets.

Q: Anything else we should cover in your assignment to Johannesburg?

DARIS: No. I made some allusion to constructive engagement just as we were terminating our first session. I want to put a little perspective on that. I think that constructive engagement reflected the visceral inclinations of the Reagan administration. It succeeded in making us about as activist as we could be at that historical moment both in terms of our politics and the situation on the ground. It was a framework, certainly a policy that I generally had few problems with. Obviously many of us would have liked to see us push a little harder than we did but constructive engagement set the stage for the more activist policy that came later when the situation in South Africa was maturing. So I think it was effective.

I might offer one unique Foreign Service experience I had in South Africa as a result of my labor role there. Although I'm not a labor expert, I became conversant in the subject in the three years that I held the job. Seeking a key domestic partner in the constructive engagement policy, Chet Crocker induced the AFL/CIO's international branch to get involved and to work together with the (Republican led) U.S. government. In those days, the AFL-CIO's international operations were run by a colorful Cold Warrior, Irving Brown. Washington constructed a formula where AID money was effectively going into our labor union movement so that the AFL/CIO's international branch was enlisted to work with black unions in South Africa. It became a lively issue, because as the representative of the U.S. government there, I became very involved in pulling and tugging over whom we should be influencing most and to whom the money would go.

I had some very lively exchanges with Washington and with my good friends in the labor movement over the period I was there, particularly in the last several months. It was a question of tactics rather than policy over which we were arguing, but it's a normal thing that happens when people are trying to control funds and to monitor them, which I viewed as my job. Irving Brown's repute and renown were legend in view of his very activist anti-communist history in other parts of the world and I did not always share his perspective on what was happening in South Africa.

I felt that certain Black unions - especially what was then called FOSATU - although they certainly sympathized with the ANC, were not directly affiliated with the ANC's violent activities. In my view - and history is on my side - these were the more viable and effective trade unions in the country. But anyone associated with the ANC at that moment in history was viewed by a lot of people in Washington, and certainly by the AFL/CIO, as not the kind of people we should be dealing with. The unionists with whom the AFL/CIO wanted to work were not usually the most effective trade unionists. And I would note that they are not around today.

Q: The AFL/CIO's concern was with the Communist Party of South Africa support for the ANC and possible involvement with some of these unions?

DARIS: The ANC was the sum of many parts. Those pro-ANC syndicalists who were still

working in the country were not engaged in violence. Indeed, the ANC was not a monolithic organization then, although the sympathies, tendencies, and loyalties of its adherents evolved into a movement that ultimately dismantled apartheid. I think it was the leftist aspect of it that bothered a lot of people, but I and others felt that the violence was associated with the ANC in exile. That, and the influence of the South African Communist party among the expatriate community, were justifiably matters of concern for all of us.

CHESTER ARTHUR CROCKER
Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1989)

Assistant Secretary Crocker was born and raised in New York and educated at Ohio State University and the School for Strategic and International Studies (SAIS). He served on the National Security Council (1970-1972), as Professor at Georgetown University (1972-1977), and as Director for African Affairs at the Center for Strategic and International Affairs (1976-1980). In 1981 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and served in that capacity until 1989, at which time he rejoined the faculty of Georgetown University. Mr. Crocker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Well, was there, in Congress, a very strong support of the white government and all its ramifications in South Africa, but also its effect on Namibia and all this?

CROCKER: Yes, there was.

Q: This is Helms and

CROCKER: Helms and I'd say eight to ten others in the Senate. It wasn't that they had any kind of majority, but they were very, very focused and they had very capable staff and they would try to influence the administration.

Q: I don't want to be pejorative, but was this racial, or were there other factors?

CROCKER: I think it's a mixture of a lack of interest in (and sensitivity to) racial politics and to hell with it, if the guys that are our friends are white and they're in the minority and they're running the place, so what? Not unlike the way the South used to be run in some respects. But of course in the South it was mostly white majority rule, not white minority rule.

I don't want to throw the label around any more than you do, but there was a racist insensitivity that was just impossible to work with. You can't, as an American diplomat, American statesman, you can't stand up and say that you only care about the views of a white minority in a continent that's 900 million people, overwhelmingly who are not white. It's just dumb, is what it is. Leave aside the ethical or moral dimension, it's just dumb.

Q: I can see how hard this would be to explain. Africa, for most Americans, was apartheid. Why are you mucking around in this sandpile over there? Why is this important?

CROCKER: I don't think that was the view of Americans in 1981, but it became the view of Americans by 1985-86, when you had all these incredible stories coming out, what with the township unrest and the actions of the South African police and the resistance that was going on in the urban areas and the necklacing and all that. By the mid-Eighties, that's exactly the way people saw it.

Q: Were the South Africans, the white South Africans, sniffing around or trying to do anything? What was their attitude?

CROCKER: I already mentioned to you that Senator Helms tried to impose an appointment on my team that would have been a direct pipeline into the South African military intelligence directorate, had it happened. I have no doubt about it.

Yes, they were definitely sniffing around and of course in the South African scheme of things they had their differences, as well. There were the uniformed military. There were the line military. There were the intelligence military, kind of like the Pakistani situation, sometimes. They had different voices inside the military. They had civilian intelligence and they had the Department of Foreign Affairs. And we were dealing with all four of them and they all four had their own policies and they all four wanted to be figuring out how to work Washington and how to influence Washington. So we'd have a conversation with one South African voice without knowing if in fact that was getting back to the other ones and were they reporting honestly and so forth.

They were trying to influence us to do what they could to undo Resolution 435, or to so encumber it with one-sided conditions that it would never happen.

Q: I would have thought they would have been delighted adding Cuba, thinking that this might be a killer.

CROCKER: Yeah, there was no question that for some, for those who never wanted to see any solution, they saw this as possibly guaranteeing there'd never be one. And for others, they saw it as very ambitious and it'd be great if it ever happened, because they could see the upside. A Namibian settlement that they could say brought about the departure of communist forces from neighboring countries would be much more attractive. But that was the foreign affairs people and a few in the ground forces who mainly saw it that way.

Q: But were the South Africans particularly interested in Namibia? It doesn't strike me as being a garden spot. I don't think any South Africans live there, do they, white South Africans?

CROCKER: There were some, at the time, there might have been a 100,000 white South Africans, but they were divided into different categories: Germans and Afrikaners and others.

Probably not that many, actually, but there was a very active and vociferous wing of the National Party, which was affiliated with the South African National Party. So that became an echo chamber for them and they were very sensitive to the views of the local white minority there; “Are you going to sell us out?” kind of thing.

Q: Back here in Washington, you were under a conservative Republican administration. Was there anyone in the Republican power structure who was opposed to doing anything, they liked things just the way they were and didn't want to upset the white South Africans and that rule there?

CROCKER: Well, within the administration there was more than one view and the policy review came out right, from my perspective.

We chose that middle option, which was to take that inherited policy and the inherited construct of the UN resolution for Namibia's transition and link it to Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola.

That was the middle course and there were people who came along with that I'd say grudgingly and would have probably been happier if we could have just sort of not had a policy towards this part of the world, or had one that was basically just for show.

I think Jeane Kirkpatrick was somewhat reluctant to see us engaging with the frontline states in order “to bring SWAPO into power.” That might have been the way she would have spoken if I weren't in the room. But she went along, provided we made rigorous and tough conditionality on the Angolan-Cuban side of the agenda, which of course we intended to do, anyway, but she wanted reassurance on that. In her view, our real friends in Africa were South Africa and Mobutu in Zaire, people that you could “count on.”

In that regard she was probably pretty close to some of the president's thinking. Richard Allen over in the NSC probably had a somewhat skeptical view of what we were doing.

Al Haig took this policy construct that we developed, took it to the President and in effect got his blessing. So we had the support that we needed at that level.

Up in Congress, of course, there was a klatch of, I'd say, nine or ten conservative Republican senators who were not particularly enchanted with any of this, led by Jesse Helms, who held up my nomination for six months.

So some of what I was doing during this launch I was doing without confirmation. I was going out there and that caused some grumbling from the ranks up in the Senate: “What's Crocker doing? He's the *acting* assistant secretary. What's he doing telling the South Africans this or the Tanzanians that, when he's not even assistant secretary yet?”

I wasn't the only one held up. There were a number of others: Tom Enders was held up for some period of time. I think Eagleburger was held up and there were I think at least two others.

So, yes, there was some pushback, some blowback and one of the more interesting dimensions, Helms tried to cut a deal with the State Department, with Haig, basically: “All right, I’ll give you Crocker, but I want to give him a senior deputy that I can count on” and the senior deputy would have come off Helms’ staff.

And we subsequently found out and I’m quite happy to put this in the history books, in light of the passage of time, that the guy he wanted to put on my staff as my senior deputy was actually on the South African payroll.

Q: When you were coming up with the launch of your policy, was it spelled out to sort of the general public or to the people you were negotiating with or was this something that you were dealing one card at a time and keeping the rest of the cards hidden?

CROCKER: We gave a lot of speeches in ’81 and ’82 at various fora and we testified a lot, so the record was pretty clear about the general approach, namely, that we were going to offer a comprehensive diplomatic alternative to military solutions in Southern Africa and that meant seeking political accommodation between South Africa and its neighbors over Namibia and Angola and, for that matter, within South Africa, because the alternative was revolution, the alternative was armed violence and we represented a constructive alternative to the Soviet approach that favored armed struggle, confrontation and so forth.

We laid all that out in speeches. I spoke to the American Legion annual meeting in Hawaii, I testified umpteen times in Congress on this. So that record was clear and so was the point of how we were going to continue on Namibia, but in practice there was going to have to be a relationship, a link, between getting Cubans out of Angola and getting South Africans out of Namibia.

We did not spell out, to answer your question, we did not spell out the terms of that linkage, because we couldn’t. We hadn’t negotiated it yet and we certainly didn’t want to negotiate it in public.

That was the key thing that took years: what was the relationship here. Does South Africa go first and then Angola, Cuba, Russia and so on look and see what South Africa has done, what it has to do, so maybe we can do something? Or it is that the communist powers have to go first, as the South Africans would say and then we South Africans will look and see if they’re serious and then maybe we’ll do something on Namibia.

The media had fun with this, as you can imagine. What exactly is linkage – is it legal? Is linkage doctrinal? Is it theological?

I remember Al Haig at one point was asked at a press briefing to be a little more specific about what kind of link there would have to be between Cuban troop withdrawal and Resolution 435 on Namibia and he said, in a classic Haigian phrase, “There’ll have to be some degree of empirical simultaneity.” And that was translated into lots of languages, I’m sure.

Q: What was your reading, as you made these initial tours, about, well, first, the situation on the ground? Was this just the right time to begin this, do you think? Had governments reached essentially a stalemate, would you say? Were they ready for something?

CROCKER: When you say “they,”

Q: Talking about the various countries involved and the ANC and other groups.

CROCKER: Well, first, the allies were ready for it, because they were desperate for a continued peace process in Southern Africa. This is classic European diplomacy here. It isn't that they were desperate for an outcome. They were desperate for a process.

They wanted to be able to say, every time they met each other and their own publics and their parliaments and so on, “We are involved in a peace process that is ongoing and we had meetings and we're going to have more meetings.”

So in that sense it was timely. As far as individual countries in Southern Africa are concerned, it would depend on which country.

I think in the case of Mozambique they were beginning to understand that the Soviet embrace and the hostility of South Africa were putting them between a rock and a hard place. They were beginning to understand that they needed to figure a way to escape the box they were in.

But they didn't trust us at all and they were unfortunately inclined to believe that what South Africa's radio said about us was true, that we were in bed with South Africa.

So we had to demonstrate time and time again that that was not the case. But Mozambique was getting ready.

I think we probably exaggerated the extent to which South Africa was ready. There were some people in the South African structure who were ready and who saw this as an interesting approach, this linkage on Namibia-Angola. And the broader construct, too, which is that if you do well on Namibia-Angola, we'll cooperate with you more broadly, they understood that.

Q: This gives a feel for diplomacy as it really is. Three fourths of the battles are probably fought in Washington and one fourth with the countries abroad. And particularly if it's a controversial issue] and I can't think of a harder one. And this is in a way fought in the full light of day, as these things go, with the media and all, all the powers that be in Washington.

CROCKER: Well, the first four years of this effort were under a lower profile. It began to blow up in our faces around late '84 and early '85, into '86, because of events within South Africa, but also because as South Africa began to experience serious domestic urban unrest there was a leftwing, liberal backlash against the Administration and our African efforts,, and then there developed a conservative backlash against us as well.

So we were being told on the one side “You shouldn’t be dealing with those evil racists Boers in Pretoria” and on the other side we were being told “You shouldn’t deal with those Marxist slimeballs in Luanda and Maputo.”

So we were being in a sense attacked from both flanks. It was difficult to keep the ship moving on its course. And, as you say, it was very much an intramural scrum.

Q: Essentially how would you describe constructive engagement, when you started? I assume it changed as circumstances and time went on?

CROCKER: It morphed in several ways. When I first wrote about it, in a piece in *Foreign Affairs*, it was in the context of describing the possibility for an alternative relationship with South Africa.

In that piece, as I said, part of that relationship would have to be based on the regional dynamics of Southern Africa. In other words, we couldn’t isolate South African from Southern Africa. It was the regional hegemon and one of the terms for our engagement would have to be their cooperation on regional issues.

But I talked a lot in that article about how there was a possibility that the current South African government of the day could be nudged to becoming a piecemeal reformist, in which reform measures would be taken that would gradually develop some momentum and gradually lead to perhaps unintended consequences of open ended change. “Negotiated change away from *apartheid*” was the terminology I used.

Now that’s the article and of course having written that article it’s been hung around my neck ever since and was while I was in office.

And that’s the way it is. If you’re stupid enough to write articles and then go into public life, you live with them!

Once in office and we had all these policy reviews, it became very clear to everyone and especially to me that the focus of energy was going to be to get the regional conflicts wound down first, before one could directly address and expect major moves away from *apartheid* to a system of one man one vote in South Africa.

And I began to push that line and to believe it and it was not difficult to believe. Logically, you can’t ask, for example, Angola to settle with UNITA while there are South African forces intervening inside Angola and Cuban forces protecting the regime in Angola. You can’t ask the government of Mozambique the same question about RENAMO while there are South Africans running across their own countryside providing clandestine support to their enemies.

And in the South African case, you couldn’t really expect the South Africans to negotiate with the ANC when the ANC is sitting in communist-supplied military training camps in neighboring

countries such as Angola.

What you're doing when you do that is asking people to negotiate highly sensitive matters – as one Angolan put it to me – 'with foreigners in their kitchen'. And so the logic of the policy was, "Let's deal with the regional challenges and get them under control," which means negotiated solutions: Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and that will create the conditions in which all these countries, including South Africa, are able to deal with their fundamental domestic challenges.

So that's how it evolved.

Q: Once you get into that particular aspect of diplomacy it means that nothing's going to happen, when you're quoting references to each other.

CROCKER: Yeah, you're reading your talking points and you're actually talking for the note takers, so they can take it home again: "And then I told him"

The one part of the constructive engagement story that I haven't touched on is that the South African government, for domestic as well as international reasons, chose to take constructive engagement and redefine it their way – in their favor – and then get South African Broadcasting Corporation on the airwaves 24/7 asserting "We have a new policy. We have a new president in Washington. He understands the problem and we have an ally in the fight against communist aggression in Africa and we're defining this new relationship and Crocker is coming" and creating an aura which was very difficult for us to contend with, framing things to look like we jumped into bed with one country's government, which was not the policy at all.

So the words constructive engagement were hammered into the minds and the ears of many, many Africans for eight years by South African Broadcasting Corporation, which we didn't have an equivalent channel to correct the record.

So that was part of the imagery of constructive engagement.

Q: That's still there, too. Looking back, for most people constructive engagement is seen in a very positive light, but I've heard other people say, "That disastrous constructive engagement policy." I think they're referring to the conception that this represents the Reagan Administration coming in and supporting white rule.

CROCKER: Which is absolute rubbish. First of all, constructive engagement worked. Secondly, by the time P.W. Botha and I stopped talking to each other, he was saying to me that he would rather deal with Jimmy Carter, because at least he knew where Carter was coming from. "You seem to have your own agenda," he said. So we were obviously upsetting the South African establishment in lots of ways, destabilizing them.

Q: But looking at sort of the diplomacy of this, we didn't have a good tool to counter the South African broadcasts?

CROCKER: Well, we used what we could use and we kept on saying, "Look, this is not an engagement with South Africa. It's an engagement with all of the countries and parties in Southern Africa who want to engage with us to create negotiated political solutions to the region's problems."

That was the one sentence answer, but people would rather believe devil theory, much rather believe it, because it's so simple and clear and of course it made for a good bumper sticker, once the sanctions movement got mobilized in the mid-Eighties.

Q: We haven't talked much about, as you took over, how did you see the South African establishment, according to the issues that you were concerned with?

CROCKER: You had the security ministries, the power ministries or departments, would be of course foreign affairs and the civilian NIS, the National Intelligence Service, which was headed by a young academic by the name of Neil Barnard, who had actually at one stage applied for doctoral studies at Georgetown in order to study non-proliferation issues and whether there was anything that could be done to stop additional countries from going nuclear, which, of course, the South Africans were in the process of doing at the time, which was very amusing.

Anyway, you had the National Intelligence Service; you had the office of the president itself, the state president's office and there were a number of personalities in that office; and then there was the military.

Within the military, there were probably three voices of note: there was military intelligence, which was the kind of ideological hardliners who prepared the briefing papers for the state president of South Africa and therefore played the role that Bill Casey would like to have played with Ronald Reagan, monopolizing the inputs to him.

Then you had the line military, the people who actually ran military commands, like they ran the joint forces command on the border between Namibia and Angola, people like the chief of army staff.

And then you had the special forces people, who were doing a lot of the special ops in places like Mozambique and you had the defense minister. Those are at least four different military voices with different views.

We made it our purpose to try and understand those relationships and try to figure out how to play them. They of course were trying to play us, but we tried to be as good at least, if not better, at playing them.

Q: Well, were you able, as time progressed, to get the CIA to start working on their counterparts to promote our policy?

CROCKER: It's a good question. We learned and it became clear to us that speaking to a foreign government of a significant regional power exclusively as the African bureau in the State

Department had its limits and that it would serve our purposes from time to time to broaden our base bureaucratically and to bring in additional voices, you might say some pinch hitters, some heavy hitters from other parts of our bureaucracy.

So we would bring in NSC people. At one point Bud Macfarlane played a critical role in helping us to reach out to the Angolans, hosted a dinner and things of that kind.

Q: Bud Macfarlane at that time was national security advisor?

CROCKER: He was, at that time. We worked with the OSD civilian people and with the CIA analytical people to put together briefings for visiting South African delegations on what the Russians were doing in the Third World generally, in order to give the South Africans a little bit of ground truth.

It was on the one hand like a gesture of confidence building, because we were doing in effect an intelligence exchange and they had intel people with them and we had ours.

So it could be looked at as a gesture, if you like, but our purpose was to reduce their provincial isolation when it came to who was going to prevail in the wars of the region and whether there would in fact be any winners.

We made clear that there was really no limit to the amount of military junk the Soviets would sell for almost nothing to the Angolans and their factories were not running out of anything.

And the purpose there was to point out that they were basically, the South Africans, in a strategic stalemate. They were dealing on the other side with both a failing African government, but also with the other superpower and they'd better be aware of that.

Q: This is in the book High Noon in Southern Africa by Chester A. Crocker.

CROCKER: And there's a picture here of the South African and Angolan military and diplomatic chiefs, with the American mediators in the background, just posing for a photograph as they finished three days of intensive talks and so on. That kind of relationship building is what made things move.

Q: You must have been concerned about that other great power that we haven't talked about, the far right, or whatever it is, in the United States. It's you and your team working on this and the whole thing could be screwed up by posturing on the part of the right wing in the American political process by stopping you from doing something.

CROCKER: I like to use boating analogies and fishing analogies and what happened to us by the end of '84 was that instead of being at the oars in a rowboat, rowing across a lake, we were suddenly like a sailboat with no wind and at the same time in the distance we could see a waterfall and we were heading over that waterfall.

It got really rough. It got rough simultaneously for two reasons. It wasn't just the right. We and our diplomatic effort got a one-two punch.

It was a combination of the left going after Ronald Reagan after his great victory in the fall of 1984, going after him on South Africa and mobilizing a nationwide campaign to stop constructive engagement and impose sanctions on South Africa on the one hand and the retaliation, if you like, from the right, saying, "Well, that diplomacy is putting much too much pressure on our friends in South Africa, anyway and the real problem is the Soviets and the Cubans and the communists in Angola and we need to support the freedom fighters of UNITA and not worry about a negotiated settlement. Let's just go for victory. That's what we're doing in Afghanistan. That's what we're doing in Nicaragua. It's what we should do in Africa."

So, to finish the analogy, we went over the waterfall, we were in fast moving water and we had to figure out how to survive, how to go with the flow.

We faced very major attacks on our policy of regional negotiations, both because of the upheaval in South Africa and the American reaction to it and American reaction, as I've said, to Reagan's victory and to the increasingly negative imagery coming out of the township violence in South Africa.

Q: You're talking about election victory.

CROCKER: His election victory, yeah.

Q: Of '84, which he won big.

CROCKER: Yeah, I need to clarify that a little bit more. It was right after the election victory, it was on Thanksgiving Day of 1984 that the anti-*apartheid* protests started at the South African embassy here.

So this was immediately post-election, but it was triggered by the unrest in the South African townships, the internal African ferment and disorder and determination to take over the townships from the white security forces, all of that being shown on American TV.

That created a dynamic of direct frontal attack on the administration inside this country over South Africa policy, at the same time that the right, as you're suggesting, was mobilizing to attack the State Department particularly for its diplomacy of constructive engagement vis-à-vis Angola and Mozambique and the rest of them.

So we didn't have any wind behind us. We had gales in front of us, if you like. There are all kinds of nautical terms that come to mind, like battening down the hatches and shipping the oars and figuring out how to deal with fast moving waters. We lost our own momentum and were for a period a sitting duck for domestic ideologues and activists who went to work on Congress.

Q: Within sort of the government complex, in the State Department, did you find that the

congressional relations was helpful, or was this pretty much something you had to do yourself, you and your own people, to meet the questioning from right, left and center on what you were up to?

CROCKER: We had some counsel and some help and some company from the congressional relations bureau, but they could not begin to master or carry the argument by themselves.

Our policy was a very sophisticated policy. It required an understanding of a very nuanced diplomatic background. One had to understand why in fact in this part of the world we had to carry water on both shoulders.

We were not on one side or the other. We were on the side of a regional peace process. And that's always a tricky message to carry, even if you're a State Department official in the H Bureau going up to talk to people on the Hill.

So I would say that in terms of the domestic public diplomacy the overwhelming public affairs burden was on us to articulate constructive engagement as it related to South Africa and change inside South Africa.

That took a great deal of our time and we had to develop a particular task force within the African Bureau to get out the word on why we were working with such focus on the regional diplomacy at a time of apparent instability and possible change in South Africa.

Q: Were you concerned that constructive engagement, today, even, with some people, I get sort of negative, others very positive.

Were you concerned that, all right, you had a term which had never been used before, so far as I know, it's a very specific term for a specific process at a specific time, that maybe it's not a good idea to have a term, because all of a sudden this is something that rallies opposing forces, or not?

CROCKER: There's no question that you're right about that. I've thought about it a lot, I've written about it and I've said the only thing wrong with the policy was it had a name! But we do constructive engagement in other parts of the world and we've been doing it both before and since this African process.

Q: And this served as a rallying cry for various groups.

CROCKER: It became a bumper sticker, and the problem with it was not only that it became itself a lightning rod, but that different people gave it different definitions.

And I would wake up in the morning and I would get really pissed off because somebody else had defined my policy, given it a meaning which I never intended.

“Your policy of constructive engagement with the white racist government of South Africa.”

That wasn't the policy! It was never the policy!

The policy was one of engagement with the region, moving with all those governments and parties who wanted to work towards peaceful alternatives to militarized conflict. But that's harder to put on a bumper sticker.

Q: Did you find the head of CIA, William Casey, playing dog in the manger or screwing things up or was he not a real problem?

CROCKER: Oh, he was a real problem. He was a real problem for everyone who had to work with him in every region where he was engaged. He saw himself as an alternative secretary of state.

And so there were things that he did and things that he encouraged that often poisoned the well for us and gave false signals to some of our negotiating partners.

I think the South Africans were always confused as to whether or not he really had the ear of Ronald Reagan, or whether George Shultz did. And that obviously influenced what I could do.

Q: Well then, let's move back to late '84 and you were saying, rough times on constructive engagement.

CROCKER: Well, yes, the beginning of 1985 saw developments of several kinds, saw the breakdown of our diplomacy with Mozambique and South Africa, which was a very important diplomatic opening that we had made leading to a kind of demilitarization of the border and a de-escalation of tensions between Mozambique and South Africa.

That breakthrough took place in early '84 and by early '85 it had broken down. It broke down because elements within the South African government destroyed it.

They escalated the support they were providing to RENAMO, the rebel movement in Mozambique and they began basically not cooperating with the government of Mozambique any more and we found ourselves unable to change their behavior, partly because the left hand and the right hand weren't talking to each other within the South African government.

I remember going to one meeting with the South Africans, and in a sidebar we had a quite lengthy discussion about Mozambique and how to get it back on track.

And at the end of that meeting the head of South African military intelligence who had not been in the meeting pulled on my sleeve and said, "Crocker, why are you talking to them about Mozambique?," "them" being the foreign affairs department. He said, "I run Mozambique."

So we were running into that problem a lot and we didn't have our own troops on the ground anywhere in this region, I should emphasize. Our entire diplomacy in Africa at this time was a diplomacy of using smart power, political tools, negotiations, foreign assistance and very limited

coercive power.

So we weren't in a position to force the South Africans to behave if they were determined not to behave and on Mozambique they appeared to be determined not to behave.

Then, of course, at the same time, we're talking about the period between roughly November of '84 and March of '85, the urban unrest in South Africa began to grow by the day and the South Africans were handling it very poorly.

The Western media were having a field day and were reporting on the daily brutalities in South Africa's urban areas. This was not a war. This was people power challenging a government and the government cracking down on people power. But it was well-organized people power and then you saw a lot of things that were very unattractive.

People who cooperated with the regime were burned to death ('necklaced' in burning tires) in the black urban areas by activists and then the activists were beaten up, killed, jailed and maimed and tortured by the regime. And this was all being televised in prime time.

So increasingly my job was to explain to the American people on American television what the hell was going on in South Africa's urban areas and why did we still have this policy of constructive engagement and why didn't we support sanctions and so forth.

So then the focus of discussion and debate in the U.S. increasingly focused on the U.S.-South African bilateral relationship, with little discussion or knowledge of our regional diplomatic efforts with Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

A major movement had gotten underway in this country, led by a number of church and labor and other organizations, to mount protest campaigns on American campuses, as activists arranged media coverage of getting arrested outside the South African embassy on Massachusetts Avenue.

So I spent a good bit of my time explaining Ronald Reagan's policy of constructive engagement, which was typically shorthanded as "constructive engagement with *apartheid* South Africa," which was not at all what the policy was, but that's the way it was shorthanded.

So I'd spend the first five minutes saying, "That's not the policy. The policy is something different." So it was a huge distraction, I guess is the right word and we were placed somewhat on the defensive politically in this country, while trying to sustain our regional efforts in Africa.

Q: Ronald Reagan, did he weigh in at all?

CROCKER: Yeah, he weighed in from time to time at press conferences. He provided me with firm backstopping in both '85 and '86. He used language that I would not have used sometimes in describing the situation there. And I think it's fair to say that his grasp of the brief was such that it didn't necessarily advance the cause of defending our position.

He viewed the South African regime as people who had been our allies in World War One and World War Two and would talk that way, rather than talking about how we sympathize with and we support the aspirations of the majority for a rightful share of opportunity and power in their country.

These were all very difficult code words which we had to work and clearly we supported movement away from *apartheid*, but the way he would say it sometimes did not necessarily make my job a lot easier.

There were many, many public occasions for these discussions and debates. Let me just say that in the first half of '85 we put in place some of our own additional restrictive measures, sanctions, that were unilateral, imposed by the Executive Branch, on the South Africans.

Q: What type of sanctions were these?

CROCKER: Well, these sanctions had to do with the travel of people to this country, they had to do with investment guidelines. We talked a lot about the importance of the Sullivan Principles and urged our companies to adhere to the Sullivan Principles.

But we firmly resisted mandatory disinvestment, argued against divestment by institution investors, and we resisted trade sanctions, because trade sanctions, of course, are an attack on the South African economy and on South African workers. They're very indiscriminate. So we remained firmly opposed to them.

But we had some restrictive measures that we put in place in '85. It didn't solve the political problem here. This debate over South Africa continued right up until around October of '86.

There were different phases of the debate. In early 1986 Congress developed a mandatory sanctions package, which was much more dramatic and included trade sanctions and also sanctions against new investment. We were adamantly opposed to those measures and President Reagan vetoed that legislation in the summer of '86 and by the fall of '86 his veto had been overridden by the Congress.

What I'm describing here is a two year struggle over South African policy. The sanctions lobby won the sanctions debate and sanctions became one element of American policy. We won our debate, in the sense that we never changed constructive engagement for the simple reason that Congress could not dictate the content of US diplomacy.

So by '86 we were conducting a dual policy, the legislative one that was imposed by Congress and one that was conducted by the administration, by the Executive Branch. It was messy.

Q: During this war, were you using your ground troops and sending them out to be slaughtered, to go to universities, people from the bureau, to talk to really kind of hostile crowds?

CROCKER: We did a fair amount of public diplomacy, yes. It was only hostile in a few parts of

the country. God bless them, the citizens of northern California, I remember dodging crowds out there on more than one occasion, but for the most part we had a civil hearing.

But there were protests in a lot of places. A lot of campuses, you had protests which pressured the administration of universities to divest shares in companies that were invested in South Africa.

So it was like an investment portfolio sanction. Had no impact, really, on South Africa. It had a big impact on American companies.

Q: Well, by the time you got this dual policy, what reaction were you getting from the South Africans? Were they saying, "Well, you talk one way and act another?"

CROCKER: It was very complex for us. The South Africans didn't realize on some occasions how deep a hole they were actually in. I remember one occasion, this would have been in probably August of '85, I had a call from the South African foreign minister saying, "Chase is pulling its credit lines." They were not rolling over the South African sovereign debt that they held. "You've gotta do something."

I said, "Mr. Minister, I don't do sovereign credit lines. You have to talk to your bankers about that one."

But from then on down South Africa basically lost its access to Western capital markets and the best it could hope for was tightly restricted debt rollovers. It got some revolvers from European markets. It didn't get much from American banks.

But the South African reaction was a combination of petulance, silliness, ignorance and hand wringing. The last meeting I had with then State President P.W. Botha took place in early '86. To give you a feel for the way he conducted his conversations, he didn't cross the room to shake my hand and welcome me. He stood across on his side of the room and waited for me to approach him and then reluctantly shook my hand and said to me and I'm not making this up, "Why are you here? I had a better relationship with the Carter Administration. At least I understood where I stood with those people. With you I never know where I stand."

And then he said to me, "Don't come and talk to me about sanctions and how you need ammunition from me to fight your sanctions battles. Sanctions are your problem. They're not my problem."

So that's the way he saw the issue. That was his understanding of reality.

But basically the relationship was severely damaged by the combination of things coming together at that time: sanctions, protest movement, the unrest inside South Africa, Botha's inability to articulate a vision for the future.

He gave a famous speech in the summer of '85 which was called the "Rubicon speech," but

instead of crossing the Rubicon he fell into it. He gave a speech with a vision for the future that led no where and the markets collapsed after that. They lost their credit lines. They undercut those in western governments trying to sustain the arguments on sanctions.

But I think we should also explain what we contributed to this mess. We tried very hard to deal with the Congress and with the American policy debate on sanctions. Secretary Shultz gave speeches, Deputy Secretary Whitehead, a lot of other people, gave testimony. I testified and spoke on television nonstop.

But the time came in the summer of '86 for President Reagan to give a major speech on South Africa in order to be able to sustain his veto of the most recent sanctions bill. We went through about probably eleven drafts of that speech and every time a draft went to the White House it came back rewritten and it was rewritten by three people: by Pat Buchanan in the Communications Office; by Bill Casey, the director of CIA; and by their friends in the South African government.

Q: These two you've named are well known as coming out of the right wing and fairly far to the right.

CROCKER: Fairly far to the right, the nativist right, or whatever you want to call it.

Q: What was the third?

CROCKER: People that they were working with inside the South African government, one assumes in the state president's office or in military intelligence, who were given our text by U.S. officials and then were rewriting it, using language which, in some cases, looked like it had been translated directly out of Afrikaans. It wasn't American English.

So we realized what we were dealing with here was a loss of control inside the White House of foreign policy and so Secretary Shultz and I had a battle on our hands over the shape of a presidential speech defending our policies in Africa and we lost that battle. The president gave a speech which lost the sanctions debate.

Q: Did you have any friend in the White House, I'm thinking the vice president or somebody at the NSC or anything like that or they weren't effective, or what?

CROCKER: They were not effective. We did have some friends in the NSC. We worked with Bud Macfarlane and we worked with, I think, Poindexter. And we worked of course with our Africa level staffers on the NSC. We also worked with the vice president's office, but they didn't assert themselves on this issue.

This was a speech drafting tug of war between the White House and the State Department and the White House communications office won.

The speech that the president gave in the summer of '86, it was mid-July, I think, lost the

sanctions debate. It lost the Senate Republicans. They got no political cover with that speech. This was not a speech that gave the necessary message to the American people..

And so the veto was overridden and that drama played out until around October of '86. It was a painful time and it undercut our diplomacy to some extent.

Clearly the Angolans would look at all this and wonder what the hell is going on in Washington? Are the Americans and South Africans going to be having a divorce? Is this a great opportunity for us? Do we have to listen to the Americans anymore, with all this going on?

And meanwhile the South Africans were saying, "If that's your bloody policy, don't bother to come and talk to us about regional diplomacy on Angola or Namibia. We don't need to talk to you. And sanctions are your problem."

So I guess you could say '86 was the roughest year I had.

Q: Could you get much support from anywhere within the great American media or the whole policy was a little too subtle?

CROCKER: The policy was too subtle, when you had bumper stickers saying "Sanctions Against Apartheid!" Constructive engagement wasn't about that. It was about getting South Africa out of Namibia and Cubans out of Angola and keeping South Africans out of Mozambique, by the way and keeping the Russians out of the whole place. That's what it was about.

We always understood that the sequence would be regional diplomacy first and then South African change away from *apartheid* towards one man, one vote. That of course is what eventually happened.

Q: That's awfully hard to sell to people who want simple answers.

CROCKER: If people want simple answers, they'll get simple answers and what they got was disinvestment, to some extent. They got the sanctions bill. They did not change our policy.

We continued to pursue our regional diplomacy and it ultimately prevailed. And only after it had prevailed did you see the release of Mandela, the negotiations for one man, one vote in South Africa.

Q: Well, in a way, did the sanctions give you an added clout? Even though you didn't want it, was this weakening the South Africans, or stiffening their spines, or what was happening?

CROCKER: I think you really have to pick that apart, in terms of different time periods. The initial reaction was, as you might expect, a nationalistic reflex amongst white South Africans and especially Afrikaners, who ran the place.

Of course it stiffened them. It made them angry.

They felt let down. They couldn't believe that Ronald Reagan, their great friend, would not be able to prevent this, or Margaret Thatcher, who also had to deal with her sanctioners at home and in the Commonwealth and Helmut Kohl in Germany, who had to deal with his church groups.

And they just couldn't believe that these Western leaders didn't have more backbone. They didn't realize that whatever backbone we had was being severely weakened by what South African security forces were doing in the black townships.

But in terms of finding people who understood the message, there were some in the elite media who understood what we were trying to do, but it was hard even for them and there were moderates among the Republican Party in the Senate who came to us, like Senator Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Richard Lugar of Indiana, who said to George Shultz, "You gotta do something" and we lost them on the sanctions debate.

Q: And also, when you think about it, it was somewhat the equivalent to the contra effort in Nicaragua. "If you start a guerilla war, we'll start a guerilla war."

CROCKER: Well, yes and we had another reason for being supportive, to some extent, of this program and that was to reduce Savimbi's dependence on South Africa.

The South Africans wanted to control Savimbi. In fact, in many ways they did and we felt that it was healthy for UNITA to have another pair of eyes and a window on the world through us.

Q: How did you view Savimbi the person and where he was coming from, at that time?

CROCKER: This is a long conversation. I would say in summary he was an acquired taste.

By the time we get to the middle of '86, we have military pressure against one of our negotiating partners and economic sanctions against the other.

And the question really is, did this strengthen our diplomacy, which you asked me and I haven't fully answered, or did it undercut our diplomacy and what led to the ultimate breakthroughs?

Q: It was a three dimensional chess game, really and yet Congress and everybody was looking at it on the basis of "What are you doing about apartheid in South Africa?", which really was not the main focus of our policy at the time. We were trying to clear the field, I guess and get the Cubans and Soviets out.

CROCKER: Yes, it is a complex matrix sort of negotiation. I would say that the issue of *apartheid* and how to end it was a fundamental part of the background of the policy. In other words, it was part of the regional arena. It was part of the geopolitical context.

But, as we've said in these discussions, the key issue for us was sequencing and getting some

traction. The way we started to get that traction was on the regional diplomacy and ending the regional wars, the assumption being that you would not see the end of *apartheid* until the regional wars were concluded.

That was our premise going in and yet, by the time we got into these heavy seas, with lots of domestic and international debate, in '85-'86, as you just said, a lot of people were saying, "Well, you're talking about Namibia and Angola and Cubans and SWAPO and so forth, but what about the big kahuna?"

The big kahuna is *apartheid* and to explain to people that you have to walk before you run and that you have to clear away the underbrush before you can lay the groundwork for dealing with the major issue, that was a complicated message.

It didn't fit on a bumper sticker. What fit on a bumper sticker was "Sanctions Now" or "Disinvest Now" or "Down With Constructive Engagement" or whatever you like.

So I spent a lot of time in those years we're talking about on the TV, including the Sunday shows and so forth, explaining the president's policy and trying to give the viewers some sense of the nuance. We had eventually let facts speak for themselves and we had the debate and the rest was history.

Q: You said "the president's policy." How much did you feel the president understood this, or you were given your head, or how did you feel about this, sort of from the president's point of view?

CROCKER: The president supported his lieutenants in supporting his policy, which was, as he defined it, by '86, it was to prevent sanctions. So he had a very simple approach to this.

He saw South Africa as a country that had been an ally in World War Two and in Korea and so forth. He did not think that Marxist terrorists should take over South Africa and I'm sure that there were people around him telling him that's what the ANC represented, Marxist terrorists. His good friend Maggie Thatcher often described them that way, too, as Marxist terrorists.

So when people talked about the importance of the internal political dialogue in South Africa, he would say, "Yes, but with whom?"

So what I doing was trying to defend our negotiation, for all the reasons that I understood to be necessary. Secretary Shultz certainly understood it that way.

But once you get into this kind of debate in Washington, it's a little bit of "us versus them." It's a little bit of the Executive keeping control of policy or losing control of policy and the Congress saying, "You're not giving us enough cover" or "We don't agree. You're not sending enough signals that your heart beats for the victims of *apartheid*."

So that debate was not an easy one to prevail in. We prevailed the first time around, in '85. We

lost the debate in '86.

Q: What about the sanctions bill against South Africa?

Meanwhile, by May of '86, the Congress, in its wisdom and looking at what's going on on the ground in South Africa, had begun another series of hearings and writing up a new sanctions bill to basically have pretty comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa, both trade and investment.

That sanctions bill was developed and marked up in the Senate and there were parallel bills in the House. When the legislation finally came to the president's desk, in the summer of '86, he was unhappy, to put it mildly.

As I mentioned in a previous interview, what we had tried to do was to preempt that sanctions legislation with our initiatives that would include sanctions of our choosing, rather than the comprehensive, full scope, as we called them indiscriminate, trade war kind of sanctions that were in that bill.

That bill was really, in some ways, a maximal effort to declare economic war on a country and put a lot of people out of work, most of them black, of course.

It had elements of protectionism in it, by banning imports of things that the United States itself was a producer of; basically it was a measure which any believer in good trade policy would not have supported.

There were parts of the bill that we could support, so we tried to, if you like, we tried to cherry pick the bill and put forward another sanctions initiative of our own.

We had had a round of limited sanctions, executive order sanctions, in '85 but things had moved on, we would have to do more in '86 to provide any hope of preempting the congressional legislation.

But this led to a serious interagency battle and the State Department was probably the only voice in that battle that thought we'd have to make a major down payment of sanctions to be able to forestall the congressional initiative.

This is a very intricate and complicated story. It's been documented in various places, including my own memoir, but the simple point I would make is that by this time, by May, June, July of '86, the sanctions debate had become a struggle between two branches of government over the definition of our South African policy.

The Congress wanted more cover, in terms of leadership, on the issue of *apartheid* than Ronald Reagan was capable or willing to provide. So the president's effort to sustain his view of the situation was ultimately unsuccessful. He vetoed the congressional legislation and then the Congress came back after the August recess and overrode his veto, which was I think the first

time that happened in his presidency.

So it was a big deal. It was a setback and a huge distraction, from what we were trying to do, which was to negotiate regional peace.

It was focused all on the internal South African situation and on Ronald Reagan's perceived failure to identify himself, his administration and the United States with the victims of *apartheid*. That's the story.

Q: Who were the leaders in Congress, or outside of Congress, opinion molders and all that you were sort of up against?

CROCKER: Well, it changed over time. I think there were people in what we would have called the anti-*apartheid* lobby group within Congress who'd been there for many years, like Congressman Bill Grey, for example, of Pennsylvania.

Q: Who was the head of the Black Caucus.

CROCKER: Yes and another would have been Congressman Ron Dellums from California. On the Senate side, the Senate was Republican-controlled at that time, but we kind of faced a situation, we in the State Department, where our friends in the Senate, namely Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, who was the Senate African subcommittee chair and Richard Lugar, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, they were looking for more cover, if you want to put it that way, than we were capable of getting out of the White House.

This would not have happened if we had been able to move the White House closer to the position that George Shultz and I were advocating. We didn't succeed as I've described above.

Q: Now, when you say "the White House," does this mean the president, does this mean the national security advisor? Are there powers within the White House, or what are you talking about?

CROCKER: I'm talking about the voices around the president and there were varied voices around the president. Bill Casey, of course, was one of those voices and he had an office in the White House and spent time there and could influence things and often did.

Bill Casey was a true soul brother of Ronald Reagan on this issue and was determined to oppose any measures, what you might call partial measures, of the kind that we're talking about, more targeted sanctions, for example, on banking or on new investment and that kind of thing.

And of course Bill Casey and the Agency were running the liaison relationship with the South African services, which they saw as allies in a Cold War context and they used their sources and relations to oppose or discredit the steps that we put forward.

They didn't do so to our faces. They did it behind our backs.

He had a very agile and active ally in Pat Buchanan, the president's communications director, who saw the world in the same terms, as black and white.

Q: We're talking about '86

CROCKER: The summer of '86.

Q: What was the reaction in South Africa?

So there was that backdrop. The South Africans had gone into kind of a retreat, politically speaking and diplomatically speaking. They didn't want to talk to us. They in fact said at one point that there'd be no more meetings to discuss these negotiations.

And in fact it became such that I think it was difficult for the "good guys" in the South African government to be seen talking to the State Department right after that.

Q: Was it the feeling that we were seen as weak?

CROCKER: Partly that. They knew all about the controversy on the speech drafts back in July of '86. Some of them were writing it.

They knew all about the interim sanctions that we had tried to put forward to preempt the legislative package called the "Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act," the "CAAA" as it became known.

So they knew what we had tried to do and they knew that we had not succeeded and they knew why we had not succeeded and they just didn't want to have anything much to do with us.

So October of '86 was gloomy. It didn't stop us from doing some things we were determined to do, which was to work with like-minded allies to prevent a complete shutdown of the South African economy. We worked very quietly behind the scenes to make sure that South Africa did not lose all of its access to bank credit rollovers and that kind of thing.

But the other reason why October was pretty grim was that on October 19th of 1986 Samora Michel, the president of Mozambique, went down in a plane crash. His plane went into mountains along the South African-Mozambique border, under stormy weather condition. He was in a Soviet plane flown by, Soviet pilots.

And so we had lost a major partner and a figure who had a lot of credibility in Africa and certainly a lot of credibility in that region as well as in Washington and Whitehall.

And this at the time seemed like a pretty major blow. It was a gloomy month, October of '86. The MPLA regime in Angola was saying that there wasn't much to talk about if we were waging war against them (aid to UNITA) and so forth. So this was a time for hunkering down, for doing

everything possible to sustain the framework that we had built up.

Don't forget we had opening bids from the two sides on a schedule for Cuban withdrawal but they were quite far apart. The Angolan proposal was sort of open ended as to when the final Cubans would ever leave at all, linked to conditions that the South Africans would giggle over. The South African proposal was a very front-loaded proposal for Cubans all leaving in the first six months, I think it was, or seven months, of the process and the Angolans would laugh at that. We don't know what Castro said about it, but I'm sure he didn't like it.

But we did have some elements of a framework here, where people understood where we were coming from: a linked package in which South Africa leaves the cross-border war, South Africa gets out of Angola, gets out of Namibia, Namibia becomes independent and the Cubans leave Angola in a parallel package.

That was on the table. We were determined to hang on to it and to protect it, maybe that's the best word, to protect it from these hostile forces, political forces, in the Congress, in public opinion, the international fora and frankly from within the parties themselves.

The parties themselves were shooting themselves in the foot by the way they were behaving. So we said, "All right, when you're ready, you have our phone number. We're not pressing for anything. But you know where we are. And in the meantime, we will communicate with you through whatever channels you like."

In the case of South Africa, it was British channels. We used British channels to communicate at a very authoritative level with the South African government in the final three months of '86.

We used UN channels and British channels to communicate with the MPLA regime in Angola. When I say "UN channels," I'm referring to a partner and an ally and a friend who has subsequently distinguished himself as a Nobel Peace Prize-winning diplomat, Martti Ahtisaari, who undertook on behalf of Secretary General Perez de Cuellar a visit or two to Angola on behalf of the SG, Perez de Cuellar, but, in a sense, also on behalf of this peace process, although he wouldn't have put it that way.

He was definitely fishing for good information, to find out what were they thinking, when will the ice break, when will we be able to warm this up again and under what circumstances and with whom and where and that sort of thing.

Martti is a very skillful person and he could say things to the Angolans that almost no one else probably could have at that time; I wasn't in the room, obviously, but my instinct tells me he spoke along the lines of, "If you think you're going to get better negotiating partners or a better deal than talking and negotiating with Chester Crocker and George Shultz, forget it, because the rest of Washington basically thinks that you people are hopeless pawns of the Soviet Union." And he would find some diplomatic way to say that and somebody to say it to. It's not quite something that I could say.

And so I think he helped in several contexts and of course he did it in New York, too, because Ahtisaari was based at the UN in New York at that time.

So we used indirect channels to try and protect this peace process, but it was pretty quiet, pretty becalmed.

Q: Did you have problems with your team, buck up their spirits and all? Were there lots of night sessions of sitting around and figuring out where do we go from here, or what?

CROCKER: What an assistant secretary can do at a regional bureau is to try and recruit and retain the best people. That's one of his or her most important jobs.

I wish I could write that in concrete and put it in front of some part of the State Department, because I don't think it's often done that way.

I had people around me who understood the importance of personnel and we were able to hold onto most of the good people that we had.

There's always a lot of turnover in the Foreign Service. People go on to new jobs every two-three years.

These were not easy times and I'm sure when I was not in the room that a lot of my career officer colleagues were wondering when I would resign during this time period.

It was not a good time. At one point in 1986 SFRC chairman Dick Lugar was quoted in the press as saying that he thought that maybe Shultz should think about a new assistant secretary, because of the way the debate was framing on sanctions and so forth.

Q: You were the guy put up, on the sanctions vote, up against the wall. Congressional rifles were pointed at you. Did you at any point think about, "Oh, screw this! Let's go home, get out this" or not?

CROCKER: There was kind of a rallying around, I think is the better way to put it. It might have been different if I had felt I was losing my people, the rats were leaving the ship, but I didn't have that experience.

On the contrary, I had colleagues, actually one colleague, who came back from the field and agreed to take on a kind of public diplomacy role on behalf of the bureau, a chap named David Miller, who was our ambassador in Zimbabwe, non-career guy. He spent a big chunk of a year trying to help sustain our side in this debate and work with

Q: I've interviewed David.

CROCKER: Have you? So you know his story. I don't know how much you went into this, but

Q: I'm not sure, either.

CROCKER: That's an example. There were a lot of long days and a lot of difficult times and some difficult meetings with senior people in the interagency process who would look at you as though you were already pretty damaged goods. "Crocker's on the way out" sort of thing. "We can outlast him." There was some of that.

I said to myself when I heard about things like that that there were other people, one doesn't want to get too personal here, but there were other people, like Under Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage who sent me a message during one of the most difficult weeks, I've forgotten which week it was, that said, "Just remember, Chet, they always go for the tallest trees in the forest first." And I took that to heart. That was very helpful to me, that kind of a message.

If you look at yourself in the mirror and you feel, "Gee, this is not worth it" maybe you don't continue. But I'm a Scorpio. So maybe it brought out the stubborn streak in me or something.

Q: What came out of the negotiations?

CROCKER: The South Africans proposed, as they came in the room in Geneva, "Let's have a *de facto* ceasefire and let's set target dates for completing this negotiation." Let me be very precise here. What they wanted to do was to say that all the Cubans would have to leave within either seven or ten months, depending on when the clock starts, from today, all the Cubans out of Angola. There were 50,000 at this point.

And they proposed to start the clock rolling on the UN Plan in ten weeks (!) by the first of November, if my memory serves. November of '88, the UN would begin deploying into Namibia.

That means that between August 15th and the end of October we have to finish negotiating everything: the withdrawal schedule, the ceasefire, the stand down of political rhetoric, some kind of understanding on respect for each other's sovereignty, that's code language for not harboring rebels, working out some arrangements for the implementation period.

So the South Africans were asking the Angolans to stop providing bases to the ANC. And I think the South Africans also recognized that they would be asked to stop promoting UNITA's offensive activities and in turn South Africa would say, "We hear you on that, but then you have to stop active combat patrols against UNITA. So there has to be a zone of safety for UNITA if you want us to stop supporting them..

So there were a lot of different military issues here. Anyway, this was a bold South African plan put on the table.

The Cubans and Angolans were not amused, because there was no negotiation going on here, this was a unilateral proposal.. They wanted a recess and they came to us and said, "What is this? What kind of a stunt is this?" They were very upset, because they saw it as a stunt. They said,

“Are they about to go public with this, because if so then we’re going to have to go public.”

So there was a real problem of calming nerves down. We had good delegation leaders in Geneva, fortunately and they were people who we could work with and get things gradually calmed down.

But it took some time to calm them down. The Cubans and Angolans said, “We’ve seen your proposal, thank you very much for responding to our proposal” of last February or January, because they had put forward, back at that time, a four year schedule for Cuban withdrawal (as contrasted with 7 months in the South African bid).

So we then had both sides putting things on the table related to the critical military issues: we had a four-year plan and we had a seven-month plan. It took some time to get them to agree on practical steps.

Q: I’m looking at the South African proposal. Was this a stunt? Were they asking for more? Did it represent really certain practical developments?

CROCKER: It was what you would call an opening bid, a very raw and somewhat provocative opening bid, because logistically getting all those troops out of Angola in seven months would have been a challenge; and the purpose of it was to try to force the Cubans to look at the idea that they had to get out of Angola before there could be an election in Namibia.

And so it was rigid, front-loaded withdrawal schedule that they had in mind and the Cubans were offended, the Angolans were offended. Of course they’re very good at getting offended. As George Mitchell once said of some of his Irish interlocutors, they would go a hundred miles to receive an insult.

So they got offended, even more so when there was some quite slick press backgrounding by the South Africans, who had some friends in the press that they had brought with them to indicate that the South Africans had taken a bold gesture for peace and that they were really stepping up the pace of negotiations and challenging the other side to see we could get everything agreed so we could start the UN plan by the first of November.

Well, once one side goes public like that, as you will appreciate, it puts the other side kind of on the defensive and they’ve got to go public with something, so there was some press hype.

But by the end of the four days in Geneva we had actually put together something we called, not very originally, a “Geneva Protocol,” it must be about the eightieth Geneva Protocol in modern diplomatic history, but, anyway, this one including the terms of reference of a *de facto* cease fire, it did establish a joint military commission between the sides, which was a very important step, it did talk about the target date of November 1st, even though all sides recognized that this was hyping the pressure on ourselves and could lead to disappointment down the road.

So what we had done at Geneva was to put our arms around some of these immediate military issues. By the time we left Geneva in the middle of August the obvious remaining issue was the

great gap between the different troop withdrawal calendars.

So here we are in late August. I'm on vacation. Everybody knows that there's one huge issue left, because a lot of other matters had been addressed.

Q: Including a ceasefire?

CROCKER: Including a ceasefire and it's sort of holding, it seems to be holding. There are no incidents of note. There are some communications to do with primarily how do the Cubans and Angolans keep SWAPO from messing around and crossing the Angola-Namibia border and trying to continue infiltration into Namibia, because SWAPO was not officially a party to this interim ceasefire, it was not at the table and neither was UNITA.

So we were talking to three states. We did not have the liberation groups, if you want to call them that, at the table. So we had to rely on the states that controlled them, or influenced them. It was quite complicated trying to figure out how to avoid the kind of difficulty which insurgents could create. There were ANC insurgents, as well.

So I think it's fair to say that we had a *de facto* ceasefire and a mechanism for observing it and for talking to each other when there were violations. We had military communications set up, so the sides could reach each other by radio.

But the big issue was the gap on the Cuban departure schedule and how that would be linked up to the South African departure from Namibia.

I am in my vacation place in the Adirondack Mountains in the third week of August of 1988. I get a call from my staff assistant in the AF Bureau saying, "Chet, would you be willing to come and meet with two senior South Africans? They have some concerns, some questions and they want to talk to you -- now."

And so we agreed on a place and my staff assistant flew up to Kennedy Airport, met the two visiting South Africans, escorted them up to a lodge on Lake George and I drove down from my place in the central Adirondacks and we met for a full day with the top guy in their military intelligence and the number 2 of Neil van Heerden, the head of the South African delegation.

We're sitting in the Adirondack sun, swatting the occasional deer fly, and they really wanted to put cards on the table: "Where are we going with this process? How do we get clarity about Cuban sincerity? They have a lot of additional troops. We've got to get a front loaded schedule of withdrawal, meaning lots of Cubans leave early. Otherwise, there's a great asymmetry in the calendars because of our (South African) timing commitments in terms of UN Res. 435."

Not to belabor this in too great detail, there were four very difficult meetings between that rendezvous on Lake George and the middle of October, and they were very frustrating meetings, because what you were seeing was a shoving match between the sides about what was politically acceptable to each when it came to the degree of 'parallelism' on the withdrawal schedule and

how would you verify, how would you guarantee, and all kinds of “what if” questions were being asked.

We met in Brazzaville repeatedly, we met in New York, we had a series of rounds and it was very demanding, a very accelerated negotiating schedule. And there were times, I think, quite frankly, when it looked like we were running out of time to maintain a sense of momentum and to conclude this process.

The U.S. election of 1988 was the first Tuesday of November. It seemed like maybe the parties were going to possibly piss away the great opportunity that we thought lay before them. So we didn't have the highest sense of confidence during those four meetings.

And it was agreed eventually that we had to go back to Geneva and really give it a final push. So I'm now moving ahead from those four meetings, which were basically, how can I put it, they were close-in work, they were hard work and they simply were a learning process in which parties talked at each other and tried to educate each other about political requirements that each had. The sides were down to their few remaining cards on the main issue – though there were other important topics raised from time to time (including side conversations between the Angolans and South Africans on the delicate issues of ANC bases and support for UNITA).

By the time we got to Geneva again in the middle of November, I'm moving ahead, now, to November of '88, this really was almost a do or die, in a sense. The election was over.

Ronald Reagan's term of office was going to come to a conclusion in two months and it was not automatic that under the new George H. W. Bush administration there'd be continuity of policy or people.

So the sides were kind of wondering about whether mid-November '88 was a great moment to grab and get it done or was it going to be a time when people say, “Let's wait and see what happens.”

Q: During this process, were you up against another major factor and that was the dislike on the part of our political masters of South Africa? Were they saying, “Do this, stick it to the South Africans,” with no regard to the peace process, but just as part of the political process, to show we were doing something to the South Africans?

CROCKER: There was some of that in the Congress, but of course there was another side, which was the people in our political system who were not at all happy with the fact that we were talking to the communists at all. So there was some degree of push from both sides.

There was a point at which there was some talk in the Congress and I don't have the month but there was some congressional initiative to maybe pass yet another sanctions bill on South Africa.

And I remember going up to the Congress with Colin Powell and talking to the Democratic leadership in the House and we heard from people like Tony Coelho and others that there was

some pressure and that they were thinking about doing something more.

And Colin turned to me and said, “Chet, what do you think?” And I said, “Frankly, if you want to terminate this peace process, that’s a great way to do it.” The congressmen were not impressed with that argument, particularly; nor was Colin Powell as I recall. There were few people in our system who grasped the significance of this negotiation as one that was at a decisive stage and could become transformative for the region.

But within the administration most people understood that we had to deal with this in a balanced way, so we tried to keep the balance there. There already were sanctions. We didn’t need more sanctions.

HERMAN W. NICKEL
Ambassador
South Africa (1982-1986)

Ambassador Herman W. Nickel was a foreign correspondent for Time Magazine in 1958. Although he had previously been declared persona non grata by the South African government, he entered the country again in 1978 as a correspondent for Fortune Magazine and was appointed as ambassador to South Africa by the Reagan administration. Ambassador Nickel was interviewed by Willis Armstrong in 1989.

Q: Herman Nickel was ambassador to South Africa from 1982 to 1986. Mr. Nickel, was this your first diplomatic assignment, so to speak? Had you come out of another walk of life?

NICKEL: It was. I've spent most of my professional life as a journalist; as a foreign correspondent. I started as a foreign correspondent for Time magazine in 1958 and in the course of my career, had all kinds of foreign assignments, including one in South Africa. The irony of my appointment was that my tenure as Time correspondent in Africa, the seat in Johannesburg from 1961 to 1962, ended with my expulsion by the South African Government after exactly one year.

Q: That's an interesting turnabout. [Laughter]

NICKEL: I don't think that this was their expectation of Ronald Reagan's nominee for ambassador.

Q: Some time had elapsed.

NICKEL: Yes. It was amusing that when I arrived in South Africa in April of 1982, that very same afternoon the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, asked me to come by because I was going to present my credentials right the following day, and they were in a great hurry to get me properly

installed. And at the end of our discussion, he said with a rather thin smile that, of course, the South African Government remembered the circumstances of my departure from South Africa some years ago, and he added with this touch of delicate Boer-humor, that they hoped they wouldn't have to do this again. [Laughter]

Q: That's fair enough. [Laughter] Well, what did you feel as you approached your assignment as ambassador to South Africa under the circumstances of the year 1982? How did you feel in the context of your previous experience in U.S. policy and all that sort of thing?

NICKEL: South Africa is a kind of addictive problem. While I didn't follow South African affairs in detail in the following years, it's a fascination that never really quite leaves you. And I suppose it fascinates you because it is an intractable problem. It takes place against a very beautiful backdrop, and so it is a country that one fervently wishes could find a way for people to live at peace with each other and with their neighbors.

I had gone back to South Africa for the first time on a Fortune assignment in 1978 and got sort of "reinfected" with that South African bug. I felt very strongly then that if we were going to play a significant and helpful role in coming closer to this objective, that one had to give encouragement to those forces in South African society on both sides of the racial divide that were working to peaceful change. I say encouragement because it seemed to me that a totally confrontational approach was not realistic. A confrontational approach might be useful when you have the power to coerce other people into doing things that they regard as being against their vital interests. And I do think that in the case of South Africa, we lacked that kind of coercive leverage. Therefore one had to reach out, especially to Afrikaners who, after all, controlled the power of the state in South Africa. The challenge was working with them to convince them that the continuation of the system of apartheid and the continuation of a system in which Afrikaners tried to monopolize political power was not in their own long-term interest, and that a new order had to be based on negotiation with them and the consent of the black majority.

And it seemed to me that the policy outlined by Chet Crocker in his well-known Foreign Affairs article which he wrote before taking office held out some promise.

I never had any illusion that we were anything more than a marginal influence. But when the balance of forces in a society is fairly close, I think that once in a while our influence can help to tip the scales. I think that is what I wanted to accomplish: to use this influence in such a way that occasionally you can help to give the forces of change - the good guys in this particular situation - the kind of critical mass that moves things forward.

I also was acutely aware of the fact that what drives the issue in the United States is less the strategic importance of South Africa than our national concern with the issue of race. I, myself, have doubts that South Africa rates as a first-rank strategic problem for the United States.

Q: World War I or World War II terms, yes. Future warfare, less likely.

NICKEL: That's right. I think that over the years the concern about the Cape route, I think has

receded considerably. And, while it is perfectly true that South Africa has a vast store of strategic minerals which are very important to the industrialized world, it is also true that any South African government would have an interest in selling these minerals because you can't eat them.

Q: Of course. [Laughter]. You can't eat them and you've got to eat, anyway, so you might as well sell them.

NICKEL: And the natural market for these minerals is, of course, the Western world because the Soviet Union, which is the other major producer of many of these minerals, has, you know, its own supplies, and in any case, does not constitute that kind of a market.

Our national interest is in not seeing a situation in South Africa develop that becomes so destabilized that the very production of these minerals is put in question. And, indeed, we have a significant national interest in stability, not only in South Africa itself, but in the entire region. You can't separate informal stability in South Africa from regional security. You can't have one without the other.

But it was clear to me, and indeed, that was always implicit and explicit in what Chet Crocker outlined as his policy vision; that our interest in stability must not be confused with commitment to the status quo, because the status quo in Southern Africa had become patently unstable. And meant that the emergence of a more stable order in Southern Africa hinged on peaceful change, especially within South Africa itself, but also in better relations between South Africa and her neighbors.

Q: That's a good overview of basic U.S. policy and I remember working with Chet Crocker when he was at Georgetown, because I did some teaching there when he was associate dean. I always admired Chet for the clarity of his thought in regard to Africa and his policy since.

You were there for four years. What would you say were the sort of peak events of those four years? Were there any specific crisis and peak events that you felt were important in terms of your trying to achieve your objective?

NICKEL: Yes. I think there were several phases in my tenure.

The first phase - roughly from 1982 to mid-'84 - involved the constitutional changes that P.W. Botha was trying to bring about and the constitutional referendum for the establishment of the tricameral Legislature.

And while in retrospect it is quite clear that the failure of that constitution to make any provision for the participation of blacks in the central political process was a crucial mistake, the problem was viewed by the government then as one of how much the political traffic could bear among white voters. And P.W. Botha, of course, was very much concerned at the time that he would not be able to get the majority in a constitutional referendum from the white voters for any constitutional provision that allowed blacks to come in, too. It was a constitution which was bound to fail, but, it was a stage that created the momentum for further change.

There were other changes that were important. In our contacts we were very much concerned with key pieces of apartheid legislation like the Group Areas Act, the old pass law system and so on. We spent a good deal of effort chipping away on these pillars of apartheid.

After the new constitution was adopted, our work moved into a different phase because, as a response to the exclusion of blacks from the constitutional dispensation - as the South African's call it - was the beginning of massive unrest, and the repression that went with it. That began in mid-1984.

Q: It had been fairly placid up 'til then.

NICKEL: Up until that point it had been reasonably placid. I mean there was always a dimension of protest and repression, obviously, but that dimension became considerably greater. And the repression that set in began to out-crowd news of any kind of reform process that was taking place. Indeed, the repression seemed to negate any claims that reform was taking place at all.

Now, that had an enormous effect on public opinion in this country and undermined the credibility of the administration's contention that, indeed, there was a reform process going on at all.

Q: It was hard to perceive.

NICKEL: Hard to perceive. Now, you may say that in a historical prospective, it is very often that you have repression at a time when a good deal of change is taking place because, indeed, I think it was de Tocqueville who, writing about the origins of the French Revolution, pointed out that the revolt happens not usually when the regime is at its most repressive but, quite the contrary, when things seem to be in a process of change, when people then conclude that the status quo is no longer something that they have to put up with.

Q: Russia in 1905.

NICKEL: I hope we don't see the same thing happening in the Soviet Union now. Well, there maybe some very grim alternatives for the Gorbachev government to the Baltic countries and so on. So, indeed, there is no contradiction really in a historical sense when repression does take place at times when change is in the air. But in the public perception here, it completely negated the view of the South African government as a regime that had set in motion a process of change.

The other aspect to our work in South Africa was diplomacy. I think that the most important culmination of our efforts came, in fact, just before the unrest started when in March 1984 we were able to witness the signing of the Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique. I think that was a very signal achievement and we had worked very hard on both sides, the Mozambicans and the South African government to bring that about. I think the promise of the Nkomati Accord of 1984 was delayed by the South African government's split personality. Its attitude towards its relationship with its neighbors reflected the divisions between the security

establishment, which was very close to P.W. Botha, and those diplomats who felt that better relations with the neighbors were one way for South Africa to work its way out of the isolation into which apartheid had put it. After the outbreak of unrest at home, the hawks were once again in the ascendancy. P.W. Botha's counter-revolutionary instincts prevailed again.

Q: I suppose the security forces were the ones who stimulated, say, the opposition forces within Mozambique.

NICKEL: That's right. I mean there was...

Q: And other places.

NICKEL: You know, there was convincing evidence that the supply relationship between the South African military and the Renamo movement continued even after the signing of the 1984 agreement.

Q: And does it still continue today, in your judgment?

NICKEL: Of course, I have been out of government for three years by now. But, I do believe that the "doves" in the South African government have finally prevailed and that that kind of supply relationship has come to an end. That is now attested by spokesman for the Mozambican government.

I think that there's still a murky area of so-called private supply routes, you know. There's a large Portuguese community in South Africa and there are still some reports of some illicit traffic back and forth, but I think that even the Mozambican government has finally accepted that the South African government is no longer supporting Renamo as a matter of policy.

Q: Do you see any hope for the Mozambican economy or society as it seems to have been, you know, a very depressed, miserable area?

NICKEL: Right.

Q: But once very rich and comfortable.

NICKEL: It is one of the tragedies that both Mozambique and Angola were - in terms of natural endowments - among the most promising countries on the entire African continent.

Now that the Mozambican government itself has renounced some of the socialistic experiments which aggravated their problems, the most crucial issue is the restoration of internal peace. For so long as this destructive guerrilla war continues, foreign aid is very difficult to administer effectively, foreign capital stays away and the government itself can't get a handle on things. So I think this depends crucially on creating peace and sometimes finding some kind of political solution. I think the Mozambican government has come a long way in accepting that there must be a political solution.

There also is now a growing willingness to concede that what gave rise to the emergence of Renamo was not solely the machinations first of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization or later of the South African security forces, but some very fundamental mistakes that were made by the Mozambican government in the earlier phases which led to quite an estrangement between the urban and the rural populations. That is why Renamo was able to establish a base.

Q: This is characteristic and like Africa, isn't it?

NICKEL: That's right. And while I'm not talking as an expert on Mozambique, I know that this is now acknowledged even by the Mozambican government. The other day there were a group of Soviet African experts in Washington, including their former deputy chief of mission in Maputo. When asked about the origins of Renamo, instead of emphasizing the South African involvement and so on. He was, in fact, putting his finger on that fundamental problem - Frelimo's mistakes in the rural areas. And I think that that problem needs to be redressed and I think that the fact that the Mozambican government does recognize this is a hopeful development.

Q: So that was the '84 event of particular importance?

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: That started the move towards ending cross-border violence and a reasonable relationship with Mozambique.

NICKEL: Unfortunately the better relationship was delayed by continued South African violation of the Nkomati Agreement in letter and in spirit, but they're now beginning to see the fruits of that kind of development.

The other effort that we were spending a great deal of time on, obviously, was the Namibian-Angola settlement. While I was not there when things finally came to fruition, it was clear to us, even then, that it was only a matter of time when all the parties to this dispute and I mean the MPLA government in Luanda, UNITA, the Cubans, and, very importantly, the Soviet Union and South Africa, were going to realize that a political settlement was preferable to an indefinite continuation of that costly conflict. We had many ups and downs and it took a long time to get all these unlikely parties to this negotiation with the right constellation.

Q: A real congeries of characters, isn't it?

NICKEL: It was an extraordinary negotiation which cast, in the broker role, the United States which had no diplomatic relations at all with Cuba, no diplomatic relations with the MPLA, very difficult relations with the Soviet Union, although that changed towards the end. The Soviet Union became very cooperative in bringing about the settlement. And then, of course, we had to move along the South African government, with which we had always had very difficult relations.

Q: *Plus, then you throw in Mr. Savimbi and the SWAPO and you've got other factors in the situation.*

NICKEL: Yes, although they were not directly part of the negotiations.

Q: *They were indirectly there.*

NICKEL: But they were indirectly there. SWAPO, frankly, was not much of a player in the diplomacy. But we could not ignore the concerns of Savimbi.

Q: *Who supports Savimbi?*

NICKEL: Well, I think, first of all, you have to start...

Q: *We were in and out, weren't we?*

NICKEL: Yes. But the first thing one must say is that Savimbi has a genuine support base within Angola.

Q: *Oh, yes. Sure.*

NICKEL: And I think that that is the real key to his longevity, rather than the foreign support he received - though it obviously was important.

Q: *No, they're not mercenaries.*

NICKEL: They're not mercenaries. I think they are in quite a different category from Renamo, since Renamo was very much a creation at first of the Rhodesian Intelligence Service, whereas UNITA was a genuine liberation movement. The South Africans, of course, were very much concerned about the projection of Soviet surrogates into the continent, because they were the only people who could constitute a genuine military challenge to South Africa's military and strategic preeminence of the continent. They saw support in Savimbi a way of fighting the spread of Soviet influence into the region, and they spent a good deal of effort and money in keeping Savimbi supplied. Savimbi accepted that because, for him, it was, of course, a critical strategic link.

Q: *Sure. Sure. And he couldn't be too fussy about it.*

NICKEL: No.

Q: *Is there some European support for Savimbi also, isn't there? French Intelligence?*

NICKEL: Yes. I think that they were certain sympathies on the part of the French and perhaps on the part of the Belgians, too. I think that there was always some support from within Africa, too. I mean there was a close relationship with the Moroccans, between Savimbi and King Hassan.

There were other Francophone countries which did provide some support for Savimbi, including the Ivory Coast and Gabon, which at least tacitly, were very helpful and, of course, very critically, Mobutu.

Q: Yes. And, of course, that gave access to supply routes and all that sort of thing.

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: Getting the things into Savimbi that he needed.

NICKEL: Right.

Q: That was a fascinating process and it started really back in '81-'82 as an objective of the U.S. Government to somehow get an end to this ambivalent situation.

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: And do you feel that it's reasonably well on the way to solution now, or that what's going on are a few hitches, but not...

NICKEL: Well, I think it was clear that an Angolan-Namibian settlement would not go off without hitches. And, indeed, we had a big hitch right on the first day when SWAPO, in an extraordinarily ill-considered move, violated the agreement by the massive infiltration of SWAPO guerrillas. This left the United Nations with little choice but to call on the South Africans to contain this incursion.

I think that we are in for continued hiccups on this matter, but I have no doubt that the overwhelming interest of all the parties in a peaceful resolution or - let's put it less ambitiously - the prevention of a revival of this warfare are going to prevail. I mean, all the parties have an interest in the settlement at this stage and I think that when that strong motivation exists, it does become possible to work out these hitches.

Q: Even with such an extraordinary array of contestants.

NICKEL: Yes. Perhaps I'm being too optimistic, but I think that the interest of the parties, in the end, will see to it that these hitches can be worked out.

Q: Governments pursue their interests.

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: One should never forget it. To go on to the domestic side, how do you see the situation is between South Africa and their puppet black regimes? I forget what you call them.

NICKEL: The so-called independent homelands.

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: Whose independence, of course, is only recognized by South Africa.

Q: *They're homeland, they're not independent.*

NICKEL: The four that are nominally independent have only a sham kind of independence. By now the independent homelands have really become something of an embarrassment to the South African government.

Q: *By now.*

NICKEL: By now, because the whole preposterous notion that you could deal with the problem of the political rights of blacks by relegating them to these independent homelands became even more untenable. While they could live in this sham independence and have their own political participation, their own political institutions, they were, of course, totally dependent on the good graces of the South African government. This was all knocked into a cocked hat by the economic realities. Verwoerd had this crazy dream that by the mid-'80s, the flow of blacks into the urban areas would be reversed and blacks would be streaming instead into these independent homelands, which, of course, lacked the resources and job opportunities.

Q: *And where there was nothing to do.*

NICKEL: Where there was nothing to do, in spite of some terribly expensive and ill-conceived schemes to create jobs and industries. It was a singularly futile effort to make water run up hill. Having created these homelands, the South African government now is in the awkward position of not being able to simply abandon them and saying that this was all a sham independence anyway; you're no longer independent...

Q: *You're now back to square one.*

NICKEL: You're back to square one. But by now you obviously have a considerable number of blacks who are civil servants in those countries, people who have built political power bases in these so-called countries and so on. All of which makes it rather difficult to simply go back to square one.

Q: *Sort of like the District of Columbia, isn't it?*

NICKEL: [Laughter]

Q: *Excuse the reference, but...*

NICKEL: Yes. What we saw during my years was the final discrediting of the grand apartheid blueprint.

Q: *The whole idea was totally kaput.*

NICKEL: That's right. But while the old paradigm was discredited and lost all its legitimacy - and this was acknowledged even by members of the South African government of the National Party which, after all, embraced this scheme - the new paradigm is much more difficult to find. The old paradigm is dead, but what is the new one?

Q: *Yes. I suppose, at least, they've got some more experienced blacks in administration and civil service now than they had before, as a result of creating bureaucracies, because they had to create bureaucracies in these places.*

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: *Whether that simply leads to corruption is a...*

NICKEL: I think that, unfortunately, the quality the administration has built up in these homelands is very much tainted by the fact that first of all, an awful lot of black did not want to participate for reasons of principle, and practically all of these homelands are rife with political corruption.

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: This has become a considerable embarrassment, indeed, also a financial drain for the South African government, which, in the end, must pick up the bill.

Q: *Has to pay for it. How do you feel about the African National Congress, the ANC, the black movement for greater rights or equality or whatever you want to call it?*

NICKEL: Well, there was never any doubt in our mind that the African National Congress still was seen by the great majority of blacks as the leading black liberation movement.

And that even though it was banned, in fact, many of the leaders of the organizations that were allowed to exist legally - the United Democratic Front and other organizations- -had strong ANC ties. So there was never any doubt in our mind about the very strong political base of the ANC in South Africa. This is not to say that the ANC is the sole, legitimate liberation movement. In the view of Chet Crocker, it would have been a great mistake to act as if the ANC was the only movement, because there's another very important strand of the African liberation movements, you know, the black consciousness strain, which is important and, indeed, you have the phenomenon of Gatsha Buthelezi and Inkatha which has a very strong and very real base among especially rural or traditional Zulus in Natal. You ignore these other groups at your peril.

Q: *I remember meeting Buthelezi in New York some years ago. He was a very impressive person.*

NICKEL: He is, indeed. And it would be a great mistake to pretend that you can make up an

equation for South Africa that leaves him out. Nelson Mandela, I think, to some extent, surprised and perhaps even slightly shocked the commonwealth eminent persons group when he told them, very explicitly, that in his view Gatscha Buthelezi had to be at the negotiating table. I say it surprised some of them because they had come to believe the ANC propaganda that Buthelezi was simply a puppet of the South African regime, which simply is not true.

Q: *Not true. No.*

NICKEL: Simply not true. And I think it's, by now, if you may have noticed that even the ANC quite publicly now, is seeking some kind of a dialogue with Inkatha. If they don't, there will be trouble. But to return to the subject of the ANC, at the same time when, you know, while there were recurrent acts of terrorism on the part of the ANC, and I use that term especially with respect to bombing attacks which were quite indiscriminate, I find the word terrorism is truly applicable when the bombs go off in hamburger stands or at bus stops or in city streets. We had to take a principled position against that kind of terrorism to lend credibility to any condemnation of violence by the government.

Q: *These were ANC operations.*

NICKEL: They were ANC operations, but they were not very effective.

Q: *Well, they just killed people.*

NICKEL: As a guerrilla operation the ANC was ineffective. The bombs they had set off were morale raisers for the internal cadres of the ANC, to show that the armed wing of the ANC still had a presence in South Africa. The effect on the white-body politic was probably counterproductive. It appealed to the feeling of insecurity on the part of whites. Fear is the driving political emotion of South African whites, and by playing to that fear, it helped the right wing.

Q: *Sure.*

NICKEL: It strengthened the far right.

Q: *That had tended to polarize - I mean, a lot of the operations of ANC is intended to polarize the society even more.*

NICKEL: That's right. That's right. And I think that the ANC has undergone a considerable theoretical transformation, because it used to say the struggle for liberation will actually be won by military means, by liberation struggle in the most literal sense of fighting. That was certainly the line of the South African Communist Party, which, of course, has always had a formal and a very public relation with the ANC I think what has happened in recent years is that the argument has shifted to saying, "Yes, we have to negotiate. But if you want to negotiate, you have to strengthen your own position by having a military dimension to your struggle, as well." That is now the basis for the ANC defending the continuation of the armed struggle, for defending the

continued operations of the military branch of the ANC, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, even as negotiations begin.

Q: Do the Russians supply the ANC - have they in the past - with funds and other kinds of resources?

NICKEL: There is a Russian connection with the ANC to this day, Gorbachev notwithstanding. I think the Soviet Union has long seen its close relationship with the ANC as a political asset. and it is not about to abandon that kind of relationship altogether. I think it did supply the ANC with the wherewithal, the limpet mines and so on, that were necessary for *Umkhonto we Sizwe* to carry out some of these operations. In financial terms, that probably didn't amount to a great deal, because I don't think that the quantity involved was all that great. One could probably argue that some of the donations which the ANC has gotten from some western, or certainly non-communist countries, like Scandinavia - were, in quantitative terms, at least, as important as the Soviet contribution. You know, arms are readily available in the world, and if you have the money, and if the money given to the ANC is not very closely controlled as to what it's used for, one could well imagine that the ANC was able to use money from Western sources to carry on these operations.

Q: Of course, South Africa is not necessarily entirely a poor country. A lot of black people are reasonably well paid, aren't they?

NICKEL: Yes. Some are, but you have vast differences. There's a generalization the South African government likes to use that, our blacks are better off than the blacks almost anywhere else in Africa...

Q: Well, some are, anyway.

NICKEL: But some of the poverty in the rural areas matches some of the worst places in Africa. But there's no doubt that you have an emerging black middle class in the urban centers. I think there is probably a broader base of qualified, educated professional people than almost anywhere in Africa.

Q: What about the educational system in South Africa in terms of education for blacks? How far can they go? How much do they have to pay themselves, or does it get provided?

NICKEL: First of all, I think you have to deal with the bitter legacy of the apartheid-Bantu education madness.

Q: Yes.

NICKEL: Bantu education was conceived by Verwoerd quite openly as providing inferior education that would just be enough to allow blacks to perform the menial tasks that would be available to them under the apartheid system.

Q: *Literate enough to take orders.*

NICKEL: Literate enough to take orders, but not so literate as to raise expectations.

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: And that, of course, had a disastrous effect. It became very clear that with the economic growth that South Africa went through, especially the big boom of the 1960s, that the greatest constraint to further economic growth was not so much a lack of capital, but the lack of trained manpower. And there weren't enough whites to go around.

So industry had to take over where the state had fallen down on the job and do a lot of training that normally would be done, in most countries, by the public school system.

Q: *Sure.*

NICKEL: But the system is still laboring to overcome this criminal, deliberate neglect of black education. So that even now, in *per capita* terms, the government spends five times as much on a white student as it does on a black student. You might say there are all kinds of reasons for it, because white students tend to stay in school longer, you have a tremendous shortage of qualified black teachers, etc. Most of the black teachers don't have high school certificates, so they get less than qualified teachers.

Q: *Well, you can't do these things overnight.*

NICKEL: Of course all these things take time, but what has happened is that with the assistance of both public and private scholarship programs, the number of black university graduates has - and attendance has - grown really dramatically in the last few years. There are now more blacks graduating from high schools than whites. Of course, you have had the breaking down of segregation at the university level. Both the University of Witwatersrand, and the University of Cape Town, the two largest and best white universities now have pretty open enrollment so that you have something like 30% or more of the students at those institutions being black. Now, the universities have gone out of their way to provide the special bridging year to allow black students who enter these universities to make up for the flaws in their secondary education, because obviously, the secondary schools - black schools - are still palpably inferior to them. The matriculation exams are now standard for blacks and whites, but there are clearly shortcomings there.

Q: *That's very interesting that there is a progressive movement on in regard to black education. It has been for some time.*

NICKEL: Right.

Q: *It's gaining momentum.*

NICKEL: Yes. And the government is allowing at least the private schools to have open admission policies.

Q: *That's very interesting.*

NICKEL: But even somebody like De Klerk is still reluctant when it comes to public education, because he is afraid of the political backlash, especially from among the lower middle class and poor whites to any real public school integration.

Q: *Well, because of the competitive factor, yes. Like the old south in this country, yes.*

NICKEL: Correct.

Q: *Let me ask you about your relationship with your colleagues- -your American mission chiefs in, say Mozambique or the surrounding countries there. Did you have a reasonably good collegial relationship?*

NICKEL: We had a very collegial relationship, and I think that we had a very good relationship.

I wish I could have done more travel to neighboring countries. I did get to Zambia on a couple of occasions when we were there negotiating, but I didn't get to Zimbabwe. However, my colleagues, who obviously had to deal with the issue of South Africa all the time, and to explaining what our policy was, came down to South Africa to spend some time.

Q: *I see.*

NICKEL: And to inform themselves of what conditions were, what our policy was. On top of that we had regular chief of missions' conferences, which we did have on an annual basis in Washington.

Q: *Did you re-analyze that by Southern Africa or Africa as a whole?*

NICKEL: Well, the chief of missions' conferences were all African.

Q: *All Africa. They were a big group.*

NICKEL: Big group. South Africa always took up probably more time than any other single issue because...

Q: *You became a central character.*

NICKEL: I became a central character at those meetings because the focus was on Southern Africa.

Q: *I can see that readily, yes.*

NICKEL: To explain to my colleagues from West Africa or from the Sudan as to what was going on.

Q: *Some of those countries are a long way from South Africa.*

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: *The African Bureau still handles Morocco and the Mediterranean countries?*

NICKEL: No. That's...

Q: *That's another bureau.*

NICKEL: Yes. It's in NEA.

Q: *I remember when that change came. In terms of Foreign Service, what were your impressions of your staff and your support in the embassy, in relationship between you as a, so to speak, political appointee and the career people in the embassy, or back in the bureau?*

NICKEL: I'd like to think of a very happy relationship both ways. Perhaps it's because I was an unusual kind of political appointee.

Q: *Well, you didn't buy it. [Laughter]*

NICKEL: No. I would like the record to show that I didn't spend one dime on a political contribution. So Ronald Reagan really didn't owe me anything. If you're not a professional diplomat- -being a foreign correspondent comes about as close to being in the Foreign Service as you can get. I think my staff realized that I had a considerable amount of international experience. My first foreign tour was in 1958 and I spent 20 years in Europe and in Asia and in Africa and knew the world. Of course, as a foreign correspondent, you always have a very close relationship to people in the Foreign Service.

Q: *Oh, sure.*

NICKEL: And they have a close relationship to people in the press corps.

Q: *Particularly the American press corps.*

NICKEL: That's right. I think that there was a sense that, while they were not getting a career Foreign Service Officer as Ambassador, that they had somebody who had considerable foreign experience.

Q: *A career foreign experience officer.*

NICKEL: In fact, if I may say so, I probably had more foreign assignments and more years abroad under my belt than most people in the embassy. And I had also covered the Department of State and therefore knew the Washington end as well.

Q: *Sure.*

NICKEL: I had a very, very good and close relationship. I think the one thing that I wanted to encourage in people was to speak their mind. One of the things that you do - this is true in any organization - is that you always have to nudge people to speak openly. This was important to me since I did feel that I was new to the diplomatic drill, so I was very keen to get the input of my political counselor, political officers. If my instinctive reaction was to do this, I wanted to know whether they had any reservations about that. I think that once I made this clear, it was understood that I genuinely welcomed it. That it was not just, sort of, a *pro forma* invitation to voice different views. I think we had a very good and open relationship in the embassy. I think the fact that I came out of journalism did have some effect on our reporting, too. As a journalist, one does feel that one ought to get the story out, and that cables ought to be written reasonably quickly after the event happens.

Q: *Quality and quantity went up, I'm sure.*

NICKEL: I hope so.

Q: *I'm sure they both did.*

NICKEL: We got a reputation for being very quick in our reporting, and that matters because if you want to make an impression back in Washington on what particularly that means, if people have read it first in the New York Times or the Washington Post or over the wire services, that is the first impression of the event that they form, and that puts you behind the eight ball.

Q: *Of course.*

NICKEL: I think it's very important, therefore, to come in fairly quickly before people in Washington act on the basis of what they read in the press. I think that's very important.

Q: *How about the area of sanctions we put on - I've forgotten the chronology - the Congress imposed certain sanctions, although Mr. Reagan didn't like it very much. I've forgotten the dates, too.*

NICKEL: Right. The sanctions campaign really picked up - and as I said earlier in our conversation - after the outbreak of the unrest in the second half of 1984 and the repression which followed in its wake. This built and built.

In 1985, the President barely avoided the passage of congressional legislation by the device of, in a way, preempting congressional action with an executive order in September, 1985. In essence it codified some of the restrictions which we have already practiced in economic dealings with

South Africa, such things as computer sales and things of that sort. The practice had already existed, but it was codified through a presidential executive order which required the declaration of a state of emergency under the law that would justify this kind of action.

But by 1986, it was clear the politicians on the South African issue had become very much a main-stream issue in American politics and the politicians wanted a chance to send their own message.

There had always been segments of the Congress that had their own particular interest in the South African issue - I'm talking particularly about the black caucus, and about various liberal constituencies, like the churches. By 1986, when you had Simon Legree-like scenes on television screens, night after night after night, something had to be done to punish the villains. South Africa became a morality play.

Q: *I know.*

NICKEL: Practically every politician in the country felt that he had to address himself to that problem and show his indignation. So, under those circumstances, what do you do to show your indignation?

Q: *You pass a law.*

NICKEL: You pass a law. We have to give some tangible signal. Well, this was supposed to be a signal to P.W. Botha as if he had somehow misunderstood that Americans didn't care about apartheid. P.W. Botha didn't quite see it this way. It was also meant as a message to the American constituencies that mattered to these politicians.

That led, in 1986, to the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, which imposed much stricter restrictions on economic dealings with South Africa than had existed before, including a ban on any further investments, and so on, the total stopping of all agricultural trade, and severe limits on other trade.

The Reagan Administration was an administration which was prepared to spend a considerable amount of capital on the issue, probably more political capital than any succeeding administration. My guess about the Bush Administration would be that this readiness to spend political capital on the issue is much less.

I think the opposition to sanctions was based on a number of considerations. One is that the peaceful resolution of South Africa's very, very difficult problems was much more easily achieved against the background of economic growth than against a background of shrinking economic pie, in which whenever somebody else is supposed to get something, it comes off your plate.

I think that we have already seen some strengthening of the far right in white politics. Among the poor whites, the fears of black economic competition, the resentment of what they think that the

blacks are now getting more of the pie than they should, fear about jobs - I think that's all helping the far right in white politics.

Q: As we said earlier, poverty doesn't promote change.

NICKEL: No. That, of course, is our own experience. It's hard to see the emergence of the New South in the middle of the Great Depression. [Chuckle] It's clear that the growing industrialization of the South helped put an end to Jim Crow.

There were also other considerations that the sanctions clearly made our negotiations under Namibia much more difficult. It is now argued, in retrospect, that the sanctions put pressure on the South African government to settle on Namibia. But if you talk to Chet Crocker, he would agree that the total hiatus, which followed the override of the president's veto on the imposition of American sanctions, and our relations with the South Africans, may have cost us a delay of about six months. There was a time when P.W. Botha's anger was such that he, in fact, instructed people in his government not to deal with us. There was an attempt at one stage, by P.W. Botha - ill-conceived and it didn't get anywhere - to carry on the negotiations without participation of the United States. To meet directly with the Angolans in Brazzaville. But, of course, the Angolans were not so stupid as to go along with that, because they had no particular interest in being left all alone with a big bad Boer at the negotiating table all by themselves. Sanctions were a delaying factor, there's no question in my mind.

Q: Oh, I'm sure it was. Were there times when you, as ambassador, had difficulty having access to the people you needed to see in the South African government?

NICKEL: Well, let me say about our relations to the South African government that they were always difficult. They were most difficult with P.W. Botha himself. Because P.W. Botha was, as a personality, a choleric, somewhat paranoid, bully-boy.

I think it might be interesting, from a historical point of view, to recall my first meeting with him.

Q: Yes. By all means.

NICKEL: "Well, Mr. Ambassador," he said, "we are glad to see you in South Africa as the personal representative of President Reagan, and let me say that we have great admiration for President Reagan. We certainly prefer President Reagan to both his predecessor and to the man who ran against President Reagan, Fritz Mondale." (They had had experiences at a famous meeting in Vienna between Prime Minister Voerst and Mondale.) "But, on the other hand, let me be quite blunt with you. I really have no great confidence in the United States. I learned my lesson in 1975 when you - you, the Americans encouraged us to go into Angola, and then you pulled out the rug from under us and forced us to withdraw. Now I can see your lips pursing, Mr. Ambassador, because you are about to tell me that that was the Congress - The Clark Amendment. But let me say to you, it doesn't really matter to me who does it, so long as it's your country. How do I know that President Reagan, when he tells me now that he's against leading economic warfare against my country, is going to prevail over the congress?"

Now, P.W. Botha was, in many ways, a very provincial Afrikaner politician who didn't know very much about the rest of the world, and about how our political system worked, but, in this respect, one must say that he was quite astute. Of course, one could only say to him, "Please avoid doing things that make this gloomy forecast inevitable."

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: He was also very skeptical of "constructive engagement."

In that first encounter, I said "Tell me, what are you engaging in? Are you telling me that you want to engage in the internal affairs of my country?"

Q: *That's a hard question to answer. [Laughter]*

NICKEL: Well, what one does say is that - I said, "We have a legitimate interest in the stability of this country. We don't want to de-stabilize your country. Our interest is stability in your country, but we cannot ignore things which threaten that stability."

Q: *At least, in our judgment.*

NICKEL: "In our judgment." He didn't like the answer, but...

Q: *Well, it was the only answer you could give.*

NICKEL: Well, it was the only answer that one could give.

The notion that P.W. Botha thought that "constructive engagement" was just manna from heaven is absurdly wrong. He saw it as an anti-apartheid policy and a more dangerous one than the previous one because it was more subtle, because it appealed to those elements in South African society...

Q: *Who wanted change.*

NICKEL: Who wanted change and who saw, as one of the benefits of such change, a better relationship with the United States of America.

Our concept of "constructive engagement" was never just an engagement of the government. It was for the engagement of the whole spectrum of South African opinion, especially, as I said, at the very outset of those elements who shared our interest in peaceful change, a non-violent change, which meant negotiation.

Q: *Did you have contact of any consequence with people like the ANC and with black groups that were challenging the government?*

NICKEL: May I just continue on my answer...

Q: *Oh, sure. I'm sorry.*

NICKEL: Inside the South African government, even though P.W. Botha had a very oppressive effect on other members of his Cabinet - because he was a bully-boy and they were all scared of him - there were considerable differences among various ministers.

I had developed, I think, what was a very constructive relationship with the Minister of Justice, for example, Kobif Coetsee, with whom I had a long debate on the concept, for example, of a Bill of Rights, which he initially rejected, and the whole concept of an independent judiciary, which he - over the months of our discussions - came to accept. And he was helpful on many things, on grievances that we were trying to deal with.

There were other ministers who were much less receptive, like Louis LaGrange was, in fact, the Minister of Law and Order, as distinct from the minister of justice...

Q: *Two separate...*

NICKEL: ...who handled the police, and who was invariably loyal to his policemen no matter what they had done. That was not helpful at all.

There were other ministers, like Gerritt Viltoen, Minister of Education for some of the time that I was there - he also was put in charge, for a while, of dealing with the crisis in black education. He was a man with whom one could take up specific grievances and get some action. The same with the Minister of Labor. But we were engaged on a very broad front with the government. Foreign Minister Pik Botha, of course, is the man I dealt with more than anyone else - we saw each other certainly almost every week once, because we had so many items on our respective agendas, especially the regional items. Also, he became the conduit for expressing some of our concerns about some of the internal developments. Pik Botha saw himself, presented himself, as a so-called Verlichte, a reformer. Very often made it quite plain that if he had his way, things would be done differently from the way P.W. Botha was handling them. Pik Botha, however, was given to histrionics. But, sometimes, you became so inured to it when he pushed his chair away from the table and said, "Well, this is the end. We go our way - you go yours. There's no point talking anymore," and then you would head for the exit, and he would tug on your sleeve and say, "Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let's get back here, and talk about it after all." [Laughter]

But there were some rather bizarre scenes, I must say, that we went through. In the end, there was always sort of a glint of humor in his eye, and in mine, too.

Q: *I used to deal with George Brown in England. All histrionics, you know.*

NICKEL: That's right. I dealt with him as a journalist, too.

Q: *Oh, yes. I'm sure you know what I mean.*

NICKEL: Yes. They also shared another quality, incidentally - Pik Botha and Brown - they liked their drink occasionally. [Laughter]

Q: *Oh, yes. Your never quite sure whether Georgie was drunk with his own verbosity or whether he was really drinking. [Laughter]*

NICKEL: That might be true with respect to Pik Botha, too, because he had a real problem sometimes. How he could put away so much without actually dying from it, I'll never know. But he could be quite coherent, in spite of enormous consumption.

Now, on the question of the embassy's contacts with blacks, let me say that there was not only the effort made, but we also managed to keep the lines of communication open. Much of the credit goes to my staff, of course. We were always plugged in very, very well. And this in spite of the undoubted fact that the policy of "constructive engagement" was not popular with South African blacks. They tended to see the opposition to sanctions as a litmus test. If you weren't for sanctions, you couldn't be all that much against apartheid. That's what many of them thought, but by no means all. I'm talking about elites here, because there's no question in my mind, and every single opinion survey has demonstrated that when you get down to the rank- and-file who have to bear the consequences of sanctions, unlike the elites who talk about it, sanctions are not necessarily popular in the reality.

Q: *No.*

NICKEL: Though they may be seen as a useful threat to use against the oppressive South African regime when it comes to the implementation, a lot of blacks don't really like it, especially when they discover that sanctions don't translate into political progress all that easily.

And this in spite of the fact that people like Desmond Tutu, for example, saw support for sanctions as a kind of acid test - had made it into the acid test - whether we were for apartheid or against apartheid. It was a difficult relationship. I said, in spite of Tutu's very vitriolic attacks on President Reagan's policies, I kept seeing Desmond Tutu, in fact, he received me for a farewell call when I left in 1986, although his public stance said he wasn't meeting with representatives of the Reagan Administration. Oddly enough, my successor - for whom I have great respect - Ed Perkins, who is our first black ambassador, was never...

Q: *Yes. I saw him on Thursdays.*

NICKEL: ...was never received by Tutu.

Q: *Never. Really.*

NICKEL: I can't say that my sessions with Desmond Tutu were particularly easy-going, although there was always a bit of good-natured banter back and forth between us. I think that Desmond Tutu was very keen to demonstrate that while he loathed the policy, he didn't have anything

against me personally. I think by way of demonstrating this, by sort of, letting me know that he thought that, personally, I was a good guy, he, in fact, followed his own rule in the breach and saw me repeatedly, many times. I think that's true.

It's interesting, my farewell receptions, especially in Johannesburg, where most of the black political elite live, there was an enormous spectrum of people from the UDF, from Black Consciousness, from all kind of groups. From their public rhetoric, you might have thought that they wouldn't show up at my farewell party. They were all there and extremely cordial and I still have very cordial relations with them. For they knew that if they came in to ask that we take up a grievance - whether a forced removal, or a travel problem, or a case of police abuse, we would take it up with the government and that as an embassy we had the most clout.

Q: Have you been back since you left...

NICKEL: I have been back. I have been back three times, in fact. I will be going back in connection with a study project which I will be doing for the U.S. Peace Institute.

Q: You mentioned that you were going to be with them, yes.

NICKEL: It deals with the political implications of economic interdependence in southern Africa...

Q: Very important study.

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: I'll be interested to see how that goes.

NICKEL: I think economic interdependence is the proper description. It is not just a dependence of the front-line states on South Africa, but it's a real economic interdependence and, it provides political incentives for South Africa as it does for the frontline states for political settlement. This is not to say that you can simply ignore the continuation of apartheid. I think most black political leaders find it very difficult to ignore the internal developments. I've always felt that I think it was a very important element of the approach of constructive engagement that success in negotiations between South Africa and black neighbors had salutary effect on the political environment of South Africa itself. It demonstrated that negotiation is possible, that it can produce beneficial results. I think it has a clearly positive impact in what happens internally.

Q: It's definitely related to internal change, too.

NICKEL: Absolutely.

Q: An opportunity for internal change.

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: Because what you're talking about is growth instead of stagnation.

NICKEL: Right. Any kind of cross-border violence, I think, has polarizing effects in South Africa itself, which make political accommodation more difficult.

Q: Do you have a comment on the Anglos in South Africa as against the Boers? They're a smaller element, aren't they?

NICKEL: It's about 60% Afrikaner and 40% English speakers in the white community, that actually omits a rather sizable Portuguese minority and some other groups. You know, there are Germans, but, basically, it's about a 60/40 split.

Due to the legacy of the Boer war, and the emergence of the National Party as the legitimate political expression of Afrikanerdom, most English speakers were basically anti-government. But that has changed very drastically.

Today the National Party has lost, perhaps, more than half of the Afrikaner constituency. It has lost it in large part to the far right, to the Conservative Party. And, indeed, it has lost a substantial number of better-educated professional Afrikaners, who are more reform minded, to the New Democratic Party. And the way in which the National Party has managed to survive is that it now relies very heavily on the support of English-speaking voters, who see the National Party as the safe party of reform.

Q: It's a stable element.

NICKEL: There is a central issue where there is little difference between the average Afrikaner and the average English speaker. For even if the English speaker presents himself as being more liberal, the notion of unfettered black majority rule is as unpopular and as feared with English speakers as it is by Afrikaners.

Q: Well, that depends on the color of your skin, not your national origin. [Laughter] Perfectly natural act.

NICKEL: This common element of fear, of course, is the greatest obstacle to transfer of power, until whites come to recognize that there are safeguards for them. That is, of course, incumbent on the other side to make clear that...

Q: That there are.

NICKEL: ...it's addressing those security fears.

Q: Sure.

NICKEL: It's been said that the liberation of blacks leads through the minds of whites, a sense on

their past that democracy does not make them helpless victims. One has to find some constitutional way, which is not just simply race-based, to address these fears of whites before the transfer of power is really going to take place. There have to be checks and balances and protections for individual rights, and unless that is done in a convincing manner, both English speakers and African speakers are going to resist the transfer of power and will continue to see it as a kind of political suicide. That also applies to other minorities.

Q: Is there any significant Marxist influence among the black people apart from - I know ANC has to some extent that, but how about others?

NICKEL: Well, you get a lot of Marxist rhetoric in the statements of liberation movements, because the liberation struggle has been defined, not just as a struggle against white minority rule, but also the struggle against capitalist exploitation. Rightly or wrongly - wrongly in my view - capitalism has been presented as the other side of the apartheid coin.

Q: Well, most of the business owners are white, I suppose.

NICKEL: That's right. There is this notion that apartheid is really the ultimate form of capitalist exploitation.

There was a time - there's no question - when the mining industry in South Africa benefitted from cheap labor. I think now, not only is the nature of the structure of the South African economy such that mining has relatively receded in importance, but the industrial sector has become more important than the mining sector. The nature of the mining industry is also changing. It's no longer as labor-intensive an industry as it used to be.

But that notion of the unholy alliance of capitalism and apartheid is a very, very strong one. Since one is reacting against the present system, the result is a kind of Marxist rhetoric that you no longer even hear in the Soviet Union these days. It is a funny thing that the last outpost of this kind of talk in the world seems to be Southern Africa. I think one has to separate between what's simply rhetoric and what is in the minds of these people that form the economic future.

I think one has to say that until now, the ANC has really thought very little about coherent economic blueprints for the future, and to the extent that they have now been forced by various useful dialogues that have taken place, to define what they really mean, they have become considerably more moderate. They're now talking more about the mixed economy. But, of course, they're still talking a great deal about redistribution of wealth. And they're talking in terms of nationalizing the commanding heights of the economy than the kind of wholesale socialism that they seemed to be endorsing some years ago. That may be the result of the collapse of their old socialist role model.

Q: It's beginning to sound something like the British Labor Party.

NICKEL: It seems to be moving in that direction. It's still, in my view, rather half-baked, because there has been a tendency on the part of the ANC to say, "Well, we'll think about that when we

come into power, but the first thing is to win the struggle of liberation, then we'll get down to these economic problems." And that, of course, is going to be a tremendous challenge for the future, because South Africa does face a kind of Malthusian nightmare, with an exploding population and very little prospect of generating enough jobs to absorb this additional population.

Q: Has the effect of sanctions, shall we say, increased self-sufficiency in manufacturing, or haven't the sanctions had enough bite to have that happen?

NICKEL: I think that the South African government has always anticipated sanctions, and in various areas, and, of course, was very keen to build up that autarky even before the sanctions were actually imposed.

The example that is most frequently cited, of course, is the arms industry. South Africa, perhaps as a result of the sanctions, has become the major arms exporter these days, which is a matter of necessity, because, otherwise, the unit cost of these items that they do produce would be even greater than they are now. I think the biggest damage that sanctions have done is basically to dry off the capital inflow. South African businessmen have, in some respects, profited over the short run from their ability to buy up multi-national companies at fire-sale prices. They've made some tremendous bargains in this respect. But the trouble is that the simple acquisition of these manufacturing facilities, and so on, has not added new jobs, hasn't really been, in that sense, new investment.

Q: Like a takeover.

NICKEL: That is like a takeover and it simply doesn't create jobs the way the South African economy needs to create jobs. That is, I think, the biggest single damage that sanctions has inflicted on the South African economy.

There's clearly also a technology loss that has occurred through the severing of these ties with multi-national companies. It's not that the technology becomes unavailable, but it does become available at a higher cost.

Q: It doesn't flow naturally because of the corporate relationship.

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: There has to be a separate process in acquisition.

NICKEL: Right. Right. And that is damaging. I think the actual trade sanctions, so far, have not really been all that crucial in their impact. For example that South African coal continue to be exported, whether it goes through Taiwan. It's a tangible commodity.

Q: Well, the world is a big market.

NICKEL: This is almost impossible to track down and South Africans have developed some very

important new markets, since the sanctions. Mainly in the Pacific Rim in Southeast Asia. Taiwan has turned out to be a very important economic lifeline to them. They've had very close relations with Taiwan throughout - when Taiwan was still in that position of being another one of those pariah states. They've developed a very close relationship.

Q: *Well, that's not a bad connection. Taiwan's a very efficient operation.*

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: *I remember when I was Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, when the energy crisis hit us in '83, the South African ambassador came to see me to tell me that - in case we were having trouble with our energy supplies - we had a lot of coal - that they developed some pretty good techniques for extracting a lot of coal, maybe we could do some business. So I said, "We'd bury the mine."*

NICKEL: Yes.

Q: *Of course, it's highly expensive, but it does work.*

NICKEL: I mean, on the whole question of self-sufficiency, in energy, first of all when there's been an oil glut, it's almost impossible to impose any kind of...

Q: *This is totally irrelevant now.*

NICKEL: ...oil embargo. Secondly, they did spend a good deal of money in improving on the German World War II process - the Leuna process. It's still more expensive, but they built up the synfuel capacities to about one-third of their needs. They also sit on a considerable reserve of crude oil. They've been selling some of it off now, because obviously when you sit on oil you've bought at high prices, it becomes a very expensive business to just have it sit there. Actually, they've been selling off oil in the world market, some of their reserves.

Q: *With an oil glut, you can always buy oil somewhere.*

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: *So you don't need to stockpile it.*

NICKEL: Right.

Q: *Which is, of course, why we haven't filled our own reserves.*

NICKEL: Yes. You know, you're dealing with a country that has an enormous wealth in coal.

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: And in Mossel Bay there are some reasonably promising oil and gas-drilling operations going on. So long as oil prices are low, they may not be economical, but the South Africans figure that might change again.

Q: They have experimented some with nuclear power, haven't they?

NICKEL: Not just experimented. They have a nuclear power plant at Koeberg, which is outside Cape Town, which has been operational for quite a few years. Basically Westinghouse-designed reactors, supplied by the French and serviced by the French. The one explosion, an attempt at sabotage at the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, evidently was done with the help of a French communist who had gotten into the plant as one of the technicians there.

Q: Have you got a comment on the Israeli relationship with the South Africans? People talk about it a great deal.

NICKEL: They talk about it a great deal, and of course, its hard to get at all the facts, because they're being kept very, very closely.

Q: It's not the information that the Israelis share with us.

NICKEL: No. Obviously, there's quite a number of Israeli nuclear physicists and other technical people, and vice versa, South African scientists who have gone to Israel. I'm sure there has been a good deal of cooperation on the technical side. It's a very sore subject with the Israelis, as you know. It's not such a sore subject with the South Africans who like to emphasize the parallels in the situations, you know, with two beleaguered nations, both of which have in common that they are afraid of being swamped by those hoards that surround them.

Q: One thing they don't have in common is the U.S. policy towards them.

NICKEL: There's a big difference in policy, yes. I often wondered what kind of leverage one would have if one had that kind of aid program in South Africa. But, as we know, sometimes our leverage with the Israelis, in spite of the enormous aid relationship that we have with them, also seems to be quite limited.

Q: It's so big, we don't have any leverage.

NICKEL: That's right.

Q: It's not crucial or vital; it's the main show.

NICKEL: It's the opposite end of the spectrum, but sometimes the opposite ends of the spectrum seem to converge.

Q: That's fascinating. Well, this has been very interesting and I think we're coming towards the end of the tape. But I wondered, have you got any other final comments?

NICKEL: What made this kind of ambassadorship so interesting - some may say difficult - is that you're dealing with a foreign policy problem which deals with the domestic policies of the host country and is driven in this country by domestic politics.

Q: *Yes.*

NICKEL: You cannot construct a sustainable foreign policy unless you have some kind of domestic consensus and support. On this issue when many politicians on the Hill, quite naturally - it's in the nature of elected officials - to cast their policies in terms that will appeal to them or will meet their domestic political needs. But what is needed from the point of view of domestic politics and what is needed in terms of foreign policy is sometimes very difficult to reconcile.

I think you do have a tremendous need for presidential leadership. I must say that I admire Ronald Reagan's willingness to stick with the issue, both on the sanctions issue and sticking with the negotiating track that we had worked out in Namibia and Angola, and his willingness to spend political capital on the issue. But I must say that had he been better able to communicate real empathy and concern with the whole question of racial injustice, not just in the South African context, it would have made our job a bit easier.

Q: *He didn't do that.*

NICKEL: He was not a great communicator on the issue, because he didn't seem to feel it quite as urgently as perhaps other Americans do. Had he been able to communicate such a sense of urgency, I think his ability to sustain his policy would have been much greater.

CHARLES LAHIGUERA
Deputy Chief of Mission, Mbabane
Swaziland (1983-1985)

Mr. Lahiguera was born and raised in New York. After graduating from Georgetown University and serving in the US Navy, he entered the Foreign Service in 1963. Though he served outside the South East Asia, his primary duties concerned the Vietnam War and its aftermath, particularly refugees. His overseas posts include Germany, Curacao, Vietnam, France, Hong Kong, Thailand and Swaziland, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. Mr. Lahiguera was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: *So, you were in Swaziland from '83 to?*

LAHIGUERA: To '85.

Q: *In a way having dealt with Southeast Asia and all this would have been a little bit of a*

relaxation, rest or come down or what?

LAHIGUERA: It was going from one kingdom to another for starters, that was the similarity. In addition we had the African National Congress operating against the South Africans. We also had Mozambique next door. Swaziland borders Mozambique and South Africa. There were some stories; in fact our embassy staff expedited my getting there. Our embassy staff in Maputo had fled into Swaziland. Swaziland was an interesting place. It was a very prosperous island in the middle of Southern Africa. The Swazis fancy themselves as the Switzerland of Southern Africa. That's a bit of a stretch, but it is a lovely place... It was an interesting window to see how things were developing both in South Africa and in Mozambique. I didn't do a lot of reporting on it, but found it quite interesting. The Swazis had a very traditional government. They had only this one leader and most of the population was very content under their system. They had a parliament during the British days. Then they were granted independence. They had a constitution and the king had suspended parts of the constitution except the part dealing with the judiciary.

Q: I can just see you're trying to puzzle this out and put it into a sort of check list off of a human rights or something, you know?

LAHIGUERA: ... Outside of South Africa they have one of the highest standards of living in Africa as well as having good health conditions. They had abundant food. Anything you wanted you can buy there. Their money was interchangeable with the South African Rand, and they had a proper relationship, correct relationship with South Africa. While I was there the South Africans set up a trade office and the head of the trade office was a Foreign Service Officer from the South African Foreign Ministry, so he was obviously in the sense their ambassador. It was a very interesting period....

Q: How did that work I mean sometimes the United States can spoil somebody, you know, coming back full of American piss and vinegar and wanting to change things around. How did, not just him, but other American educated people?

LAHIGUERA: I don't think it was a problem. Swazis are very conservative people. I used to say they were lovers, not fighters. The fire-eaters would be more likely to come from the South African University people who were influenced by the ANC. There was an ANC presence, which they went along with. What the Swazis didn't permit were any anti-South African activities. Activities on either side. They felt that they were a neutral area and they were in favor of a democratic rule in South Africa and they didn't want any operations against South Africa to be conducted from Swaziland. While I was there the South African government in fact attempted to cede to Swaziland the area between Swaziland and the ocean on the East Coast. The area south of Mozambique. The South African government had felt it needed to cede the property and the Swazis had accepted it and the Zulu tribe sued in court. The court found that the South African government hadn't followed the proper procedures and the Zulus claimed this territory was legitimately part of the Zulu area. As a result the land transfer didn't take place, but it was an interesting example of how business was done there and how their relationship was. They got

along and when the senior Swazis became ill they were all evacuated to the hospitals in South Africa. It was just an interesting situation.

LAHIGUERA: Well, the Swazi government is very sympathetic to our approach. They themselves were trying to do the best they could to get along and to work with the South Africans. I think they would foster any meetings between the South Africans and ourselves and the rest of the African states. So, I viewed Swaziland as an opportunity to demonstrate what free market economy and investment could do in Southern Africa. I was hopeful that we could encourage more investments there. My own feeling was that if the economy grew the majority of the people would be drawn more and more into the economy and would take on more management roles. I thought this was a very constructive way to go through change. I'm not convinced that we were wrong.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Political Counselor
Pretoria (1983-1986)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Was this a jolt for you to all of a sudden end up in Pretoria?

CARNEY: No because my second posting had been in Maseru, Lesotho, so I did have the Southern Africa background. The Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, the very sound and capable Chet Crocker, had his own candidate for political counselor in Pretoria, but I had been promoted, had gotten the Director General's award for reporting for my work in Thailand, and essentially Chet didn't have his way.

Q: Did this cause a problem?

CARNEY: Ultimately I think he was glad. It took a while.

Q: But did you feel that you had some fences to mend?

CARNEY: I knew that I had some fences to mend and did so first by inviting his special assistant, Robert Cabelly, a complicated figure, to stay with us. He was arriving in Pretoria on

one of his regular visits about a month or 2 weeks after Vicki and I arrived. We didn't have household effects. The welcome kit... We had Robert stay with us and then did a dinner party the night after his arrival and met some South Africans, some of whom are friends to this day.

Q: Who was Robert Cabelly? What was his role?

CARNEY: He had been in the private sector. I think he had worked for Goldfields and was fairly well plugged in in aspects of Southern African society. Chet Crocker found him very congenial as kind of a special assistant to do imaginative memos, and to try to meet with people and find out what was going on in ways Chet apparently felt he wasn't getting from either embassy or CIA reporting. So Robert would come down. He'd talk to the head of the South African Intelligence Service and to the security police and to Pan African Congress types as well as a certain number of journalists and economic and financial people. He was not viewed in any friendly manner by either the ambassador, Herman Nickel, a political appointee and former "Time Life" executive and reporter; who got kicked out of South Africa in the early '60s when he was the Time bureau chief. The DCM thought I was unwise in inviting Robert to stay with us.

Q: Who was the DCM?

CARNEY: Walter Stadtler.

Q: You were in Pretoria from when to when?

CARNEY: '83 to '86. My personal portfolio was Namibian independence, so I was in Windhoek every 6 to 8 weeks.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa and Namibia at that time?

CARNEY: There are 3 or 4 aspects of the situation there. There are 3 consulates in the country: Durban, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. Basically the marching orders were to understand the Afrikaner and to work with the Afrikaner to see if there wasn't scope to begin a movement away from apartheid. Two, you had an ongoing civil war in Angola with a massive Cuban troop presence and the South African role in support of (rebel) Jonas Savimbi. The object was to get rid of the Cubans to try to bring about a resolution of the war. Three, Namibia, the South Africans had refused in the late '40s to put Namibia, for which they were the League of Nations mandatory, under the UN Trusteeship Council and had at various times abortively tried to get Namibia absorbed as part of South Africa itself. There was an active insurgency under Sam Nujomo, the current president. We can talk about Sam's ambitions. Having just recently been in Namibia, I have a good feel for it.

Then we had the issue of what was going on in black politics in South Africa itself. Just as we got there, there was a constitutional referendum that opened up parliament to participation by Indians and Coloreds, Coloreds being the mixed race group. That ignited black South Africans, who were themselves divided in 3 groups. One would have been the ANC supporters through the United Democratic Front. The others would have been those who totally rejected any possibility

of a white role in South Africa, the PAC or Pan African Congress. The ANC was multiracial. The third was the group that was essentially Zulus, under not the king but the effective prime minister, the hereditary prime minister of the king, Gatsha Buthelezi, and his Inkatha Freedom Party. It was a very complex internal racial, ethnic, political situation.

You also had a complicated white political situation, but the bottom line in the white political situation was, the Afrikaners were in charge and most of the English speakers were glad of it. However much they babbled and wrote, they didn't vote for highly Progressive Federal Party, that at that time was the main white opposition in parliament.

Q: You were in Pretoria, which is a heart of Afrikanerland.

CARNEY: Exactly, but we spent every 6 months in Cape Town when parliament sat. There were a number of people on the embassy staff who moved from Pretoria to Cape Town with the ambassador and his secretary, DCM, and his secretary, political counselor, and secretary, and one political officer.

Q: Let's talk about Pretoria first. Was there almost a problem in dealing with the Afrikaners? Were they politically in the U.S. being put beyond the pale?

CARNEY: Well, at the period we arrived, mid-'83, there was an era of good feeling. The Afrikaners had accepted that Chet Crocker did not have horns and a tail as they had initially been led to believe, partly by their supporters here in the U.S. They saw Chet in particular working on the Angola question, which was very much in their interests. On the Namibia question, there was a growing consensus in South Africa that it would ultimately be independent. They were hoping that they would set the terms for independence, and who would be in charge and they were hoping that Dirk Mudge of the Republican Party and his people would be the political majority there, that maybe they could even do a deal that would effectively marginalize the Southwest African People's Organization, SWAPO, that was actually fighting a low level insurgency with no great success against South African troops.

Q: Was the South African government beginning to feel the strain of supporting forces up in Angola and then fighting this low grade war in Namibia?

CARNEY: Not until 1984.

Q: What had happened by that time?

CARNEY: You began the state of emergency in South Africa and black response to the constitutional referendum and its outcome, and you began to see a more effective Cuban-Angolan opposition to South African incursions into southern Angola. The handwriting was pretty clearly on the wall in '84.

Q: How did you find the Afrikaners?

CARNEY: My wife and I both found them serious, engaging, ruthless, but they had the real interest. Except for the communists, entirely too many of the English speakers were willing to exploit, enjoy, live well, and then run for home when they ultimately would have to.

Q: Basically like suburbanites.

CARNEY: We got into it immediately. The second night we were in Pretoria, we drove to Johannesburg to go to a play at the Market Theater. It was "Master Harold and the Boys." Roger Daley and his wife, Dalene, were in Johannesburg at the consulate. I had been at their wedding in Durban in 1969 when I was in Lesotho and Roger was posted in Durban, so we had instant welcome and a set of people who were not your normal embassy groupies. One of our earliest experiences was at the State Theater in Pretoria where the Brit who was head of Sigma Motors was there, basically told Vicki, "My dear, the only reason I'm here is this is the best place in the world for a white man to be." That kind of set the tone for the experience.

Q: The United States worked hard to develop better race relations. The language that was used in the 1950s is just absolutely unacceptable.

CARNEY: You'll find if you look at the 1950s volume of Foreign Relations of the United States, that the apologetics we were using in South Africa, considering our own racial situation in the U.S., were fairly torturous, very unconvincing. I read the volume because we had them in the embassy. I would occasionally cite from that as I was talking to South Africans.

Q: We were touting democracy and yet we really didn't have it.

CARNEY: We did not have racial justice in the U.S. Separate but equal.

Q: Sounds like apartheid in translation.

CARNEY: It was hypocritical at best.

Q: How did you find operating with the Afrikaners?

CARNEY: It was odd. The second or third day in the embassy, we were in the same building that the South African security police was in. It was sort of an arcade on the ground floor. I went down to have a wurst of some kind at Heinz and Gertie's, a little stand in the arcade. I wandered out. I was walking along and there was a shop window that attracted my eye, so I looked at it, and then I saw that I could go around the corner because the window extended. I went around the corner and said, "I think I'll wander in." I turned back and came face to face with this guy and he closed his eyes and shook his head and said, "Oh, shit." He was following me. He was one of the security police people following me. I just smiled at him. He shook his head. My predecessor was the late Dennis Keogh. Dennis was harassed by the security police from time to time. They never got to where they harassed me, but my successor, the late Robert Frasure, was harassed seriously. He laid himself open to it.

Q: This is it. Did you sort of set yourself off on a course of saying... We were trying to be as open as possible and get out and meet as many people, which I take it the South African government did not want us to do.

CARNEY: Well, actually, ultimately, whenever I went to talk to the military people, there were always 2 of them. They ultimately made a decision... Cabelly could never see anybody without Pik Botha's man for Angola and Namibia, with whom I just stayed in Cape Town, David Steward present. They basically decided the Americans were learning too much about what was going on and that this was they felt inimical to their efforts and interests and operations.

Q: How did you operate?

CARNEY: I just did. I called people up and went over to see them, invited them over to the house. We had a huge Thanksgiving dinner with usually 30-40 people – black South Africans, security/military South Africans, columnists; my gunsmith was in one of them. I was deliberately trying to throw together a mix as often as I could so that... We had one dinner party where we had Gaby Magemola of Barclay's Bank and his wife. He was complaining, "Why can't I live in Houghton?" He had a good bank job. The then wife of the group economist for Standard Bank, Niko Cypionka, Lynette, said, "You know, you wouldn't want to live there. The sand blows into your swimming pool all the time." That kind of conversation, as mindless as it sounds in this day and age, never took place in any forum of South African society. Essentially the U.S. embassy was very active in trying to get that sort of buzz going. All the members of parliament in Cape Town, we'd always be out with members of parliament. We were especially active with USIS making sure that the IV program included members of parliament, as many Afrikaners as possible to get them exposed to the U.S. If you look at who, among Afrikaner politicians who were with DeKlerk in ending apartheid had been on the IV program, you would agree it was a notable success.

Q: Were there problems with dealing with black Africans?

CARNEY: There were. The consulate in Johannesburg was particularly jealous because that was their role. But my deputy, Margaret, McMillion, who is now ambassador in Rwanda, was the black politics officer in the political section in Pretoria. I wouldn't hesitate to go see Bishop Tutu or Cyril Ramaphosa, then labor leader, to go to some of the homelands to talk to the late Enos Mabusa, or to go to Gatsha Buthelezi or Oscar Dhlomo in Zululand in Natal. But my own portfolio was heavily concentrated in Namibia, and where I personally did black politics was essentially there.

Q: What was the situation in Namibia?

CARNEY: Again, it was a South African effort. There was an Administrator General who ran the place. There was a Southwest African Territorial Force that was commanded by a South African defense force major or lieutenant general. There were occasional incursions by SWAPO units across the Angolan border trying to get into the farming areas for what we would call today terrorist activities. At the same time, Windhoek was a charming, lively place with a very German

air about it. Lots of Germans balanced the Afrikaners off. Certain active politics there, including an internal wing of SWAPO, whose leaders I would meet when I went. We were part of something called a contact group of 5 countries. We would have contact group meetings in the bubble in the U.S. embassy or its equivalent French or British facility.

Q: Was there strict apartheid in Namibia?

CARNEY: No, there were plenty of people... There wasn't even strict apartheid in South Africa. It was breaking down in South Africa, too. In fact, the Group Areas Act went when we were there in 1986, something that opposition member of parliament Helen Suzeman had fought in the 30-plus years she had been in parliament. An Afrikaner National Party MP acknowledged it when the vote passed. Albert Nothnagel allowed that it was a victory of the honorable member from Houghton, Helen Suzeman, who had fought successfully against the act for her entire parliamentary career. Things were breaking open. Washington couldn't see it.

Q: Were you feeling the Washington pressures in which you had on one side the conservative Republicans who were in command at this time saying, "You know, it's good for business and let's not mess around in South Africa?"

CARNEY: That was there, but there were U.S. sanctions. They started in '84.

Q: But this came more from the democratic side?

CARNEY: It succeeded.

Q: Were you running into the contradictions?

CARNEY: Black South Africa was saying, "Look, the U.S. administration is not interested in us. It's only the Congress that's keeping your feet to the fire." And to a degree they were right. On the other hand, you then wound up with the very unseemly spectacle of the Black Caucus in the U.S. taking responsibility for the end of apartheid. I was there for that – Mandela's election in '94 – which is just ludicrous. It was essentially South Africans who came to the right set of conclusions. Our pressure helped, but it was by no means determining.

Q: Was the name Mandela a force?

CARNEY: Yes. He was the imprisoned leader. His wife was out and a darling of the embassies. Some diplomats were seeking to have affairs with her. One of them succeeded. She's 20 years younger than Mandela, was on her own, and was basically a woman of appetites and desires which she would indulge.

Q: Was she an asset or a liability?

CARNEY: She was a liability. The ANC came to recognize that, largely due to her comment "with our necklaces and our matches we shall liberate this country."

Q: The necklaces being tires.

CARNEY: Exactly, with petrol. And a last cigarette was offered.

Q: Was there concern at the time... When I was in African INR back in the early '60s, we used to talk about there being a night of long knives.

CARNEY: There was a considerable concern about that. It was given substance by this practice of necklacing and stoning believed police informers and that sort of thing.

Q: How did the police behave?

CARNEY: They shot everybody. And then the murder squads were out, too. There was no doubt that... Ruthless is an Afrikaner characteristic as well.

Q: How were we received by the government?

CARNEY: It was an era of good feeling but that gradually changed to where by 1986 the state president, P.W. Botha, was denying permission for any officials to go on IV trips, for example.

Q: Why had that changed?

CARNEY: It was perceived that we were in opposition to P.W.'s view of what South Africa ought to look like, and we were. We always were. They decided we were no longer willing to work with them, that we were insisting on change in a way that they simply weren't willing to do.

Q: Did you feel that Crocker's view of constructive engagement was beginning to have teeth in it?

CARNEY: Absolutely. I was all for it, behind it, and working with it.

Q: Explain what you were doing to constructively engage.

CARNEY: Getting to know as much of Afrikaner polity and society as possible. I was perhaps deficient in not going to the churches. But certainly on the political side, both government and opposition, because there were Afrikaners in the Progressive Federal Party, mainly from the Cape but they were Afrikaners. Also getting to know just ordinary Afrikaners, which I would do through my hobbies of shooting and hunting and book collecting, that sort of thing. Making the point clear that South Africa couldn't stay where it was. The question was, "How are you going to evolve?" Entering those debates and arguments. Listening to South Africans, especially Afrikaners, saying, "You killed off your problem" or "Your problem is so small you don't have it" and replying, "Do you want prosperity here? You're going to have to give black South Africans who are earning your prosperity a share of the profit." It was at the same time not

wagging fingers and being in your face. (Ambassador) Herman Nickel was particularly gifted at taking U.S. policy and turning it into speeches and articles that would make the point in a way that was completely grasped, but without offense by Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans alike. He was very good at that, as you would expect from a journalist of his background and standing.

Q: What about the universities there?

CARNEY: I had a rough go at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. The answer is, yes. One of my efforts was with the head of Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, who was also head of the (Afrikaner) Broederbond at the time, Professor Pete Delange.

Q: The Broederbond was what?

CARNEY: The Broederbond and the ANC were created in 1912 with very different goals. The Broederbond aimed to build the place of the Afrikaner in his own country, they feeling seriously and correctly put upon by the British. The Broederbond underlay the victory of the National Party in 1948, defeating Jan Smuts.

Q: Could you get in and talk?

CARNEY: I did: Down at Rhodes University, very good conversation. Lots of unhappiness from black students. The U.S. role with Savimbi. One student who was very active in the United Democratic Front said, "You've got Savimbi. You've got his head under your arm. You're carrying him forward like a football. How can you expect to do anything in Angola?" My answer was, "Both sides have asked us to help mediate. You can criticize the U.S., but the fact is, the MPLA has asked us to be part of the effort to bring about a solution."

Q: Rhodes was...

CARNEY: All the South African universities except RAU and maybe Potgeitersrust – I'm not sure about Stellenbosch – had black students.

Q: How was that working?

CARNEY: Slowly, few, but beginning.

Q: Going back to Namibia, what was your impression of this contact group and how they worked together?

CARNEY: We worked very well. We and the Brits were particularly good at working together. My opposite number, Graham Archer, had one of his staff doing Namibia. He didn't do it himself. So we had the most senior level going in, except when an ambassador would go over. And we all sort of saw roughly the same people and pushed the South Africans, mainly then Foreign Minister Pik Botha and his staff, to implement UN Security Council Resolution 435.

Q: Why was this effective? It sounds like the South African government could kind of say, "You're a bunch of outsiders giving me advice. Thank you very much. There's the door."

CARNEY: Well, there was a UN Security Council resolution, which has the force of law. The South Africans were in an impossible legal position because they failed to give their League of Nations mandate over to the UN Trusteeship Council. Practically speaking, the Russians had bellied up. Angola made a deal to kick the Cubans out and began negotiations with Savimbi. There wasn't any reason to keep Namibia.

Q: Was Namibia doing anything positive for South Africa?

CARNEY: Well, it's got all the diamonds in the world, and uranium. The South Africans signed the NPT, so that maybe became less urgent.

Q: In a way, was the diamond cartel-

CARNEY: The CSO, Central Selling Organization. They were very active.

Q: What was their stand on this?

CARNEY: "That's politics. We do business."

Q: But politics intrude into business.

CARNEY: Well, then we need to talk about Tiny Roland and that whole interesting role that he had. I regret Frasure's death because he was much more aware of it than I am.

Q: Who was he?

CARNEY: Tiny Roland was a London based investment figure who had a finger in every insurgency pie in Africa. He died of melanoma in the mid-'80s. He was active in Sudan, South Africa, Angola, everywhere.

Q: What role were the French playing?

CARNEY: I can't remember. Friendly but not as active as we.

Q: But essentially this was a group that worked together.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: It wasn't split.

CARNEY: No, it wasn't. It was one of the early formations of those kinds of multinational

groups that actually tries to get things done.

Q: The Germans were there. Namibia was formerly German. And the French and British.

CARNEY: And the Dutch were there.

Q: Were there concerns that the South Africans were trying to split you up?

CARNEY: No, not to my knowledge. We were the most active. Chet (Crocker) or one of his deputies, first Frank Wisner and then Chas Freeman, were in the area every 3-4 months. Big effort on Chet's part to move things. He saw that apartheid was stultified, that P.W. Botha couldn't go any further than their constitutional referendum that he had passed in 1983. So, his focus shifted to Angola.

Q: Did you find that within the embassy you were all on the same team? Or did you find that the junior officers were pushing to get out and do more?

CARNEY: More junior staff would argue that we were too close to the power structure and that we needed to do more with black South Africa, but it was a question of emphasis, not of fundamental policy.

Q: How did you find dealing with the black African leadership? Were you caught between the Inkatha and the ANC?

CARNEY: No, you just saw everyone. One of the last things I did just before leaving the job in mid-'86 was the Pan African Congress successor called AZAPO (Azanian Peoples Organization) had its national congress in Durban. It was open to the embassies. I went down with Vicki, my wife, and we had the political officer at the consulate in Durban at the congress. I can still remember, a delegate from Namibia came over, Rukoro, and as he was walking up to be seated in an honored place, he looked down and said, "What are you doing here?" You had access. I think that was the bottom line, despite black criticism that the US Administration was too close to the Afrikaner apartheid government.

Q: Did you sometimes get the feeling that there was a split in the administration between what Crocker was doing and maybe more conservatives coming out of...

CARNEY: I didn't. Honestly, I was a field mouse. I wasn't paying attention to Washington.

Q: By the time you left in '86, what was your feeling about our sanctions?

CARNEY: I never believed they were a particularly good idea. I always held to the argument that it was better for the U.S. to stay engaged and invested because I could see things starting to change in South Africa. It wasn't that we were pushing against an open door because there was plenty of resistance to change. But I'm not sure sanctions were the best way to foster that change.

Q: It was removing the American influence from the industrial base. From our point of view, under their own internal pressures, they were making much more room for black participation.

CARNEY: Yes, exactly. You lost that as people divested and sold out to local companies and what have you. But in fact, the key aspect of the process was the recognition by South Africans, notably Afrikaners, that if they wanted to prosper they had to give blacks a share. That's what ultimately did it. The sanctions might have helped but only in the sense that there was a risk that they would become general. The Brits, for example, I talked with the provost of Cambridge, who had the daunting challenge of doing the annual lecture... The most noted precedent was from his predecessor many years removed, John Maynard Keynes. Cambridge was going to divest from Barclays bank, so Barclays got out (of South Africa). That sort of thing might have been more encouraging of the process than just strict U.S. sanctions themselves.

Q: Was there the equivalent in South Africa of a chattering class, the intellectuals?

CARNEY: Yes, Nadine Gordimer, Andre Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Alan Paton, and a few others.

Q: Did they have much influence?

CARNEY: Yes and no. Their literature and their views were out everywhere and the press was very active. The *Rand Daily Mail*, that bellied up and became *The Star* and what have you... You also had a humorist, Peter Dirk Uys, who is still active, who was brilliant, taking the mickey out of the entire Afrikaner establishment. As his name betrays, he is, in fact, an Afrikaner. It was all out there waiting to coalesce and it did. But it took somebody like Frederick Willem De Klerk to do it.

Q: Was he much of a figure when you were there?

CARNEY: Yes indeed. He was minister. But he was regarded as conservative. I never met him. His then wife was regarded as even more conservative. They were divorced and she was subsequently murdered in an apparent robbery and break-in. One of the journalists whom I saw regularly... We were talking about De Klerk at one point. He was the obvious successor of P.W. Botha as leader of the National Party because he was the head of the Transvaal wing of the National Party. This journalist had interviewed him and put the question to him, "Does not survival of the Afrikaners mean Afrikaners must be dominant?" He did not get a good answer, an answer promising of a future of an end to apartheid in that discussion with De Klerk. That was '85.

Q: You left there in '86.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: When you left, what were your thoughts of whither South Africa?

CARNEY: It's on its way to change. I figured by 2000 it would have changed, that apartheid

would have been ended. I did not predict it would be as early as '94.

Q: How did you feel it was going to happen?

CARNEY: Evolution. The Afrikaners making a deal. There wasn't any doubt in my mind.

Q: Did you feel that there was a special... that within the African South Africans, was there a mindset that they could probably do this without being nasty?

CARNEY: Right. I saw that, too. There still remained a reservoir of relative goodwill among ordinary black South Africans. In the leadership by the time we left had begun to see... first the same reporter who was at that initial dinner with Cabelly, Pete Muller, had gone up to Lusaka to interview ANC leaders and published his interview in the leading Afrikaans daily, *Rapport*. That sort of process had gotten underway as well.

The big problem was what do you do with the ANC that was so clearly dominated in its executive by the South African Communist Party? That answer came when the Soviet Union bellied up about 1990.

Q: This was a major concern of ours?

CARNEY: I don't know. It was a major analytical concern of mine as I looked at what could be done in the future.

Q: Was there the feeling that if things go on the way they were...

CARNEY: It would be a great obstacle, the SACP.

ROBERT J. KOTT
South Africa Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1984-1985)

Mr. Kott was born and raised in New York City. He earned degrees from St. John's University in New York City and from the University of Oregon. After service with the Peace Corps in India, Mr. Kott joined the Foreign Service in 1971. An African specialist, Mr. Kott served in, Togo and Cameroon as Economic and Political Officer and in Malawi and Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Indonesia and Canada. Mr. Kott was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

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

KOTT: I was doing battle with personnel because I thought it was really time to go home. I had

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

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

It was not a happy experience. Not necessarily because of Chet, but overall for a whole bunch of other reasons. I didn't flourish there. In fact, I didn't really have much authority, as in most countries especially in African countries the Desk Officer is the authority. The Assistant Secretary is too busy putting out fires to worry about what's happening in Guinea Bissau or Togo or Malawi. So the Desk Officer for those countries is in effect..., he is effectively the Assistant Secretary for that country. Not the case in South Africa, as you can imagine.

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

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

officers, one full-time and one part-time officer who was shared with the Botswana Desk Office.

Q: Did you supervise them?

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

As I said, about two months on the job I let it be known that I would like to transfer at an appropriate time. I made it clear that I was not doing this to go public, I wasn't a dissident. I wasn't going to denounce our policy or anything like that. I went up to speak to Frank Wisner about it, to Jim Bishop about it. Jim was very kind, he said, "Would you like to switch jobs with the Zaire Desk Officer? Just do a one-for-one swap. That way you could still have a good job and stay at the Bureau." A number of things were happening and in my thought processes I was thinking, "Look, if I'm going to make a break I ought to make a clean break. I think I need to do something different than Africa for a change." I'd been doing Africa for about nine years. Lomé, West African Affairs, Cameroon, Malawi. I think that totaled about nine years, nothing but Africa. And I thought, perhaps wrongly, but anyway I came to the conclusion, "Thank you Jim, but, no thanks." Good friend, dear friend, Jim Bishop, still is. If I'm going to break, I'm going to break clean. Chet, Frank the others asked me if I'd stay until at least they got a replacement, and I said, "Of course, I'm a Foreign Service Officer, I am not going to abandon you." As it turns out, they really didn't get a replacement until the following summer so I wound up staying on the desk for about 10 months.

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

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

KOTT: I would just say that I didn't disagree that much with the policy that Chet had largely devised and was propagating, my problem was more with the way he was selling it. I prefer not

to go into too much detail. I respect Chet but I disagree with some of his actions. And I think the way I handled it was to disassociate quietly from those actions.

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

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

SCOTT E. SMITH
Development Officer, USAID
Mbabane, Swaziland (1984-1986)

Deputy Mission Director, USAID
Harare, Zimbabwe (1986)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He earned a BA from Johns Hopkins University and an MA from the School of Advanced International Studies [SAIS]. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974, serving in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1997.

SMITH: Swaziland, as most listeners or readers will know, is a little country that gained its independence in the '60s but was dominated by South Africa, in fact surrounded on three sides by South Africa (on the fourth side is Mozambique), so was something of an island of tranquility in this apartheid-dominated world which was very much on the front burner in the mid-'80s. A lot of the assistance effort there - ours and the European countries and other donors in Swaziland - was mostly because it was not South Africa, and the same was true of Lesotho, and Botswana and several of the other countries.

In those days, 1984-85, we were just beginning to open up a direct AID program in South Africa. Of course, until the early '90s that was all exclusively with private organizations. We had been doing a few small programs out of Washington, but in 1984 we created the first AID representative office in Pretoria and that was the start of the South Africa program. Swaziland earlier in the '60s and '70s had been a regional mission. There was still some hold over of the notion that Swaziland could or should serve in a regional capacity for countries in the southern part of Africa, and so some of the early support for the South Africa program came from the Swaziland mission.

So, it is interesting to think now, again with ten years of hindsight, that the seeds for the programs and missions which would become two of our largest, if not *the* two largest, programs in Africa - Mozambique and South Africa - were planted in 1984-85 during the time we were in Swaziland. The mission in Swaziland was a support mission for those programs and gave me an opportunity, in both cases, although more in Mozambique than in South Africa, to go on TDYs and to help begin to structure the initial programs in both of those places.

And, in South Africa, there was a kind of moral satisfaction in trying to begin to work with organizations that were trying to change the apartheid system. The sense of being on the right side of these ideological issues was a very positive and refreshing change from how I viewed our role in Latin America. So, the Swaziland mission was at the hub of [the economic support and PL 480 Title I] as they started out.

In addition to that there was a regional program in southern Africa, which still remains. That was channeling assistance through SADCC, the South African Development Coordinating Council, , which was a loose organization of nine or ten southern African countries, trying to band together and coordinate on their development and other policies in reaction to South Africa and its economical and political presence and domination in the region.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe's foreign policy was at right angles to ours. These were the days of "constructive engagement", when the Reagan administration was trying to take a more engaged approach with South Africa and pursue that as a way of resolving the apartheid situation. That was perceived in Zimbabwe as being very much in favor of apartheid, because we were not condemning it and if you are dealing with the South Africans then you are not with us.

BONNIE BROWN
Spouse of Consul General & Educational Advisor for USIS
Johannesburg (1984-1987)

Mrs. Brown was born in Canada and raised in Seattle, Washington. She was educated at Whitman College and the University of California, Berkeley, where she obtained a degree in Law. From 1982 to 1984 she accompanied her husband Kenneth Lee Brown to Brazzaville, where he was US Ambassador. From 1984 to 1987 she accompanied her husband to Johannesburg, where he was Consul General. There Mrs. Brown worked with the United States Information Service as Educational Advisor. Mrs. Brown was interviewed by Daniel Whitman in 2010.

Q: Yes, '82 to '84 and then he [Ken Brown] stayed in the African area, became the consul general in Johannesburg.

Not to dwell on this more than the story we are going to get to, which is your own activities, but what went into the decision to go to Johannesburg? There may have been other opportunities? Do you remember your own reactions? This is as you say, born in Canada, went to Whitman College, Berkeley, a lawyer and then suddenly everything changed.

BROWN: I had considerable reservations about going to South Africa. I wasn't entirely comfortable with our government policy at that time. I felt we weren't doing enough to undermine apartheid. My views on that changed later because I came to realize that individuals can make things better, and it was important to have people in diplomatic positions that cared about the issues and about promoting change in South Africa. I think my husband was clearly one of those people and I know he was an agent of change. He made a difference.

Q: I believe that he did. We are going to concentrate today on the things that you did.

What you have just said is a summation of many debates about constructive engagement and boycotts and there was a very lively debate, certainly in the '70s, going into the '80s, and you hit Johannesburg just about at the peak of the debates.

BROWN: Yes, including the Sullivan principles.

Q: The Sullivan principles, very hotly debated. Better to have them but then having them implied being complicit with the system. They are both arguments, I think.

BROWN: Well, there were also mixed results. One unexpected result was that some of the best companies in terms of labor policy and community development were the first to leave. Kodak, for example, had been very important in Soweto where it had supported a number of sheltered projects, primarily for the disabled. It created employment and was a model for decent employment practices. Its leaving was a tragedy. In contrast, some of the companies that were the least responsible stayed on.

Q: The least socially responsible or the least guilty when you say the least responsible?

BROWN: Socially responsible, I would say.

Q: The companies that left, do you think they did so because they thought it was the right thing or because they were responding to political pressure back home?

BROWN: That's hard to answer. The people I talked to most were from Barclay's Bank. I think there was a real split among the executives there as to what their purposes were and how they evaluated their role. It would be very difficult for an outsider to speculate about that.

Q: What we do know is that all of these companies were very much in the limelight, being observed very closely by the people politically active and wanting to have change in South Africa. Both sides of the debate were always there. Be there and do what you can versus refuse

to show any complicit behavior with the regime.

So you went there. This is very interesting. You went there with some misgivings.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: About going there at all?

BROWN: Yes. I had come from a family where social justice was an important issue, very important to my parents, and I am a liberal person both philosophically and politically, so it was difficult. In fact, I talked about it with my father at the time and he was of the view that one can always help to change things.

Q: From within. Did that argument persuade you pretty easily or did it take a while for you to recover? Did you have any comfort intellectually or ethically before arriving or did this happen really after you arrived?

BROWN: I think after. I thought I had a fairly good understanding of what apartheid was all about, but one doesn't unless one is there and sees what it is like. It was a complicated matrix of reinforcing laws and regulations.

Q: You had misgivings. Did it approach dread? How willing were you to go? You just discovered many, many things after arriving. Were you reluctant to go?

BROWN: Well, my husband felt it was important to go and that was a big consideration. I trust his judgment on things and we talked a lot about it. Each posting is a bit of an adventure anyway. You know, I haven't thought about this for quite a while.

Q: Can you remember your first impression? You arrived, had you ever been to Johannesburg before going on your posting?

BROWN: No.

Q: So you arrived at Jan Smuts airport, as they used to call it. The minute you arrived you saw apartheid being played out. Do you remember the first day you arrived?

BROWN: No, but I can describe our home and neighborhood.

Q: Please.

BROWN: We had a little jewel of a house in the white suburbs. What was so amazing is if you went into the backyard you could see swimming pools and tennis courts in every yard as far as the eye could see in either direction. Domestic workers were confined to the homes in which they worked because of the pass laws. Women workers had Wednesday afternoons off: men Thursday afternoons. Generally, you would see them at the curb talking to friends and hesitant to go far

because of the pass laws. If someone disappeared, you had to go and find him because of the possibility of mistreatment by the security forces.

Once we had friends staying at our home and our gardener disappeared, so they went to all the surrounding police stations to find him. He'd been picked up.

Q: Picked up because he was in the street violating the rules of apartheid?

BROWN: He may not have had his pass, I don't know. What one did know is that if you didn't find someone quickly, he or she could wind up injured. I don't think we had a consular convention that protected our premises, so I was always worried about what would happen if there were a pass raid at our home and what would I do? Of course, I wouldn't have any legal right to say no, no, don't come in.

Q: We didn't have a consular convention? Now, isn't that fairly unusual?

BROWN: I don't know the history of that at this point. This was almost 25 years ago.

Q: What did the white community, including our diplomats, know about apartheid at that time?

BROWN: The wealth of the white community at that time was so evident and extraordinary. Most outsiders, including Americans, didn't visit the townships or homelands.

Early on we went to an American Chamber of Commerce dinner and one of the officers came up to my husband and said, "Welcome to paradise." A lot of the American business community became seduced by the wealth and ease of living for white people. At that same dinner I sat next to a man and we began talking about the mixing of races. It was kind of mischievous of me, but I said, "My husband is part Cherokee." And he stopped short. He was South African: he looked across to where my husband was at another table and said, "Ah, but it's all right. He's assimilated." I loved it.

This lack of comprehension was also the case among the embassy community -- more in the embassy community in Pretoria than in the consulate community in Johannesburg. Again, people were seduced by the way of life they could have there. It was very upstairs, downstairs. People could have servants. The DCM's wife at one of her teas announced that if people couldn't afford to pay maids properly, they simply shouldn't have them and this created a great hubbub. People were offended and carried on.

Q: This seems like centuries ago. It is hard to imagine how recent this was.

BROWN: We lost a baby when we were in South Africa. My husband was on the board of an SOS Village and at that point we thought foreigners could adopt a child fairly easily in South Africa. We found out it was just a terrible process. We fell in love with a little girl at an SOS village whom we finally adopted here in the United States after getting legal custody of her in South Africa. We were at a business dinner one evening, sitting with a South African couple,

former diplomats who had served in the South African Embassy in Washington for seven years, I think in public affairs. My husband was talking to the wife about our efforts to adopt this little girl and once she found out that the child was in the group classified as “colored” she said, “Ach, take the child back to the institution and get yourself another dog.”

Later that evening she made a point of sitting with me and giving me the same advice. We both said the same thing to her, that it was much too late. We loved this little girl. We went home that night and talked about it and Ken wondered if he should write a cable about what the woman had said, because it was so reflective of the way people regarded race. This woman was all sympathy, thinking about a child getting a home, until she found out the child was biracial.

Her reaction was shocking but not surprising, but it had a profound effect on both of us. This was a couple that had lived in the United States and yet didn’t understand the effect their racial views had on Americans.

Q: I see. So the idea was mixing races is bad. Is that it?

BROWN: No, they wouldn’t have approved of us adopting a black child. After we left South Africa, we became the subject of a talk show and some hateful articles in newspapers, which was disturbing. There were a couple of reporters in the white press who leaked the fact that we were trying to adopt a child, but people in the black and colored communities and some in the white were very supportive of us.

Q: That’s most interesting. So you have really lived this very personally, the attitudes of the systems.

Was there any question of the legality of what you were doing?

BROWN: Oh, yes.

Q: When you say ‘leaked’ you are talking about giving information that could sabotage the adoption.

BROWN: It could have. We were given legal custody by the colored minister of social welfare with the understanding that we would adopt her when we got to the United States. So I was nervous until the plane left the tarmac, I thought that something could happen. Our security officer took Pinkie and me to the airport well before take-off time and we didn’t go by South African Airlines. We flew British Airlines. So that was it.

When we got here we were able to adopt her.

Q: How old was she?

BROWN: She was eight.

Q: When you left?

BROWN: Eight.

Q: This is an amazing story. How did you find her? Where did you first see her?

BROWN: She was one of three little girls we became fond of at the SOS Village in Ennerdale. We tracked down her birth mother, who is Zulu. Pinkie had been given up at the age of six months because her community would not accept the fact that her father was white. Pinkie was originally given to a colored couple. We don't know all that happened to her during the years she was in foster care.

Anyway, her mother gave us permission to adopt Pinkie. Her mother, who lived in a township outside of Durban, asked that we come there and participate in a ceremony. It turned out to be kind of a marriage ceremony that united our two families and was attended only by women and my husband Ken. Ken was asked to bring a sheep and he worried that he was going to have to slaughter it. Fortunately, a man in the community did the slaughtering. After the sheep was killed, Pinkie's mother poured sheep bile over our hands and feet and told us we shouldn't wash until we got back to the States. But we did when we got to the airport.

Q: So this was sort of like a baptism almost or something that united. You used the word 'marriage.' But you are talking about the biological mother of the child you adopted. So this was a ceremony which actually consecrated that the two families could share something and in this case, it was sharing Pinkie. That's remarkable.

BROWN: At that point, Pinkie could not have lived with her Zulu relatives because she had a different racial classification. That just shows how insidious the whole idea of race was. Now, back here in the United States, she identifies herself with the African American community, but with white parents. It has been a long road for her.

Q: It is important to realize that we see this sort of thing happening with some frequency in the U.S. now, but a very short time ago this type of relationship was most unusual, most unusual. It sounds like history from long ago but in a fact, it is very recent.

I have spoken with a number of South Africans previously classified as colored and they do tell the story of not being accepted in either community and I think increasingly nowadays, identifying themselves as black. That's how they see themselves. It is a very odd position to be in where there is stratification, but you don't belong to the class above and you don't belong to the class below. It is a very, very stressful position to be in, I think.

BROWN: The colored community had the most difficulty. The SOS Village where Pinkie lived was in a colored township. SOS gave a party for Pinkie when she left that was very moving. The children there ranged from children who were as dark as could be to a little girl you could have found on the streets of Belfast. They sang 'Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World, Red and Yellow, Black and White.' The children sang that for Pinkie and I lost it. I cried. I still tear up

when I think about that. If ever there was a place where that didn't work for children, it was there.

Q: These were children in a colored community?

BROWN: Yes, orphans in an SOS Village in a colored township.

Q: They were in an ambient society that had disdain for that idea. They themselves had the idea? They really did believe in acceptance of diversity, do you think? Or do you think they were singing a song that they did not really understand?

BROWN: I don't know. That is a hymn one often hears. I think they probably took comfort from it in some ways without realizing the full implications. That's how I would look at it.

Q: Were the children Pinkie's age, eight?

BROWN: They ranged from infants up to I guess 16. At 16 they were let go. I think the colored community has had the most difficulty psychologically. There is quite a bit written about that because they didn't have a cultural identity, a clear one anyway. That's a real oversimplification.

Q: I have heard a number of people of that category say exactly that denied an identity in some cases. Now that these labels supposedly don't exist, they say, "I am black," because there is an identity there.

BROWN: Had the government been smart, it could have co-opted them politically, very easily by embracing them.

Q: This was a nasty system and a very rigorous one and as you have said, it had many arcane details that kept it going.

Now let's go back a bit, chronologically. You have arrived in Johannesburg. I know that you did some very interesting activities in the community and in some cases you brought the community into your home. Let's talk about those experiences.

BROWN: Well, I started working as the educational advisor for USIA as a 'PIT.'

Q: Actually we should explain why this was ethically possible because Ken was a ConGen and at that time USIA was an autonomous agency. Therefore there was no possible nepotism. Nowadays, this would not be possible. That is worth a footnote in this history.

BROWN: There were lots of very privileged white students who came for counseling about where to go to school, scholarships, and things like that, but also a lot of students from Soweto and so I got to know them.

Q: You were what? An academic counselor?

BROWN: Yes. I got to know a woman by the name of Sebolelo Mohajane, the director of the Careers Center in Soweto and a chairman of the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee. She invited me to her center where I helped out and we became close friends. Then we decided to get women together from various communities.

Q: Was the center in Soweto?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: So this was a bootstraps operation?

BROWN: Yes, but an active and important one in the community.

We started on our project to get women together by inviting six educators to lunch at our house, three from Soweto and three from the official US community, and they got along pretty well. Then, a month later, we added a few more. Within less than a year we had 80 or 90 women, not only from the embassy community, but also from the black, colored, and Indian communities and then finally Afrikaners as well. The political range became much broader; from people who posed no problem to the government to those who did and who had been in detention or under house arrest, the whole range was there.

In fact, there was a funny story as we were leaving Johannesburg. I was at a party in the Indian township with a group of women and one little lady came up and said, "I would like to come to one of your luncheons." She continued: But you know, I am Stalinist, my dear." She and her husband had been very active in the Labor and anti-apartheid movements in the very early years. I chuckled and thought, good lord. She looked like a kindly lavender-scented old grandmother. So I had to say, "Oh, I am sorry. I won't be having any more luncheons because we are leaving."

Anyway, the luncheons became increasingly important as the political situation worsened. Women across racial and political lines could meet at our house and discuss what was happening. The importance of being able to do this became apparent during the luncheon held on the first day of the first state of emergency. Security forces had detained people and surrounded union and religious buildings in the early hours of the day. Yet women called asking if the luncheon were still on. I said yes, people were on their way. That day women talked about 1976, when their children were detained or shot or went missing in Soweto.

Q: '76 was Sharpeville, wasn't it?

BROWN: No, it was when security forces fired on children in Soweto who were protesting the imposition of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. One woman at the luncheon told us that her son had disappeared that day and she had never found out what had happened to him. It was a very emotional experience for the American women, an epiphany. We became a single community of mothers.

The luncheons became a regular event throughout the states of emergency. People were forbidden to gather, but because my husband was consul general, they could come to our home. It was the one place where people could meet and talk freely.

We also had a lot of representational events where we brought people together. I don't know how scientific this is, but I always thought there was a kind of ratio you needed to have for people to mix well and that basically you needed at least 65 percent from black, colored and Indian communities for people to get the right balance for interaction. That conclusion is not scientific, it's what appeared to work.

Q: You talked about the way in which people felt comfortable to speak freely and you said this was partly because this was the residence of the consul general. Tell me more about that. Do you think free speech of that type, people telling their own genuine thoughts to one another, is this something they had any opportunity to do prior to coming to your house?

BROWN: I don't know. I imagine a few of them did. The ambassador when we first got there, Herman Nickel, had a very small range of black contacts. Pretoria was a very different culture than Johannesburg.

Q: Oh, absolutely, Johannesburg was a big metropolis. At that time Pretoria was a very small, conservative place.

BROWN: Our house was pretty open. Because of my interest in education and work with another educator in Soweto, we became interested in a small school there. The children frequently came for sports days at our house.

We invited a lot of people to our home. We felt it was very important, particularly during the states of emergency when people could not meet. The few places they could meet were in our home, the political officer's home, the labor officer's home.

Q: So Americans made themselves available for this type of dialogue. Now you said there was no consular convention so in fact, you had no legal protection for doing this.

BROWN: I think our protection stemmed from my husband's position. I knew we weren't protected against pass raids and some of our neighbors had suffered them and their servants had been rousted out.

I did the educational advising for a few months and then the political officer asked me if I would take over the human rights and self-help grants.

Q: Was that the Ambassador's Fund?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: When you said 'epiphany for American women' did you sense or in retrospect do you think

we are talking about spouses of American officers?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Were they surprised to see open conversations of this type? In what way did they change because of these events?

BROWN: I think women who worked at the embassy and the consulate saw the human face of apartheid and what happens to women like themselves who just happened to be black South Africans. They were pushed to ask themselves what if this had happened to my child? Or to think, this woman is intelligent, she would be valued by any other society. Also a few of the women who came to those luncheons were detained. We knew them.

Q: Do you think that is because they attended these sessions?

BROWN: No, I think because of other activities, although there was an arbitrariness to how the government acted. The arbitrariness was terrifying and clearly was one tool that permitted a small group of white people to control a large number of black people. Security was very tight.

Almost everything that people did was watched. The government didn't permit leaders to emerge for very long. People would develop as leaders and then disappear or be detained. This happened to generation after generation.

Q: It was disabling any social cohesion that might change the system in some way.

You said 80 to 90 women. Did they ever all come at the same time? You had that many in your house?

BROWN: Yes, routinely. We had it about once every six weeks.

Q: That's a pretty large group, 80 to 90.

BROWN: The women came from the surrounding black, colored, and Indian townships, as well as from the white communities in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

There is another story. Coretta Scott King came to one of the luncheons. She talked about the value of civil disobedience and one of the women -- I think it might have been Helen Joseph, one of the great heroes of the anti-apartheid movement -- said, "We have tried that. It didn't work. This isn't the United States. It doesn't work here." I don't know if Mrs. King understood the truth of that statement.

That same day during the luncheon I went into our living room to get a match to light the candles on a birthday cake for Martin Luther King's sister. There was a man sitting there obviously listening to what was being said. I asked him, "Do you have a match and who are you?"

He said, "Oh, I am just with the delegation." Earlier in the day I had read in the newspaper about a notorious South African security agent that had been attached to the King delegation and seen his photo, but I didn't make the connection then. In the middle of the night I sat up and said, "Ken, you know who that was." My husband complained to the Embassy about permitting that kind of person to accompany Coretta Scott King and come into our home?"

The women were willing to talk and they knew all too well that they could be heard or recorded or whatever. Yet they assumed the risk.

Q: It probably was partly that they were willing to take that risk.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: It sounds as if there was little or no self censorship in these conversations.

BROWN: There must have been some. Occasionally I would be told who had gone to Zambia to talk to the ANC. I'd hear bits and pieces, but they were things I wouldn't talk about in the house. If I wanted to talk about them with my husband, we would go for a walk. We didn't talk in our home about things that could put people in danger.

Q: You assumed the house was bugged.

BROWN: Yes. I always thought it must be voice activated and for that reason I was pleased we had and still have a very talkative African gray parrot.

Q: Recommended technique for living in repressive countries: have a parrot.

BROWN: We assumed our phones were tapped. I once got a semi-offensive call immediately after I had a phone conversation and the caller referred to what I had been talking about with a friend.

Q: Really?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: And when they call that's when they want you to know that they are listening to you.

BROWN: Yes, but the caller was pretty careful, nonetheless.

After we left post I spoke to a group of students from Georgetown who were about to go to South Africa. Rather than talking about what they would find in South Africa, I talked about risk. I told them that they were going to come home but they had to remember in every relationship and conversation they had they could put somebody at risk and they had to be more concerned about that than anything else. This surprised them, but it is true. People who were actively engaged in opposing apartheid assumed risk and many of them suffered for it.

I believe it was CBS that aired a program after we came back from South Africa called 'Children Under Apartheid'. They interviewed children, some as young as 12, including a young student leader my husband had known. Like many of our colleagues we talked to afterwards, we thought that CBS had put targets on those children's backs. Indeed, the young man that my husband knew was picked up at the airport in Johannesburg and found three days later shot in the back of the head, an execution. My husband had talked frequently with this young man and had told me: "They are not going to let him live very long" and they didn't.

Q: What does this say about the ethics of journalism, getting the story at all costs?

BROWN: I think part of it was a lack of comprehension of what the risk was. It was so enormous. I tried calling CBS that night and got nowhere.

Q: Too late. It had already been broadcast.

BROWN: During the time we were there, there were perhaps as many as 10,000 children in detention. These were children between the ages of eight and eighteen. Their names weren't published, parents didn't know where they were, and when the children were released, they were often given a rand and simply told to go. If they were incarcerated with the criminal population or in solitary, they suffered very greatly. Those who were with the political prisoners had some protection.

There is a women's association in South Africa called 'The Black Sash' which you probably know about. Just before one Christmas it invited parents of missing children to come to a meeting place in downtown Johannesburg. The Black Sash and other anti-apartheid groups had debriefed people as they were released from prison, asking them if they knew of child and other prisoners, and had listed the names of those they found out about on the walls on long sheets of paper. It was heartbreaking to see parents poring over the lists, looking for the names of their children.

Children often had psychological problems after detention. The head of the Black Consciousness movement there was a very impressive young man. Saths Cooper was a psychologist and received one of our human rights grants to provide psychological treatment for children who had been detained.

Q: Your contacts were all in the Johannesburg area?

BROWN: Not entirely. They were also in townships in other areas and in some of the homelands. The self help and human rights work was the most absorbing work I've ever had. I met an incredible range of people working against the system on the most basic level. We gave grants for labor, education, legal assistance, health and children's projects. One grantee was a theater group in Soweto that went to black spot (communities under threat of forced removal) to explain what to expect. The group acted out in the local language what actions the government could be expected to take against them.

Q: The grant system, I think, requires a committee to meet in the embassy and then people vote. I don't know if that's the way it was arranged in Johannesburg and then a coordinator carries forth the projects that have been selected by the committee. Did it work that way?

BROWN: Usually I wrote up the proposals and they were granted with some exceptions. One grant that was denied was one that would have funded a community planning program for a squatter camp outside of Johannesburg. Yet another grant was made to a young herbalist and sankoma, very much from the village, who wanted to gain the right to be a hawker on the streets of Johannesburg. We gave him a grant for legal representation and the case was decided in his favor. Then the right was extended to other communities. Years later I saw a picture of him in a three piece suit. He used to bring me presents of beads and porcupine quills.

Q: So just to recap a little bit, you had some reluctance to even go to this country and then within a year it sounds as though you were very much involved in the social changes. In fact, did it make you feel better about being in South Africa?

BROWN: Oh, yes. I felt very quickly that my husband was important because of what he chose to witness and report about. Being present, seeing firsthand what was happening, and being seen by the black communities and the government mattered.

Ken's attention to forced removals is an example. The purpose behind forced removal was to move people to a homeland, declare it independent and strip black South Africans of their nationality. People were to be kept to these areas, which were bleak and then allowed back into South Africa only as foreign labor.

Because of his opposition to forced removal, a chief near Johannesburg was brutally murdered. That same day Ken visited the family to show solidarity and demonstrate that the U.S. Government was watching. The family told Ken that the police had been called several times, but had stood on a nearby hill, watching the chief being hacked to death and burnt.

Ken had also talked to a teen aged boy who had just been released by black vigilantes. The vigilantes had hacked the boy with machetes and hung a tire filled with gasoline around his neck.

The vigilantes were prepared to shoot the boy or light the tire, a way of killing called "necklacing" when somebody recognized him and let him go. Ken said that he was haunted by the boy's face, still dazed and staring at death when he met him. And that was reflected in Ken's face when he came home.

Ken went to difficult places. He did a lot of reporting on apartheid, especially about black spot removal. That was very important.

Q: Do you think this inhibited the regime in some way, knowing there was a foreign diplomat from a major country observing very closely and reporting this? Did it inhibit them, do you think?

BROWN: It gave them pause, I think, when we visited a place targeted for removal. I know when Ambassador Perkins came and he and other western ambassadors went into Soweto for a major funeral, there was no violence. It made a difference.

Q: That was later.

BROWN: That was later. Diplomatic actions affect things, but I don't know how you can measure that.

Q: I am sure you cannot but we could say that this young man with the tire around his neck maybe survived because Ken was there.

BROWN: Not in that case, but it does help to shine a light on such misdeeds.

One of the women who came to the luncheons, a reporter, was in Soweto that day in 1976. The first child shot in Soweto, Hector Peterson, was put in her car. She raced to get him medical care, but he couldn't be saved. There is a famous picture of Hector Peterson being carried with his sister at his side.

Q: So this became someone you knew? This person with the car?

BROWN: Yes. She talked about it. It was amazing to hear the stories that people had to tell.

My friend Sebolelo Mohajane, for example, had been arrested and detained over time and at one evening over a beer she casually said, "I just got some new grill work put on my windows and it slants outwards so I guess if grenades are lobbed, they will just glance off."

Q: There is something macabre and humorous about this. Can you characterize the tone? You talk about their amazing stories. These are stories of hardship, of injustice. Was there sort of a humorous touch? What was uniquely South African about the way they told these stories?

BROWN: It differed. The English speaking white community generally had a very bleak attitude and little sense of humor. Nonetheless, people in the white community were courageous, particularly the women in the Black Sash and religious leaders.

Q: The Black Sash, at least in the beginning was entirely white, wasn't it?

BROWN: Yes, middle and upper-class white women had the protection of their husbands. Some of them suffered because of their involvement, but certainly black or colored or Indian women would have been much more at risk.

There was a lot of humor in the black community. When the government eased up on pass laws but tightened the screws on housing people would say, "Ah, I used to have to carry a pass and now I've got to carry a house."

One of the human rights grants was for a women's conference for black, colored and Indian women. Of course there were women there from the white community. There was humor even when discussing serious issues. At that time there was a lot of concern about birth control, whether it was state-mandated. Black women were given Depo-Provera shots without their knowledge.

Q: In effect to sterilize them.

BROWN: In effect, so there was a great deal of discomfort with birth control. There was a very heated discussion in one of the sessions and finally a Khosa woman wearing a blanket said "All this is well and good, but you've got to remember there is no apartheid between the blankets" and the crowd went wild, laughing and cheering. It was wonderful.

The parties in Soweto were fun.

Q: When you say there was less levity or no levity in the English speaking you are referring to the white women?

BROWN: I think mostly the men. They were pretty humorless.

Q: I think the point about the people enduring the most hardships being the most humorous is a powerful point.

BROWN: One subject that deserves more discussion is the role of the church in South Africa. It was the young people at Stellenbosch who first broke with the racial policies of the Dutch Reformed Church. Also, the churches in townships and rural areas were an amazing force. The ministers and priests sheltered and inspired people facing terrible circumstances. It was a real living religion.

Q: It wasn't in name only. It wasn't going through the patterns. There was a real zeal.

BROWN: Yes, a combination of belief and action, working to protect people and give them strength. People didn't talk about religion but they lived it. Their actions, their courage, their willingness to protect other people were really amazing.

A friend of ours was an Anglican Episcopal bishop in Soweto. His church was firebombed by security forces who didn't try to hide their identities. He rebuilt and carried on.

When Anglican Bishop Tutu was installed in Johannesburg a Catholic bishop participated in the ceremony. He had been released from detention and when he appeared there was a gasp from the crowd because everybody knew what had happened to him in prison. He had been tortured with electrodes on his genitals. He was tall and proud and had great courage. After Tutu was enthroned, the choirs in the balcony broke into wonderful singing and movement.

Q: Do you think the regime understood or failed to understand the force of the church as an instrument of social change?

BROWN: Probably, probably.

Q: Well, if they firebombed the church, I guess they understood.

BROWN: I think the Catholic bishops, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Anglicans, they were all important in the struggle.

Q: Did the regime fail to notice this? Were they inadvertent in allowing this to happen? Clearly it went against the regime.

BROWN: I don't know what the answer is to that. We gave a self-help grant to a Catholic priest in a small independent homeland. He was always in and out of detention and each time he was released, he called me to let someone know he was okay. Although the authorities were pretty rough on him, he stood up to them all alone.

Q: The self-help grants conventionally go to NGOs or community groups. But did these groups exist when you were there or were these grants done in an ad hoc way with people as the opportunity came up? In some countries the NGO has been there for a few years, they come to the embassy, they have a proposal. It sounds as though you nurtured them more in Johannesburg than is sometimes the case in some countries.

BROWN: I think it was a mix. There was a surprising number of NGOs there. Other proposals came from groups that had little organization or were outside of the usual.

As I mentioned before, there was a grant proposal for a squatter camp outside of Johannesburg that was not accepted. The camp was located on property that was a no man's land. The title wasn't clear. The camp contained a large group of people who were trying to develop a structure for their community, including a sanitation system and rules for how people were to use basic amenities, a basic social and governmental structure. I thought the proposal was exciting but the embassy turned it down.

At that time the human rights program was a political and not a USAID program, so it was more flexible and reactive than was the case later.

Another grant that was denied was one that would have provided funding for families of those being tried for treason to visit the trial once a month. Our consulate employees took up a contribution and we paid for the transportation.

In our final year, the human rights program became a USAID program.

We had funded legal assistance offices in a number of townships. This was a sensitive process, because each township had its own blend of political groups and tensions that had to be taken

into consideration. USAID came in and said, “We are going to have a prototype” you know, like widgets. And I thought, “Oh no.”

They said, “We are not going to do education.” Legal offices had been done and done very well. Education was then sort of the cutting edge. We attended a hand-over meeting at the Embassy and I argued for some social, economic and educational projects that were being developed and what I thought was the cutting edge for us. The new head of USAID said, “That’s what the Marxists do.”

My husband wrote me a note saying, “Nobody here but us commies.”

Q: This week is May 9th. This is a very controversial matter right now, a matter I am working on, which is Haiti where the U.S. government will not agree, the executive branch will not agree, to do education. The entire NGO community and the Congress are in direct conflict but this gets us off the theme. This was not some bizarre, drive-by comment.

BROWN: No, but Congress was also casting a heavy eye on everything South African.

Q: Maybe in a different way back then. That is an amazing comment.

BROWN: The conservatives came in great numbers.

Q. Oh, really? Because ten years later it was exactly the opposite. Everybody came. They supposedly had all been involved from the beginning in the struggle, which we know is not true. A lot of people took credit for things they never did.

The church; did you involve the church consciously or otherwise in your own activities? You say the church was a very, very effective agent in social change. You had 80 or 90 people come into your house every six weeks. Did you target church members at all?

BROWN: Not particularly. Among the guests there were some ministers’ wives, including Else Naude, and women who worked for religious organizations, such as World Vision.

Q: You mentioned the dawn of USAID in the mid-80s. When I was there ten years later the whole rationale was that USAID gave no money to the regime. They gave all the money to NGOs and to communities, pretty much in opposition to the regime. Can you comment on that because this must have been a bit dicey, doing programs in areas that the regime did not like.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Tell us about that. Were there risks? I don’t know if there were risks to you but maybe to some of the grantees?

BROWN: I think there may have been.

Q: The regime must have been unhappy at least to see the types of activities you were doing.

BROWN: They tolerated it. I never really understood why.

Q: Why do you think they did? To avoid international embarrassment, or out of laziness, or did they feel that these programs were of little importance?

BROWN: I think they felt that they could pull it in at any time. There were a couple of people who were on the run who were grantees. I had to arrange to meet them somehow. One came to the house and I was nervous about him being seen or caught in our neighborhood, where he stood out.

Q: Not allowed to be there.

BROWN: Essentially. I believed that it was important for the human rights program to be a political program, one that could react quickly and be flexible as events and organizations developed and new leaders emerged. The USAID process isn't nimble, flexible, or easy to maneuver, but Washington and Congress wanted to strictly control the grants.

Q: So in fact was the money transferred out of the ambassador's fund into a USAID fund?.

BROWN: I believe so, but that happened after we left.

Q: The USAID program was of much greater magnitude than the Ambassador's self-help fund. The latter are small amounts of money, but you can implement them very quickly.

BROWN: I think there was a \$10,000 limit for any human rights grant at that time, very small. The self-help fund provided even smaller grants.

Q: When USAID come in ten years later, they had a hundred million dollars. So that is a huge contrast.

BROWN: That wouldn't have been just for human rights grants. There would have been other kinds of programs, such as housing.

Q: Was the self-help program there as long as you were?

BROWN: Yes. That stayed with the ambassador The human rights program went to USAID.

Q. How did you and your husband work together?

BROWN: I have been fortunate because my husband has always treated me as a partner. We worked as a team. In South Africa this worked quite well. His brief was the townships, black politics, labor unions, the liberal media, and also minerals and commerce. He dealt with people who were leaders of organizations for the most part, not exclusively by any means, and the

people I dealt with were grassroots.

So together we were able to bring a wide range of people together and accomplish things that otherwise would not have been possible. For example, Saths Cooper, the head of Black Consciousness movement, wouldn't deal with Americans on an official level but did work with me on a project to get psychological treatment for children released from detention. When Congressman Stephen Solarz wanted to meet him, he refused an invitation to do so from the consulate general. I asked him and he came to our house and met with the congressman. Then I suggested that he apply for a Fulbright. He did and he went to the United States. Again, it was because we had a working relationship.

Q: What you were doing, there aren't that many political officers that get involved in that. That is sometimes what public diplomacy does. The more enlightened political officers do this and there aren't too many that actually get to the point of influencing people's lives. Many political officers, I think, see themselves as analysts, not as activists. I think this is a great history and a great partnership that you have with your husband. You were grassroots, he then using that not only to analyze and interpret but to actually be part of what was happening. I think that is remarkable.

BROWN: South Africa was just an amazing experience for us both. It changed us. I had never met so many people with such courage, amazing people. We had friends who had been under house arrest for 22 years. The husband had been very active in the Indian Congress and the wife, Amina Cachalia, is still alive. She was one of the leaders of the women's march to Pretoria to protest the imposition of pass laws on women. They were not allowed to see more than one person at a time. They had their house split into two and each lived in one half of the house so that they each would have the opportunity to see their children one at a time. Occasionally people would shoot at their doors and windows.

Q: Some years later as the change became more and more rapid and history went to the side of change, I think you have to remember that at this time in the mid-'80s nobody thought that anything would change. The courage was enormous, given that it wasn't courage with a reward that was apparent, that in fact most people's appraisal was this will never change, I think. Is that the way you remember?

BROWN: I think people hoped and believed it would happen and felt that things were changing but there would be violence. The fact that there wasn't, is really significant.

Q: How did South Africa avoid the violence which everyone expected? You were not there in '93 – '94 when everyone thought that all hell would break loose and it did not.

BROWN: Much was due to the extraordinary character and leadership of Nelson Mandela. Another reason again was faith. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission institutionalized forgiveness and allowed people to move forward. It was remarkable that people could forgive someone who had killed their children. I don't know where else this could happen, but I think it is due to a living faith that people have there.

Q: And then the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a structure also where faith could express itself. Without the structure, who knows what might have happened in terms of people able to function having been through trauma?

BROWN: We had lunch one day with a man who had been on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and we mentioned my friend Sebolelo. He said, "We are investigating her death to see if it was not an accident." This shook both of us. I don't know if I could forgive a person if murder were to be proven the case.

Q: You were very, very close friends when you were there in '84 to '87. Was she killed during that period?

BROWN: No, after that. She had come and visited us in DC and I had seen her one more time after that. She was apparently blindsided by a car. It wasn't uncommon for people to be purposely forced off the road.

Q: You were talking about the contacts that you had as a team, the ConGen and the spouse of the ConGen.

BROWN: I think it worked well for us there and then later on in Ghana.

Q: I would like to draw out some more of the anecdotes because these are amazing stories. Eighty people in your home, a safe haven so to speak where people could express themselves, and certainly not in large groups to that extent outside the home of a foreigner. I don't know if these conversations could have taken place anywhere but in your house.

BROWN: They couldn't meet elsewhere because of the terms of the states of emergency. I don't know what conversations were held on the margins.

Q: But here you had large groups of people. I think that must have been unique.

BROWN: Yes, but there were risks. People knew that what they said could be and probably would be reported back by someone.

Q: As it was the time you saw the fellow sitting in the hallway.

BROWN: Ken was really disturbed by that. It shouldn't have happened.

Q: When something like that happens, whom do you complain to, the police?

BROWN: This man was notorious in South Africa. He was a police spy and maybe the last person you would expect to be sitting in one's living room. In my view, the embassy was responsible. It didn't exercise due diligence when it permitted him to be attached to the delegation.

Q. That's an important detail. I didn't know that the embassy would have blessed that.

What about the different tendencies at the embassy? In some countries in conflict regions you have groups within the embassy of different opinions: old guard, new guard, opposed to change, in favor of change. Did this happen or was there any difference between the people posted in Pretoria, perhaps and the people in Johannesburg? Was this circumstance or was it the nature of the people involved do you think?

BROWN: The embassy and consulates were separate universes. Johannesburg was involved with the black communities and black politics. My husband, as well as the political and labor officers, was out in an engaged with those communities.

Political officers in Pretoria dealt primarily with the government and Afrikaans community.

I think it is fair to say that some in the embassy regarded the government and anti-apartheid movement quite differently. We went to Pretoria fairly frequently for events. Early on I heard one officer in Pretoria making racist comments. Had he worked for Ken, he would have been on the next plane out.

Much depends on the ambassador. Ambassador Nickel, although he had some very good qualities, had little contact with the black community. His successor, Ambassador Ed Perkins on the other hand, was a much needed change.

Q: So you said different universes between the staff in Pretoria and the staff in Johannesburg. Were the ones in Pretoria more accepting of this regime and its injustices or did they even maybe support it?

BROWN: I can't answer that in all fairness. I know in Johannesburg and I think also in Durban and Cape Town there was much more contact and sympathetic with the anti-apartheid movement.

Q: There was more contact.

BROWN: Yes, but there were other differences, as well. There was always this feeling of urgency in Johannesburg. My husband said that I was a state of emergency junkie. We'd go on leave and I would worry about what might happen to this person or that person. This may be accurate, but I understood that there was a higher differential for Johannesburg than there was for Pretoria because of the stress.

Q: I think it is true and, again, years later I was told that in previous days the differential was high not because of crime, not because of other things, but the psychological stress of being in a conflictive situation. That's what I was told.

BROWN: Our people also went into situations that could be dangerous. When I went into Soweto, a paraplegic center would send out a scout to tell me which was the best way to get to

where I was going. One didn't have trouble with the young "comrades". The fear was being caught between the army and people they were after. The army was composed of young men who were frightened and sometimes did things they shouldn't. That was the potential for getting hurt, not being roughed up by the comrades.

We had a friend who was a principal in a high school in Soweto. One day a group of soldiers -- young and green -- came to her school for no apparent reason. They went into her office and by the time they began leaving, hundreds of students had lined the walkway leading to their vehicles. These were nervous young soldiers with guns, surrounded by students angered by the show of force. Our friend got hit in the head with a stone, but the crowd of students let the soldiers go in peace. It could have turned bad.

Another time Sebolelo took me to a meeting of school counselors and teachers in Soweto. They talked about their role in teaching or helping their students become self-actualizing and to stand up for themselves, all the time knowing that when the children walked out the door they would walk smack into the face of all kinds of danger. Making judgments about their role had to be very difficult. They were giving their students the very tools that could put them in danger.

Q: Did you find they had courage? We talked about that. Did you also find they had a pragmatic sense of how to make something positive out of a crazy situation?

BROWN: I think they wanted to prepare the young people to be as much as they could be in that society, with the hope it would change enough so that they could really become full members of society.

Q: In the rest of the world, there was much militancy, much activism to try to get changes happening. At the same time, again from the outside at that time, it seemed to me very few people outside of South Africa thought that it would ever change, although many people wanted it to. I think your anecdotes imply that some of the people there did believe that change was coming.

BROWN: Oh, I think so. It was complicated. For example, the comrades wanted to shut education down so children who wanted to be educated had to run the gauntlet.

Two students stayed with us for a couple of months while they studied for their exams. They had little chance of success. They sat for a chemistry exam never having been in a lab. And the set piece for literature was *The Great Gatsby*.

Q: Something remote from everyday life. Like Milton or something. The Great Gatsby which is hardly a reference point for an African, South African, who couldn't have had any experience, anything comparable to The Great Gatsby, no point of reference.

BROWN: I was in schools that had fewer books than I have cookbooks.

Q: Yes, so even the dearth of materials.

BROWN: Another area that struck me was the health of children. I visited a number of farm schools in the peri-urban area and I had never seen as much kwashiorkor, or severe malnutrition as there, not even in Central Africa. I think it was because people couldn't move. Essentially farm workers were indentured so they couldn't get up and go to where there would be better food and conditions for their children.

During the time we were there, South Africa stopped reporting on the health of black children. The UN, however, came out with a study showing that 85% of rural black children were below UN height and weight standards. And many fell into the stunted growth category. Children weren't being educated and their power of learning was drastically affected.

Hunger was used as a weapon by the government. While we were there, the government tried to move a small group of Ndebele to a homeland and it was starving them out, literally. An organization called Operation Hunger brought in food and water until the government stopped it from doing so.

The Ndebele women do wonderful beadwork. The women make beaded aprons for children, for girls when they are maidens and when they get married, and for other life events. When conditions got tough, women began selling their work, their patrimony, to buy food. Operation Hunger was an honest broker for this in contrast to collectors who took advantage, buying the aprons for next to nothing.

There are different estimates of how many people over a period of 20 or 30 years were forcibly removed, taken from their farms, their villages and businesses and moved to the homelands. The process was a difficult one for us to understand. There were a number of black spots under threat when we were there, a few of which we visited.

The government would try to cajole, persuade and threaten the leaders of the communities into moving voluntarily, sometimes putting in its own leaders. There were all kinds of psychological methods used against people and then – if the government decided to go forward - the helicopters and trucks would come in and take people away and the neighboring white farmers would buy the livestock and whatever was left.

Mathopestad was a farming community under threat while we were there. What was really chilling was that the government had come in and painted a number on each door. Of course it makes you think of Nazi Germany and the Star of David. The theater group that I talked about earlier came to the community to tell people about what to expect. Generally, the final move against a community took place when soldiers came in by helicopter.

When Ted Kennedy came, he got rushed and decided to visit Mathopestad by helicopter. This terrified people and it was – to say the least – unthinking.

Q: Did he understand that?

BROWN: I don't know if he did. We later talked to his aide about it.

We traveled to settlement areas where people were slated to go. At one Betsey Spiro, our political officer, said, "You are going to have less than ten minutes here." So we took off in different directions and, sure enough, the authorities were there within ten minutes to kick us out. The relocation area was basically composed of drop toilets.

Some resettlement areas had nothing but rows of drop toilets, nothing else. And people were expected to live there. One could recognize a homeland by the environmental degradation. South Africa had lush beautiful agricultural land; the homelands and resettlement areas looked like moonscapes. Generally the resettlement camps were constructed just outside the borders of the homelands and then incorporated in and at that point, people became citizens of an independent homeland and they were no longer South Africans. We visited a large resettlement camp in the Orange Free State. It was a place of enormous poverty, with a huge cemetery filled with children who had died of malnutrition and of course prostitution. What do women do in that situation? It was shocking to see.

We visited a homeland called Qua Qua. There were Israeli and Taiwanese firms there that had free and unregulated use of any labor. People had no recourse if they became sick or injured. There was no labor code, not even the most rudimentary one.

The head of Operation Hunger once told me: "If I have to choose between feeding a grandmother or her grandchildren, I feed the grandmother." The reason was that grandmothers often had been domestic workers and their small pensions were what keep people alive.

Q: They had passports that were recognized in no country except South Africa, right? They were citizens of countries that were unrecognized.

BROWN: We couldn't go into independent homelands.

Q: Because of U.S. policy?

BROWN: Yes. We could go into dependent ones.

Q: That may have been a good thing.

BROWN: Yes, I think it was except we needed to see what's happening.

Q: You said it was hard to understand the resettlement. Do you mean that it was hard to understand why the regime would do such a thing? Was it in fact against their own interests to disperse people? It seems logical that the regime in order to perpetuate itself would denationalize groups, divide and rule or whatever. What was it that was difficult to understand? That people could be so mean?

BROWN: The process of softening up a community is what I didn't understand, the rationale for that, the kind of psychological intimidation that went on before finally forcibly moving people.

Q: So it was the process that was very detailed, very systematic and kind of mysterious. Is that what you are saying?

BROWN: It was sadistic, I must say. You can understand, although not condone, wanting to keep people available for certain specific kinds of labor. The process was contorted. The Zulu homeland, for example, was composed of 19 scattered small areas.

Q: You also mentioned the time you went to see one of the resettlement camps and the political officer said, "You have ten minutes," knowing that the police would come. Can you describe the scene? Were these places supposedly off limits to the embassy?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: So when you went to see these places the South African authorities had said, "Don't go there." What was it that made you decide you could go there without actually being in terrible danger? You could be arrested? What was the worst that could happen?

BROWN: I don't think we felt in physical danger. We just wanted to see as much as we could.

Q: And the time you went, indeed they came in ten minutes. Can you describe?

BROWN: We were told to leave and so we said, "Right, we are out of here." We didn't give them any trouble. We just left. But they knew they were under observation.

Q: You went into an area where people had been resettled.

BROWN: They hadn't been resettled there yet. They were going to be.

Q: Where did the policemen come from? You went and then they came, is that right?

BROWN: Our car must have been noticed or followed. Generally the way they constructed those resettlement camps, they would be intended for one ethnic group and another ethnic group would be the builders for that. It is like Soweto; Soweto used to be pretty well mixed up and then the government forced people into separate townships within Soweto according to their ethnicity.

Q: Divide and rule.

BROWN: Divide and rule.

Q: You mentioned the word 'comrades'. I think ironically. I think you are referring to political activists who wanted to have nothing at all to do with the system and actually discouraged or intimidated people from going to school because going to school was a certain acceptance. Tell me about these comrades. What were they like?

BROWN: I didn't have much contact with them. I heard stories about them. They could be fairly

rough with people.

Q: Were they a large number? Were they a strong minority of people? Were they bullies?

BROWN: Yes, they wanted to force their will on people. I am not the best person to answer that because I dealt with people who wanted to engage in different ways.

One time I went into Alexandra which was a little township north of Johannesburg. Talk about bleak and pitted. There was a wonderful clinic there where babies were born onto newsprint, which is sterile. There had been some sniping, so the group I was to visit got the comrades to provide a specially marked car so I could have safe passage. It did. I didn't think that anybody would be interested in shooting me anyway, because there was no advantage to that, but I must admit I was a little relieved when I got in and I got out. The visit was uneventful.

Q: So they had to go to the comrades who were opposed to all these activities and get their consent?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: So you were there from '84 to '87?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Let's relive this in sequence. Ken was consul general. You met an individual in Soweto. With this individual you created an informal group, but it became a regular meeting and it always met at your house. How did things progress? You were there three years. Did you see any difference in your own presence in the community during those three years, or did you detect shifts in the country? It is a pretty narrow slice historically, but from beginning to end of your three years, how did you think things changed? Both for you and the community?

BROWN: Personal contact for American diplomats is always important. I think the way the American community in Johannesburg interacted with people in townships was very important. It takes a while for people to trust you and share their thoughts with you.

Our progress was reflected to some extent by the growing range of people who were willing to come to our home. More radical and conservative people came over time.

Q: I am guessing this had to do with your own personal approach and your acceptance of people of different types.

BROWN: Orrin Hatch came with a very conservative delegation once and we had dinner with him. During the conversation about apartheid, I felt I was in a different universe. Anyway, I asked the three or four women in his party to come to a luncheon. It must have been a real culture shock for them because they heard women talk about apartheid in ways they would never have heard any place else.

Q: It sounds as if the congress in the mid- '80s was almost the exact opposite of the congress in the mid- '90s. In the mid- '90s the Congress was demanding, not everybody, but a good number of congressmen, a boycott of South Africa.

BROWN: There were liberals who came through and a lot of very conservative, think tank types. Every once in a while Pat Buchanan would write a speech for Reagan and I'd think that any advance that we had made in dealing with the black communities was getting wiped out.

Q: What was the logic of the congressmen and the politicians and the think tanks in the U.S. who opposed change? Did they think change wasn't possible? Were they informed about what was happening?

BROWN: I don't think most Americans knew much about the South Africa system or wanted to know. They realized that it was a bad system, a cruel system, but there wasn't much sophistication as far as what apartheid was like, because it was a system like no other and the regime appeared to be so Western in nature. And perhaps they were comfortable with a ruling class of prosperous white men. There were, however, lots of people who visited who supported change.

Again, I think it was important for the consulate to educate people and expose them to what was happening. Ken really worked to report on black spot removal and put it in real human terms.

Q: To educate visitors, you mean?

BROWN: To educate visitors, yes. Nancy Kassebaum came.

Q: A relatively enlightened person.

BROWN: Yes and the staff would have died for her. She was just wonderful. There were others like that too.

Leaders matter in terms of what people report about and what kinds of contacts are encouraged. Ed Perkins came at the end of our tour, but you could tell it was going to be a new time.

Q: It's a pity you didn't have more time with Ed Perkins, I think.

Another question in passing about the internal culture of the consulate and of the embassy. You mentioned that other people accompanied you and sometimes went in these supposedly forbidden places or they joined you in these group activities. Did you feel that others accompanied you in every sense or did you feel you were a vanguard with nobody there? Did you feel there was a community of Americans at the consulate or the embassy who had the same beliefs and the same wishes that you did?

BROWN: I think so, I think it made it easier for people because of what Ken and I believed and

did.

Q: Ah, in fact you led the others.

BROWN: I took a group of women from the embassy and consulate into Soweto for a tea and some of them were very nervous, asking about what could happen and what should they wear. I told them not to worry, anything they wore would be outshone by the hats there alone. That was the case and everyone had a great time.

Q: What do you think they were nervous about? Actual security?

BROWN: I think because of the unknown.

Q: But this was familiar turf to you.

BROWN: For the most part, not always. Ken said he often got nervous when I went into townships. I never had any trouble. And I always avoided the military.

Q: Did the military avoid you?

BROWN: I don't know. The young soldiers were pretty raw.

Q: You described them as afraid.

BROWN: They were vastly outnumbered.

Q: Got it, got it. Things could turn against them. I am guessing that if they saw a foreign diplomatic mission vehicle, they'd just as soon not have trouble.

BROWN: If they knew what it was.

Q: They may not recognize one from the other. The ConGen does not go with the flag, right? It has to be the chief of mission?

BROWN: He sometimes flew a consular flag.

Q: These are really valuable reflections and recollections.

Would you have done any of it differently? Would you have done it quicker or would you have done it with full cannons blasting? The pace of the activities that you engaged in, looking back, are you satisfied with what you did?

BROWN: It was a rich personal time largely because of the amazing women I got to know. We had one last lunch to say good-bye. People made little speeches and Helen Joseph told the crowd that she didn't have many talents, so she stood up and sang "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean". I

can show you pictures of our laughing faces when she was doing that. She was a hero of mine. I treasure that memory.

I think I may have helped the image of America and I know my husband did.

Q: What about that image needed to be helped? Were we previously seen as indifferent, arrogant? How did that image need to be changed and how did you manage to do it?

BROWN: We needed to focus on the black communities, become a presence in those communities, and give our people the kind of information they needed to make better decisions about policy towards South Africa.

Q: If I were to say, "I am going to threaten you unless you take some credit; I am going to demand you take some credit for some achievements". Without making them up, what were your achievements? I am not sure you are taking the credit that you should take. I want to put it on the record here. I think you did some remarkable things and I want to know what they were.

BROWN: Bringing women together and having an open welcoming home was important. Also, I managed two or three hundred grants of different sorts, some of which were very valuable. And, I supported my husband, who was a real agent for change in many important ways.

Q: And you had a legal background. You went to law school.

Do you remember where you were and what your reaction was the day that Mandela was released and on the day of the elections in 1994? How did you feel?

BROWN: There had been several false starts. In fact, we were in Soweto one night and somebody said Mandela has been released and one could feel the excitement, but it wasn't true. I was elated when Mandela was released. The day of the election, when there were people stretched single file up and down over hills waiting to vote, was really something. It was really something to see.

Q: Did you feel you were a part of that? I don't know where you were at the time.

BROWN: I think I cry every time I see Mandela talk. In fact, we went to a theater production at the Studio Theater, a one-woman show in which the actress played 20 or 30 different South African parts. The main character was a black domestic worker in a white household. At one point she learns that her daughter was one of the children killed in Soweto. I started to cry and couldn't stop.

It was an exciting and moving time when we were in South Africa. People were working to build institutions and a better future. People were brave, they were prosecuted and persecuted.

And there were people that we loved very much and still see. Amina Cachalia, for example, visited a couple of years ago and we took her to Holocaust Museum. There is now an apartheid

museum in South Africa. And there are ironies. We adopted a little South African girl who is biracial. I took her to register for school when we returned from South Africa. A school official asked what her race was. I told him that she came from South Africa and we had had enough of classification. (Pinkie had originally been classified as black and later as Colored.) He said, "You do it or I'll do it, lady."

Q: Wow, there you were. Back at square one, so to speak.

Was this DC public schools?

BROWN: Yes. I think South Africa deeply affected everybody who served there.

Q: In your case it seems to have worked both ways. It had a deep effect on you and I think you had a deep effect on people there.

BROWN: I hope so, I hope so. It was a fascinating, emotional and rewarding tour.

Q: Bonnie Brown, thank you for this remarkable interview.

E. ASHLEY WILLS
Office of Southern African Affairs
Washington, DC (1985-1987)

Ambassador Wills was born in Tennessee and raised in Tennessee and Georgia. He was educated at the University of Virginia and John Hopkins University. Entering the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1972, Ambassador Wills served abroad in the field of public affairs in Romania, South Africa, Barbados, Yugoslavia and Belgium and in India as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Washington as Deputy Director for Southern Africa Affairs for USIA and as Political Advisor to the US Military Commander in the invasion of Grenada. From 2000 to 2003 he was US Ambassador to Sri Lanka. His final posting was as Assistant US Trade Representative. Ambassador Wills was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

WILLS: As I say four or five of us on the South Africa desk and we all worked extremely hard, long hours. We did more press guidance's, I was told, than any other desk in the State Department including the Israeli desk for the two and a half years or so that I was in that job.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WILLS: It would have been I think, March of '85 until the summer of '87.

Q: Before we move on, when you got there how long had constructive engagement or at least the

policy towards looking at South Africa been in place and what was the spirit both within the bureau and in your office? Also, this is a very controversial thing.

WILLS: Yes it was.

Q: What were you getting from outside?

WILLS: We got a lot of criticism from outside. In fact, one of the reasons I was attracted to the policy was because Crocker believed not only that we should engage with South Africa, the White leadership, but that we should also engage with the region's Black leaders, some of whom were committed Marxists, and try to draw them into constructive relations with the United States. Crocker, even though he wasn't a career diplomat, he had wonderful diplomatic instincts. He believed, as I do, that it doesn't serve the U.S. well to ostracize governments or to make moral judgments to the point where we are rigid. We always have to make moral judgment about regimes and leaders and so forth but we can also restrain ourselves and deal with these people. So he was trying to draw Samora Machel, a Marxist in Mozambique, toward us. He was trying to draw Bobby Mugabe, who has since become an irredeemable ass-hole but in those days he was negotiable. Kenneth Kaunda was a committed socialist in Zambia, constructive engagement was aimed at him as well and it was also aimed at South Africa. So we were getting criticism from the left for dealing with South Africa, we were getting criticism from the right, Jesse Helms being the leading critic, for dealing with Samora Machel. Senator Helms thought that was unconscionable. We had very high morale in the bureau because we thought if we are getting whacked from both ends we must be doing something right. So it was a very happy and hard-working office.

Q: Were you getting anything from your Foreign Service colleagues and USIA colleagues not in that happy crew but elsewhere?

WILLS: Yeah, my first ambassador in the Foreign Service and one of my heroes was Harry Barnes. Harry who was then ambassador to India came back a couple times and we had coffee. He was very skeptical; a lot of my Black friends were deeply suspicious, most of them but some of them understood what we were trying to do.

The way the public affairs bureau at State was set up in the day, I don't know if it still is, people who were desk officers or office directors with controversial policies would be asked to go out and speak. Most of the time we were too busy to do it; as I said most of the time we were working killing hours. But occasionally just to get out of the office I would accept speaking engagements. I remember once going to William and Mary to speak, another time I went to the University of Massachusetts consortium. In those appearances very often there would be protestors, people carrying placards trying to make our South Africa policy out as immoral and to make it as public an issue as opposition to the Viet Nam War had been when I was in university. I remember once when I was at the University of Massachusetts there was a debate between a leading Black American scholar, Roger Williams; he since has gone to George Mason and become a professor there, and me. The crowd of three thousand people in this gymnasium and this professor, my debating opponent, began his opening statement with the following sentence:

“I don’t know Ashley Wills but he must be a racist.” That caused the crowd to erupt, “...because he’s carrying out the policy of constructive engagement.” It was not a very gentlemanly way to begin a debate and it turned out he really was a gentleman but he was also deeply upset by what we were doing and thought it was serving the apartheid regime’s interest more than it was serving ours. But I insisted that those of us who were implementing the policy, devising it as it went along as it always happens in the State Department, we were committed to the end of apartheid and didn’t feel we were racist at all. In fact, we thought we were doing a service to the Black people of South Africa. So I felt, even though people would attack quite confident about what I was doing. It was in some ways the happiest I’ve ever been professionally because we had a cause; we felt it was noble, we felt it had applications beyond southern Africa. We thought American diplomacy, as a whole would be served well by adopting constructive engagement toward countries we didn’t agree with such as Cuba, for example, or North Korea or Iran or any of several other countries. So that was the approach, the philosophy behind it.

Q: There is this peculiarity which has always bothered me just the plain diplomatic approach that the worse relations get the more likelier you are to pull out your top diplomat, your ambassador, just when you should have the top person there.

WILLS: Exactly.

Q: I mean it’s not talking. It’s counterproductive and nuts!

WILLS: It is, I think it is. I think it is a very bad idea and my own experience in other countries, not only in this case, proved your point. Anyway, it was a very happy time for me professionally even though we were working very hard. We had two little kids living out in Vienna, Virginia. We’d been out ten years by the time we came back for what really became our only U.S. posting, five years in the U.S., and my wife used that occasion to get her masters degree plus it is called in school psychology at George Mason. So she was working very hard and I was working very hard and we were trying to tend two kids who were...

Q: How old were they?

WILLS: When we came back our son was five and our daughter was two, I guess. So our lives were full and busy. Even though I was an O-1 at that time I’d been promoted to O-1 in Barbados, we could barely get by financially. It was a stressful period but we were happy at home and happy at work; it was a great time. But it came time to decide what I would do next. Frank had left and a guy named Chas Freeman had come in to replace him, a brilliant officer as well.

Q: I’ve interviewed Chas too.

WILLS: A brilliant officer, he didn’t know a damn thing about Africa and became deeply knowledgeable in a matter of a few weeks.

Q: He learned Arabic while ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

WILLS: He learned Chinese well enough to be the official interpreter for Richard Millhouse Nixon on that historic first visit. The guy is a genius.

Q: He is.

WILLS: He would read a book a day. We would go on trips to southern Africa and Chas would go through a book like this.

Q: He's turning the pages very rapidly.

WILLS: He told me one time he reads at least one book every day. I would get home after an eleven or twelve-hour day at the State Department and taking care of two little kids while my wife went off to her night classes. The best I could do was turn on television and watch Northern Exposure or something to take my mind off... Chas was reading deep philosophical books and improving his mind and I was not. Anyway, people at State wondered whether I would like to convert to the State Department. USIA was pressing me about taking an assignment as deputy PAO in Yugoslavia; we have a very big USIA posting there. I talked it over with my wife and I felt loyalty to USIA and I'd always wanted to learn a Slavic language. At that point I spoke Romanian, French, Persian and a little Zulu. I wanted to learn another language, a Slavic language; Eastern Europe had always been my first love. So I ended my assignment in State, as I say, maybe the happiest professional period in my life, and went back to USIA and took ten-months of Serbo-Croatian, it was a difficult language to learn, all those damn cases. But the way I am about so many things was I was very systematic. I would study so hard and I came out of that with a three plus three plus after ten months and I was rarely as proud of an accomplishment as I was of that language result.

Q: Vrlo Dobro! Before we move to Serbia let's talk a little bit about what you were doing while you were on the South Africa desk, you yourself. What sorts of things were you involved in?

WILLS: Well as you know a guy or gal who runs the desk, especially a class one desk, is dealing with every aspect of diplomacy. I think I mentioned in an earlier conversation I had befriended the guy who was the head of the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation, the ANC's military wing. At one point, for example, Chet and Frank and Jeff Davidow and I were musing about how we could open up some contacts with the ANC with which we had no links really, as a way of putting more pressure on the White government in South Africa. Letting the people there know that we also were dealing with these guys and we also thought it would be useful as a way of exchanging messages; it turned out to be very useful. Well I piped up and said, "Well I happen to know the head of Umkhonto we Sizwe, he was my gardener in South Africa." They were laughing and thinking I was not serious, it turned out I was and that's how we initiated contact with the ANC. I flew to New York when we learned through intelligence he was coming to address a UN conference against apartheid. I showed up, we met and this lead eventually to the head of the ANC's coming to Washington and meeting Secretary Shultz. The photograph of my introducing the two gentlemen has an honored spot on my "me" wall at home. That's one thing.

I spent a lot of time on nuclear issues because we knew the South African's had constructed a

few nuclear weapons and we were trying to figure out how many and we were trying to get them to give them up. Frank especially was deeply involved in that and he and I and a couple others flew to South Africa a couple times to try to talk the South African's into giving up their nuclear weapons, which they did after the end of apartheid. But that train left the station a few years before as a result of our talks. The South African's knew that they couldn't really use these weapons, I forget how...

Q: How would they be used for?

WILLS: Exactly, but they had terrifically talented corps of scientists in the country and they were very clever about reprocessing fuel away from international inspections and acquiring some technologies they needed surreptitiously.

Q: There is supposedly an Israeli connection?

WILLS: Yes, there is even talk that something had happened, I think it happened while I was on the desk.

Q: That explosion?

WILLS: Yes, it was an Israeli-South African joint operation.

Q: There was this phenomenon out of ...

WILLS: Out in the Indian Ocean.

Q: Out in the Indian Ocean.

WILLS: Yeah. So that was another thing I worked on. The main thing we were doing was talking to them about apartheid and doing everything we could to improve the conditions for Blacks in South Africa, for political prisoners in South Africa, for Nelson Mandela on Robben Island. We would meet with the government either here at the embassy or out in South Africa constantly prodding them and making ourselves, I'm sure, quite unpleasant from their point of view, about police actions. Everyday there was some news story; that's why we did so many press guidance's. Somebody got killed in one of the townships or a political prisoner was beaten up, or there was a military action in Namibia where the South African's were backing one of the rebel leaders or in Angola where they were involved in the civil war there. So everyday there was a new crisis, something that we had to deal with. Let me digress here for a moment and tell you the best benefit I ever received in my Foreign Service career. As I said, we lived out in Vienna and I didn't qualify for a State Department parking pass. So everyday I would put on the back of my Volkswagen bug, a car that I commuted in, my bicycle. I would drive down to the State Department before the HOV restrictions...

Q: High Occupancy Vehicles.

WILLS: Yeah, 66 and I would drive down to Hains Point where I could park the little VW for free and ride my bicycle up to the State Department and park it in the basement. Well unbeknownst to me one day I was coming into the Department, this would have been about in November about eight months after I took the job. It was a rainy cold November morning and there I was pedaling into the Department. Chet Crocker happened to be driving into his State Department parking place and saw me. I didn't even know. That day I got a call from Chet Crocker's secretary who told me, who was a wonderful woman, and she told me that Chet Crocker had decreed that I will get a parking pass because he knew how hard I was working and that I had bought into his policy. So for the next two years I had a parking pass in the State Department. I can't describe to you what a joy it was to work and to drive into that building every morning and have a place I could park that little old VW bug that I partially restored so that I could have cheap transportation.

We had an interesting cast of characters on the desk, too. As I say, there were five of us so I had four assistant desk officers. Some of them knew about South Africa, some of them had no experience, all of them, I think, were skeptical about what we were doing at the start and after working there for a few months, obviously there was a lot of turn over, they'd all come to agree with the philosophy behind the diplomacy. We got along very well; one of them was a woman by the name of Sue Keough who was born a British national, educated in the UK and married an American FSO named Dennis Keough who was with our defense attaché at the time on an official visit to Namibia. They were in a gas station when one of the insurgent groups, I can't remember which one it was it might have been UNITA, blew a bomb up in the gas station. They weren't targeted, they just happened to be there and both of them were killed, Sue's husband. This happened in '82 or so or '83 maybe. So the State Department to its great credit offered Sue, since marrying Dennis had become a U.S. citizen, a job first as a civil servant and then she was brought into the Foreign Service and she had a distinguished career. I think she ended her career as consul general in Quebec City. She was one of the people on the desk. We had very talented people and everybody busting his ass.

Q: Being the public affairs person were you stuck with the job of meeting all these groups that wanted to come and pound on the table? Do you know what I mean?

WILLS: I wasn't the only one. It would depend on the level if it were a senior group, reputable group I would see them, if I could, if not one of the other four people on the desk would see them. I remember one time this is a bit of a kaffuffle the Swedish DCM and the Swedish political counselor, I guess he was the charge, came in to see me and I don't know how you feel about Swedish diplomacy or Nordic diplomacy generally but they can be condescending and they can be quite excessively moralistic. This guy called on me and started lecturing me about the evils of constructive engagement and how Swedish diplomacy took the principled stand there should be no contact at all with the evil apartheid regime. He went on and on and on, a soliloquy about ten minutes long, and I had three of my desk officers in this meeting with me because we weren't sure what subjects he wanted to discuss so I had the economics person, the human rights person and the political person and there were four of us. So I listened to this lecture for about ten minutes in my office. At the end of it I said, "Sir, I've had enough of your lectures. This meeting is not going to serve any useful purpose. Please leave my office and leave the Department of

State.” I kicked him out of the building. The desk officer for Sweden was there as well, it was a big kafuffle and I still think it was the right thing to do.

Q: Absolutely.

WILLS: What a prick coming into my office and telling off the United States...it was really bad. Anyway that was the sort of thing that was going on. There was a lot of tension and I understand now after years and years and years of retrospective thought that the guy was under orders to do that. He just didn't do it very well.

Q: Did you ever read a short article by the columnist and writer Tom Wolfe called Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers?

WILLS: No, I never did.

Q: Well this was of this talking about Black activists in San Francisco and particularly they included Samoans who are very big people.

WILLS: They are very big.

Q: And they would go in to protest about something and get screaming in the face and meeting then would be a man with rimless glasses and some pencils stuck in his thing and he was the bureaucratic and he would sit there and listen to it. He was designated flack catcher and the Mau-Mau's were the people who were trying to fight them. It was one of these little dramas that goes on all the time, which results in a lot of lightening and no particular substance.

WILLS: One of the reasons why we were all I think quite happy in that period and that bureau and that office was because there were several people in that group that had great senses of humor. If you can't see the humor in American diplomacy even on a serious subject like assaulting apartheid and trying to end it then there is something wrong with you. We had wonderful camaraderie in the office; we would have great parties, it was the best office. People would come from all over the State Department for AF/S Christmas parties. Everybody would bring something; I would make rum punch, a Barbadian recipe for rum punch. It was really a lot of fun. We felt like we were on a mission.

Q: By the time you left, about two and a half years, did you see any discernable cracks in the system?

WILLS: I accompanied Frank Wisner a couple of times and Chas Freeman once in meetings with Pik Botha who was then the foreign minister of South Africa. Once to a meeting with P.W. Botha who was then...well he was initially the prime minister then a guy named de Klerk took over for him and he's the one who brought about the end. I could see that they were becoming negotiable whereas when I lived in South Africa in the late '70s eight or nine years earlier they showed no flexibility at all and were supremely confident that their way was the virtuous way. By the time I left the desk in the summer of '87 it was clear in their body language and what they said that their

confidence was cracking. They were not sure what they had done was right, that maybe what they'd done was a colossal error. I think Pik Botha made it plain that the goal at that point in early '87 was to manage the end of apartheid, which ended, what was it, four years later, three years later. So even today some people will say it was the sanctions and the ostracism of the international community and they played a role. I don't question that at all but we also played a role. If we hadn't been their outlet, if we hadn't been their counselors, their psychological priests, if they hadn't had anybody outside who could reassure them that they could do this that they could end this in an honorable way and still protect the interest of not just their community but other South Africans then...

Q: What were you getting from your Black Africans, South African, contacts?

WILLS: You mean in neighboring countries?

Q: Also within the country, but I mean representatives.

WILLS: I think a lot of Black South Africans were angry at us for dealing with the Botha's and the Afrikaner leadership. A few might have understood it in an intellectual sense but emotionally living as a Black in South Africa, my God, what a horror. I think very few if any Black South African's accepted what we were doing but as I say some I think probably understood it intellectually. In the region as a whole, I think the leaders of the surrounding nations understood that this was a useful diplomatic thing even if they were as committed to the end of apartheid as we were or maybe more committed. As proof that constructive engagement worked with Samora Machel, he moved off his Marxism. Robert Mugabe throughout the '80s behaved himself. It was only since then that he's turned into a monster. There might be evil in the world and if there is he represents it.

Q: I think that in a way is not a matter of policy. That's a personal...

WILLS: Yeah, but my point is Robert Mugabe, Samora Machel, Kenneth Kaunda they all moved in ways favorable to America's national interest in that period and I attribute it very substantially to Chet's philosophical construct and his willingness to deal respectfully with people he disagreed with. I think that's the way I've tried to operate since then in other countries.

So anyway a year of Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Okay, again we are picking this up. This is November 18, 2008 Ashley Wills. So you finished was it still called Serbo-Croatian at this time?

WILLS: Yeah, turns out that I was there the last three years that federation existed. When I got there in the summer of '88 with what I thought was good Serbo-Croatian as I'm sure you've learned in your career. You can be by FSI standards more than competent in a language but when you get to a country you discover oh my God...

Q: Yes.

WILLS: I'm not as good as I thought I was. That was certainly the case the first six months or so I was in Yugoslavia. After a while my ear got tuned and my language got better and I ended up doing well. I remember the first cocktail party I went to, or official reception, the defense attaché I think was the host and I was there speaking Serbo-Croatian to this guy. He was chattering at me and I realized I didn't understand a word he was saying. He might have been saying as far as I knew that he intended to come over to my house that night, rape my wife and murder my children. And I'm sitting there smiling happily like I understand what the son of a bitch is saying because we learn, as you know, in the diplomatic service to nod agreeably even when we don't know what is going on. But after a while my Serbo-Croatian got better.

Q: But you were there from '88 to?

WILLS: '91.

RICHARD C. BARKLEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Pretoria/Cape Town (1985-1988)

Ambassador Richard C. Barkley was born in 1932 in Illinois. Barkley attended Michigan State University, served in the US Army after graduation, attended graduate school in Germany and then joined the Foreign Service in 1962. Barkley served abroad in Finland, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Panama, Norway and South Africa as well as ambassador to both the German Democratic Republic and Turkey. He also worked in NATO Affairs, INR, and as the Deputy Director of Central European Affairs. Ambassador Barkley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Dick, in 1985 you are off to South Africa. Where did you go and what were you doing?

BARCKLEY: I went as the DCM.

Q: Okay, so that gave you two places.

BARCKLEY: I actually had two residences. One was in Pretoria, which was the administrative capital of South Africa, and the second was in Cape Town which is the legislative capital.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BARCKLEY: From summer, I think it was early July, 1985 until three years later August, 1988.

Q: Ok, who was our ambassador then?

BARKLEY: When I arrived, our ambassador was Herman Nickel. Nickel had quite a reputation as an analytical journalist. He had worked for Fortune Magazine. He had interviewed Nelson Mandela and a number of key South Africans at different times, and was known for his critical understanding of what was going on in South Africa. My understanding was that he was selected by Chester Crocker who had met him somewhere, was impressed with his intelligence and drive. He had been ambassador there for about two years when I came.

Q: What was the situation in South Africa at the time both domestically how it operated, and how were relations with the United States?

BARKLEY: Well Apartheid was still in place, but it was crumbling around the edges. The National Party, which was the party of the Boers, was in power. The president was P.W. Botha. His party clearly controlled the white electorate. But at the same time a number of systemic changes had already begun. The economy was growing. There was an attempt on the part of the National Party and P.W. Botha to engage effectively in foreign policy areas. Unfortunately, that usually meant military attacks against the ANC or what they considered to be terrorist groups in Zimbabwe and Zambia. They also were engaged in a low level warfare with the Cubans in Angola. But the bedrock of Apartheid was beginning to fray around the edges. American policy was in the hands of Chester Crocker who was the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, a position he held for an eight year stretch. I arrived there about five years into the Reagan Administration, and Chester Crocker was an advocate of constructive engagement. The idea is that the white minority government was a powerful government. It had a sizable military force. It had a real anchor in the population.. The economy was still quite robust at that time. Crocker thought that you can't wish these people away, basically the Afrikaners. And, as you can't wish them away; the best thing you can do is engage them to convince them that the elimination of Apartheid is not the same as the elimination of the Afrikaner people, which was one of the things they were most concerned about. That indeed, reaching rational accommodation with their neighbors was not a sign of weakness. Also that a robust economy can play to the advantage of all South Africans, because as the economy grows, the base of expertise among the Whites, Anglos and the Afrikaners, was not sufficient to operate that economy efficiently. Therefore a growing economy would willy-nilly empower groups that had no power under the Apartheid regime. P.W. Botha had started to make some accommodations to those realities. There were now houses in the parliament, admittedly with very little power, for colored representatives and for Indian representatives. Botha apparently looked upon those two groups as a bulwark against the overwhelming power of the disenfranchised blacks. So Crocker wanted to engage, but his concept was often misunderstood. This was not engaging the Afrikaners as a legitimate government in order to entrench them in power, but indeed to induce them to change. Despite all of the arguments, political debate that went on in the United States which was sizable and substantial, no group that I knew of, had any goal other than the elimination of Apartheid. How you did it was the point of contention. There tended to be a feeling among many Americans that by punishing people you bludgeon them to the point where their economy is in such dire straits that they give up. Chester Crocker's idea was the opposite. You want to create such a dynamic economy that you bring more and more people into it, and in that process enfranchise them.

Q: Well Congress by the time you got there in '85, hadn't Congress levied some sanctions on

that?

BARCKLEY: The sanctions came later. Of course this was during the Reagan administration. There were a number of people in the Reagan administration, more specifically in the White House, who actually claimed that the communists were using the anti Apartheid movement to subvert what was going on. There was an East-West dimension to what was going on in South Africa. There is no question that the ANC, was the major opposition against Apartheid. It had been forced abroad or was in prison, and had large numbers of active communists in their ranks. The communist movement in South Africa is extremely interesting. Initially it was, and for the longest period of time, was focusing on organizing white workers because there is a large white laboring class in South Africa. People like Joe Slovo were obviously whites. But later on they broadened their appeals and began to realize that there was a great disgust with Apartheid generally, and that they could turn it to political advantage. Many of them joined very actively, and some at great personal risk and sacrifice joined the anti-Apartheid movement.

Q: Well what was sort of the status of the embassy in this difficult time when you got there?

BARCKLEY: Well interestingly enough when I arrived, Ambassador Nickel had been called back in protest over an incursion the South Africans had made into Zimbabwe. It was to show our displeasure with what was going on, only to find out the South Africans didn't particularly care if we had an ambassador there or not. Then came the question how do we lever him back in while maintaining the integrity of the United States. I landed, at that time and after a short interval after my predecessor departed. I took over as Chargé, and of course as you can imagine, it was entirely new turf for me. It was a rather frantic time. I was trying to get all of the elements of our policy as well as what was going on in the country under some control. In any event, after a relatively short period of time, Ambassador Nickel returned carrying a personal letter from President Reagan to try to encourage P.W. Botha to open himself to more reform. That became the hook on which Ambassador Nickel could return. So for the initial month or so, I was the Chargé.

Q: How did you find you were received by the nationalist government when You got there?

BARCKLEY: Well of course, as I was the Chargé I didn't have to present my credentials or anything like that. Most of my initial contacts were with the foreign office. The foreign office was an extraordinarily sophisticated group of people. They were all very well educated. By the standards of that time they were a forward leaning progressive group of usually, not only Afrikaners but a lot of Anglos too. These people were sophisticated and of course most of them knew perfectly well what the American position was. There was always sort of an ambivalence about them. Many of them liked Americans. There was a certain, I think, kinship because as strange as it sounds, the United States also had racial problems and had tried to come to grips with them. Although the races were absolutely different in South Africa. But I did not ever have any problems intellectually. There were a couple of people in the foreign office who were more hard headed than others, but most of the time you had regional or national discourse with them. The problems with the military were somewhat different. We did have meetings with the military fairly often. Once again, intellectually they seemed to be reasonable. They were pursuing their government's policy line, one that we strongly disagreed with. At that time, I think, among most

white South Africans, perhaps more among the Anglos than among the Afrikaners, this concept of “the spear in the window”, the haunting fear that their security will always be threatened, and the fear that if the black majority takes over, maybe they will treat us like we treated them. So there was a certain fear that could be played on. The thought I think among Chet Crocker and others at the time was if you challenge that fear directly they will go into what they call “lager” which is they will turn in on themselves, and shut out the world, and things will get even uglier and bloodier. But that if you indeed engage them intelligently and tell them there is nothing really to fear, their future as South Africans would be secure. That of course was a position that Nelson Mandela personally held, reasonable accommodations for all sides could be made without fear. Of course you draw these issues simply but they are complex issues and emotions ran very deeply on all sides.

Q: Well Nelson Mandela at that point was still in jail. You didn't realize the type of man and the thrust he would...

BARCKLEY: Well he was in jail, but people were seeing him with some regularity. I remember Helen Sussman, who was one of the foremost leaders of the Progressive Party an anti-Apartheid Anglo party, in Parliament, and an enormously courageous woman, would visit him on occasion on Robben Island. It turned out later that a number of government officials did meet with him fairly often. He wrote letters, of course through a number of people in his family. Now the government would of course selectively publish segments of those letters. But he wasn't totally in lockdown. That was when a number of things happened actually. I remember one of the first things that caught my attention. I hadn't been Chargé more than a week or two, when we got a visit by Steven Solarz, the Congressman from New York. Steven had developed quite a reputation in the foreign service because he traveled a lot. He was extraordinarily well read. He prepared himself extremely well. There were a couple of things of course, that he felt strongly about, and he had the tendency whenever he came to town to demand, not to ask, but to demand to see everyone from the President to the Prime Minister to the Foreign Minister on down. So every time that he appeared there was sort of a cumulative groan. “Oh God, you know, this guy is not the head of government or head of state. He is one of 435 Congressmen; how do we do all of these things.” Interestingly enough he is always remarkably successful in getting what he wanted because he put the fear of God into the Embassies and they worked their butts off for him. He also had a number of contacts that usually helped him one way or the other. In any event, he showed up shortly after I arrived. I was still trying to get established. Through a series of intermediaries and the embassy etc. he got almost all the appointments he wanted. So he went in to see P.W. Botha, and I went with him. This was actually my first introduction to the top leadership of the national party and the president of the republic. It was one of the most incredible sessions I have ever attended. Steve had a tendency to try to put people on the stand and grill them. Well the president of a sovereign nation doesn't feel he has to accept that kind of thing, but it was a stylistic thing that he did, and he usually of course, provoked a lot of responses, some perhaps he didn't want and others that maybe were illuminating. So we went in to see P.W. Botha, who turned out to be very large man with rather bulging eyes and bald pate, you know huge arms, a man of physical stature but a man who quite clearly had made somewhat a career out of intimidating anybody around him. In fact he had a reputation even among his people of reducing most everyone that worked with him to tears. Well you can imagine the

meeting of these two gentlemen was not going to result in a great deal of harmony.

Q: Sort of like a pit bull terrier against a mastiff or something.

BARCKLEY: Yeah, probably a fair analogy. You know the pit bull was out of his turf. Anyway, we went in and sat down and without much further ado, Steve started to fire questions. All right how do you do this; how do you justify this etc? P.W.'s bile rose very quickly and he looked at him and said, "How long have you been in my country?" So we said, "Three days." He said, "Then you must be a very stupid man." Well this is not the kind of language you would expect in these kinds of circles. He said, "You come here and lecture us on how we should behave; you should at least have the wisdom of understanding what you are talking about before you start mouthing off," something along those lines. Steve, who is very quick on the uptake said, "Well Ronald Reagan has never been here, but you listen to what he says." Anyway that was about the high point of this conversation. Shortly thereafter, a really incredible event took place where Steve, who just couldn't give up his inquisitive approach said, "Well when are you going to release Nelson Mandela? After all, he is an icon and a man of great stature and intellectual capacity etc. It would do you great good to do this." P.W. looked at him, narrowed his eyes and said, "Well I am not like you people. I take no pleasure in keeping an old man in prison." Steve looked at him and thought for awhile and wondered what in the world is going on. He said, "Mr. President, you are not talking about Rudolph Hess are you?" (Who at that time was in Spandau prison in Berlin and had been since the end of the war.) He said, "I am."

Q: I would have never thought of that.

BARCKLEY: Steve looked at him and God bless him, he said, "When Nelson Mandela is responsible for six million souls of Afrikaners around this country, I will accept that analogy. Until then I will not." Well everybody in that room except, P.W. Botha, had their heads were down scribbling and trying to avoid eye contact. Of course it was a marvelous retort. At that time P.W. got up and said, "It is ridiculous to even talk to you about this. Get out of my office." I had never been in a place where someone actually ejected his visitors. So we went out, and I have to say Steve was courageous but shaken. That was my first introduction to some of the harsh realities of the South African leadership. Shortly thereafter P.W. made his speech which was supposed to be his Rubicon speech that was supposed to open more liberal approaches in the country. He never crossed the Rubicon. He stayed firm.

Q: Was there someone equivalent to the chief of staff or national security advisor or the equivalent thereof? Somebody who would take the hard line of the president and put it in perspective, on the South African side?

BARCKLEY: Well interestingly enough the ones I think who put at least the Afrikaner perspective more into focus were the ultra conservatives. Truerneck was a party believe it or not, far to the right, of course of the nationalist party who objected to everything. Furnek was the head of this party. We met with him on occasion. It was interesting because whenever I met with them, John Burrows was along. John was an African American consul general in Cape Town. The ultra conservatives were actually very fond of him. What we found out later was the one thing that

either the nationalists or the conservative Afrikaners most despised were liberal whites, not blacks. It was an interesting thing. But their policy was, in short, "If we went to one man, one vote, we Afrikaans immediately become irrelevant in this country. And this is our country. We created it, and we will not become irrelevant in our own country". So that was basically the line that justified Afrikaner intransigence. It was one that I think was held at a lot of different levels. Now P.W. Botha did have a staff, and many of them would speak with us. Some were quite rational and articulate. The foreign office too basically trying to say, "The line of the government is quite clear, but we are in transition, and when in transition it is not quite clear where we are going to be heading. But certainly the idea is that we will certainly try to come to an accommodation". One of the whole principles of Apartheid, of course, was that every black would have a homeland. Incredibly they created artificial homelands all around, so all of the blacks could claim some sort of nationality of Swana, Swasi, or Zulu. Sotho, they all had homelands. Those homelands had measures of independence but quite clearly they were basically controlled by the South African government. Also they were created out of the least attractive, least arable, parts of the country. So what they did is basically try to create legal reservations to which everybody somehow legally belonged. It was obviously a pernicious kind of design, but theoretically that is the way they justified a lot of things. And they would tell us, talk to the president of Siskei or Transkei or whatever when issues arose in the designated homelands. Soweto was of course outside of Johannesburg, was the largest city in black Africa. It wasn't on any maps at that time. People were theoretically there just on temporary status, but many of them actually were there permanently. Soweto itself like many big cities had slums and some terrible squatters camps but also had a place called Beverly Hills, which had quite lovely homes. The whole country was a contradiction in so many ways.

Q: In the embassy you were still, you had never served there before, so is there a conventional wisdom in that? I can remember when I was in INR dealing with Africa. I had the horn of Africa, but this is back in early 60's, 1960 actually. There is going to be a night of long knives you know when the blacks took over. You know this is what we were all saying. What was the attitude when you got there?

BARCKLEY: Well, when I got there, I mean the overwhelming power of the white establishment was everywhere evident. At the same time you could see all of the signs that there was a restive population, and things were not going to improve. The Embassy looked at itself not only as supporters of American policy, and every officer I knew supported American policy, although some somewhat selectively. South Africa, of course was quite different than the rest of Africa. It is the only one (after the creation of Zambia and Zimbabwe) in which there was a white government and there was a sizable and permanent white population. South Africa was also the economic engine of almost all of Africa. The trade that went on between South Africa and the rest of Africa was sometimes sub rosa, because people didn't talk about it, but it was enormous. Without that engine of South Africa, there would be terrible problems throughout Southern Africa. We are beginning to see that today in Zimbabwe. So the Embassy had a lot of people who knew the situation very well. Many of them had served in South Africa before, but even those who hadn't, like myself, understood that we were actually engaged with a regional powerhouse. That meant that somehow without doing terrible damage to the productive capacity of South Africa, which was as I said, essential to other parts of the region, we wanted to make the

transition away from Apartheid into a democratic order. I think everybody was basically committed to that line. Now quite obviously there were a number of people, many of them Americans, who thought maybe South Africa at that time was not the worst possible situation. People used to come in from the neighboring countries and of course, quite enjoy the material wealth that they encountered, because most of the neighboring countries were in real economic straits. But nonetheless, I mean there was never in my experience, any doubt that the American government stood for change. Now the Embassy could do and did do one rather marvelous thing. We became in many respects the only forum in which these different political groupings could communicate. If we had a party or if we had a reception, we insisted on including every part, every segment of that society that we could. Now quite obviously we couldn't take banned people and bring them into the Embassy, but there were huge numbers of people who were in anti Apartheid organizations, such as the UDF, the United Democratic Force, and we would invite them and they would actually meet the parliamentarians from the government or members of the foreign office, and for the only time, have meaningful discourse. The Embassy I think, provided a wonderful service in that regard.

Q: I mean these would be, there was no problem having blacks to the embassy.

BARCKLEY: Oh no. As a matter of fact after Herman Nickel left, to emphasize the importance that the United States placed on a colorless society, the President selected an African American to be the new ambassador. It was Ed Perkins. And of course when he was on station, then the outreach was even more effective into the black community. The black community was sometimes confounded by this because they said that having a black ambassador doesn't mean that we like what your government is doing. But nonetheless, there was always an effort. We had a difficult time, and this was the problem that Ambassador Perkins, who was a remarkable man, encountered. So when he took the job, he was under enormous pressure not to do so, because some looked upon this as gimmickry. But Ed Perkins was an ex Marine Corps officer, and when his commander in chief asked him to serve, he was going to do it. He made a number of commitments to bring more and more African-Americans into the Embassy. But when he started to try to recruit them, he encountered the same problems the rest of us did, that most of them refused to go. John Burroughs, our consul general in Cape Town, had served as ambassador in Malawi and was an extraordinarily sophisticated and decent man. He took on this job under a lot of pressure but it was an extraordinary advance for American policy for people to see them there. Nonetheless, even Ed Perkins had a difficult time recruiting black officers.

Q: Well did you find that you were running across, any embassy where there is a controversial problem, you often have somewhat of an age split or a rank split. The junior officers are all for going out and changing the world, and charging around, and the old fogies at the top are trying to preserve relations and do things in a more orderly manner. Did you run across this?

BARCKLEY: Well strangely enough that doesn't speak at all to what I experienced. Right from the top when I arrived, Herman Nickel as ambassador had really great credentials, particularly in the United States. He was personally engaged in the civil rights movement. His view that coincided with Chester Crocker was just posturing on South Africa was not going to get you anywhere. But there was no doubt as to where they stood, that this regime must change. Now that

went through the entire fiber and fabric of the embassy. Some people were a little bit more outspoken. Our USIS head was Bob Gosende who had a lot of experience in Africa and was particularly forthright in his views. He was a wonderful officer. But everybody felt this. Now I think perhaps a couple of members of our military mission might have felt a little bit too close to the military in South Africa. The South African military was indeed of course in battle with Castro's troops in Angola. That immediately defined the South Africans as somebody we should appreciate. But also as I am sure you have experienced military people generally have the ability to communicate with each other despite their political orientations. It is the same thing I think you find with most foreign service officers, because your frames of reference are the same. But other than that we had a bit of difficulty one time because one of our military would try to invite the so-called ambassadors from the Homelands to one of their parties, and we had to call him on that and say, "Stop it. That is not our policy. You are not independent here. You work in concert with the United States government." As soon as they were aware of where we stood, that stopped. But sometimes there was a tendency to get wound up in attaché parties and things without thinking what the implications would be.

Q: Well did you get involved with Inkatha party?

BARCKLEY: Yes, well, the Inkatha party was almost totally a Zulu party. Mangosuthu Buthelezi was the president of Zululand. There is an historical framework to that. There are many tribes in South Africa. The biggest tribe by far is the Zulu. These are called the Nguni people. The Xhosas have a close kinship with them. The Zulus are a martial kind of tribe, with a long history. Everybody knows the Zulu as courageous warriors going back to the time of Shaka, and earlier. But there was always an animosity between Zulu and Xhosa. Now interestingly enough Buthelezi was of the royal house of the Zulu nation, Nelson Mandela was a prince of the Xhosa nation. The Xhosas became much more active in the ANC, the African National Congress, and I think they probably could trace some tribal animosities back there too. Buthelezi was a man of considerable intellectual and organizational gifts. He put together the Inkatha party, which in some respects had a great deal of respect for the Afrikaners because of course they had engaged in battle many times over their history. He was fearful that the ANC would not only seize power but that all of the other tribes would join the ANC and marginalize the Zulus. The ANK tried to organize the Zulus, Buthelezi fought back. Sometimes they also picked on the Indians who were merchants in large numbers in Natal which is where the Zulus basically lived. So Inkatha had the problem that it was tribal, it was regional, and of course its leadership was royal. People used to say that in view of the size of the Zulu nation, there cannot probably be a solution in South Africa without them, but they are not the solution per se. So there was a unique quality to Inkatha. But of course the Zulus like everybody else had been engaged in the process of urbanization, so there were Zulus in Soweto, and they tended to be loyal to their tribal background, and many of them were Inkatha members. Every now and then there would be real bloodshed. I think that is still going on as a matter of fact. I saw and met with Buthelezi several times. He is a very charming and extraordinary sophisticated English speaking fellow. Most of the black African leadership was educated. It is an irony of South Africa that Fort Hare University was run by Afrikaners. They trained almost all of the people that were active in the anti Apartheid movement, including Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela.

Q: How did you find the academic part of South Africa as far as our embassy was concerned?

BARCKLEY: Of course you always look to the universities as where the intellectual ferment that is going on. By and large, not surprisingly, the universities had a liberal bent. Often not surprisingly also, many of them were from Anglo backgrounds, like the press itself. But for one or two papers, most of them were considered liberal. You know, liberal in South Africa probably has a different dimension than it does elsewhere, but basically they wanted to see positive change. They seemed to think that the end of Apartheid would mean they would have black leadership, but nothing else would change. Of course that is not true, but everybody, all the whites lived in such levels of prosperity and privilege, that I think many of them looked forward to the future with great anxiety. Most of them, certainly the liberal elements knew they couldn't continue like it was.

Q: What about the coloreds and Indian communities? Were these ones we could have good contact with?

BARCKLEY: We had good contacts with everyone. The colored community was particularly strange. The colored community basically was a group of people who had intermarried mostly in Cape province. They were mixtures between traditional blacks and whites and bushmen and Hottentots, some elements including a sizable Malaccan group, which came out of the East Indies. One must remember of course, that Cape Town was just a fueling station for the Dutch East Indian company for a long time, and then was seized later on by the English during the heyday of British imperialism. But there was a large number of people who actually didn't fit in to any of the tidy categories of Apartheid. For a sizable element the only language they had was Afrikaans. English was not their language. As a matter of fact the Afrikaans language came out of these people who had simplified the Dutch and the German and French elements that came in at that time. These people were, I am speaking generally of course, basically afraid of the black Africans who were there in such large numbers. At the same time of course they too had suffered all of the elements of Apartheid, the worst parts of it from the Whites, so they were betwixt and between. The Whites tried to play on their fear of black domination, and did that to some success. But at the same time, some of the key leaders in the fight against Apartheid, I think primarily of Alan Busak was from the colored community. The Indian population which was very largely located in the Natal or in Durban but they had some of the same characteristics. You know Apartheid is perverse, in its urge to categorize people, but didn't know where to put people at certain times. For example, they certainly knew the difference in their minds between Afrikaners, or whites and blacks. They had trouble defining those in the middle like coloreds, and Indians. Of course, when Asians started to arrive they even had the category of honorary Whites. It was really perverse. The system was put together with such care that somehow everybody had to be identified.

Q: Well now, were we the only ones? You talk about the embassy being a place where all parties could get together. Were other embassies doing this same thing?

BARCKLEY: They were doing it in different ways. The British embassy was I think the closest to the way we were working. Quite obviously the British had a vested interest in what was going on

because there was a sizable population came from Great Britain and many of them still carried British passports. Therefore they had a dual problem, not only to represent their viewpoints on Apartheid which was basically what they did in Rhodesia and wanted to do in South Africa. They also had to consider a large number of people who were their citizens. Indeed if there was to be a huge flight from South Africa it would affect them directly. This has happened, of course, in other areas. It was still going on in Zimbabwe. When people pack up and leave, where do they go? They go home. They go to Britain. Well you talk about the injection of a couple of million people, you are talking serious dislocation, so they were very concerned. Of the others, I was naturally interested in the Scandinavians because I knew the Norwegian minister very well. They had different approaches to Apartheid.

The Scandinavian attitudes were very interesting because there was such anger in the Scandinavian countries towards Apartheid and its elements, but at the same time there were interesting trade possibilities in South Africa. Many of them played a double game rather effectively as a matter of fact, where the Head of the Mission, usually a Minister or Ambassador would go through the niceties of talking to the government etc, and then a second person in the Embassy was their contact with the black community. They put a lot of support into the ANC mostly via the ANC abroad. ANC headquarters abroad received an extraordinarily high amount of money to fight Apartheid. And of course as there were certain openings in the community of the Africans in South Africa itself, they got in very closely with people like Winnie Mandela and others who were speaking out more vocally. So they financed these people's activities at a lot of different levels. Particularly the Swedish ambassador and the Swedish DCM were very effective at doing both things. The DCM was an extraordinary, attractive, and engaging woman who fought very hard to make sure that the anti Apartheid movements knew they had a friend in Sweden.

Q: Did you find in observing these groups, the ANC and Inkatha and all that, you know, money was coming from abroad to help them. Did you see a problem of sort of careerists trying to take over and sort of enjoying the fruits of the money but not pushing the cause?

BARCKLEY: You know I think most of the anti-Apartheid engagement was at such a level that they could not be purchased off. That doesn't mean that human beings aren't susceptible to a large injection of money. I would meet with the ANC on occasion. I met with Thabo Mbeki in Botswana. These groups would come into Botswana for example, and we would have conferences with them. Afrikaners and others would also attend, so there was a constant exchange. But the problem of the ANC abroad was that more and more of them lost touch with what was actually happening in South Africa. Of course once Nelson Mandela was released and the ANC was legitimized, ANC people flowed back in. There was a certain animosity between those who stayed behind and fought in the trenches and those who lived abroad. And of course the policy of liberation is an extraordinarily complex question. How much pressure do you put on? How many bombs go off? What is the legitimacy between attacking what is obviously an illegitimate system? Those things continued for a long time. But the people that I knew were very courageous in their fight against Apartheid. One of them, Alan Busak, I knew quite well, although he was careful in his relationships with us. Busak was a colored Dutch Reformed minister who was very active in the anti Apartheid movement, and was one of the key leaders of

the UDF. He was also a man who could be corrupted by fine things. He always wore suits tailored in Italy and flew first class and stayed at the Georges Cinq and things like that, and he didn't do it on his own dime. It was quite clear. I think he worked on the assumption then and probably even does today is that his courageous engagement in the anti Apartheid movement actually made these little peccadilloes rather minor. Yet I am sure the South African police had documented all of this, where the money had gone, etc.

Q: What were you observing about during the time you were there about the hand of the South African whites through the police force? I keep thinking of some of the things that happened in our south you know, the redneck sheriff beating up on people. I mean how...

BARKLEY: Oh, yes, I think that what went on in the police stations was absolutely horrible. I mean there is no question about it. I mean the case of Steve Biko is something that took place before I was there. They were always heavy handed. I think one of the things that constantly amazed me is the courage of a number of people who live in that society who also knew perfectly well what the police and the military were capable of, and the courage they showed. One of Steve Biko's friends was Peter Jones who was a guy I knew very well, a colored guy who lived in Cape Town. We got him to the United States against a lot of opposition from his own friends who thought he was being purchased by the Americans. I remember meeting with Peter many times. He was an extraordinarily wonderful man. He said, "You know you go to the United States and there is this simplistic notion of how we live. True I live in what is a colored township, but I live in a very nice bungalow, better than most people in the United States live in." When American blacks found out he was a CPA and that his hobby was not to throw bombs but to go scuba diving they couldn't believe it. But nothing fit into the different pictures that we have of these people. And yet, the courage he showed in meeting his convictions and continuing to organize against Apartheid was impressive. I think the fact was that all throughout South Africa one saw things that did not fit easily into the American frame of reference. It was very hard sometimes to sort it all out.

Q: I would think that more than in most places where I think they tend to be more pro forma, that our entertainment thing must have been part of a war plan in putting the right people together at different levels and so on.

BARKLEY: Yes, although I think a war plan would be better conducted and better devised. But the fact was that everybody knew that when we gave a party we wanted representatives from every segment of that society. I remember particularly one fellow who came. In fact I think he is in jail now for having committed murder, a fellow named Clive Darby Lewis, very British with the guard's clipped mustache, speaking clipped English. He was a dyed in the wool reactionary. He would meet with these members of UDF, and they would engage him in a rather active shouting match. But inevitable afterwards they would say thank you. I never had a chance to talk with this guy before. I don't think that this made a major difference in the government's final decision to give up the system, but it certainly allowed a level of communication that was very rare.

Q: How did you deal with, yes I imagine every politician worth his salt, particularly ones

engaged in civil rights in the United States, I am thinking of Jesse Jackson and others, would pop down there from time to time to see things for themselves.

BARCKLEY: Well it was very interesting. As I said before, a number of members of the black caucus would show up. They inevitably would be put up at the Carlton Hotel, which is a beautiful hotel in Johannesburg. They would meet with almost everyone. They usually didn't meet with the president. P.W. Botha didn't see them very often, but he did on occasion. But primarily Pik Botha who was the foreign minister would meet with them. What you saw clearly was that for the Afrikaner, the true traitor, and villain, was the liberal white, who was willing to sell out his kinsmen. They understood fully well that whether it was an African American from the United States or whether it was a black African from South Africa, that it was natural for these people to be unhappy with their lot. These are groups that are fighting to maintain some level of control over each other. I remember very well sitting there one time, and the American black caucus were sophisticated people. One of them at one time was Rev. Fauntroy from the District.

Q: Washington, DC. William Fauntroy, yes.

BARCKLEY: He is extraordinarily well spoken. He got up and they said at one time when they were talking to Pik Botha, he said, "I understand that you have trouble with the British." Pik said, "Well this goes back to the Boer war when the British instituted the first concentration camps," and went through this entire history. "Yeah, we have some deep seated problems with them. We were treated like second class citizens." Fauntroy responded, "Well then you must know how the blacks feel." Well Pik didn't have a particularly good answer for this, but the answer was, "We well understand how they feel. But we are not going to become irrelevant in our own country. Later on, just before I left South Africa, we had a visit by Coretta Scott King. Jesse Jackson and others showed up independently. She is obviously an American icon and a wonderfully alert and bright woman. She found that she got caught in the midst of competing black groups, because she thought that she could come in with her stature and meet with any group she wanted to. She decided she would accept an invitation to meet with Buthelezi, whereupon all of the UDF and other groups told her that if she did that, they wouldn't meet with her. So she found out that her ability to harmonize all different groups and meet with all different groups and all of these things was very limited. There was some very deep animosities between these groups. Indeed as they all were black, it was really a dilemma that they encountered.

Q: What were you getting form the business community about, I mean during this '85 to '88 period about how things were developing?

BARCKLEY: I am speaking in generalities, but by and large the business community was largely controlled by the Anglos. That goes back to the gold and diamond mines and all of these other things. The Afrikaners came out of a rural base basically. They were farmers and later on bureaucrats and policemen and military etc. But the business community was largely Anglo, and was largely friendly to the progressives which were the anti Apartheid whites in Parliament. Of course there were some extraordinarily big companies. The Anglo-American mining company and a lot of these different groups, and they all of course, were calling for the end of Apartheid.

Yet at the same time the leadership in these groups remained Anglo white. They did begin the process when I was there of trying to train and bring highly educated blacks in to the leadership. They were aware indeed they had an international reputation to try to uphold. The value of the Rand, credit, and all of these things depended on good ratings so they very much wanted to be seen as progressive and against Apartheid.

Q: Did you, you mentioned not boycott but sanctions. Did they start during your time?

BARCKLEY: They started actually just about a year before I left.

Q: What was the feeling from the embassy about sanctions and how did that work?

BARCKLEY: Well in principle of course, Chet Crocker and others thought that sanctions would un-do one of the major elements of constructive engagement, and that is that if you savage their economy, the first people that will suffer will be the blacks. If you expand the economy the first people that will take advantage of it, because they are the majority and people need them, are the blacks. That is a position that was held also by Helen Suzman, who believed that the solution was not actually to ruin the economy but to expand it. So there was a lot of opposition. But at the same time in the United States, politicians move to entirely different drummers. There was a great groundswell of anger over Apartheid, and our inability to get things moving etc. Randall Robinson and the different groups in the United States said, "Well they don't understand anything but the fist and therefore we must impose sanctions." It developed among a broad majority in Congress that sanctions were not welcome but they were a visible sign of American discontent. Pretty soon, the pro sanction groups in Congress and particularly in the Senate had a vast majority, Republicans as well as Democrats. It was only at the last minute that the White House and basically, tried to stop it. It was the first major defeat of the Reagan administration.

Q: Were you there long enough to feel how the bite was working?

BARCKLEY: Well the South Africans had lived with sanctions in a lot of different areas, particularly in military hardware, things like that, for a long time. They had become very adept at evading them. I mean one of the things is they developed quite a good relationship apparently with Iran because they were able to get oil and other things. So they had become quite good at it. But yet I think that you could see primarily that different American companies who might have decided to go into the market or stay in the market changed their minds. So it was starting to bite. Then the fear was that if it bites too much, and if the Afrikaners see the economy going to hell, that they will go deeper into "lager" because they realize the world is against them. Then people saw of course even more conflict coming out of this. As it turned out the sanctions did bite and did hurt to the point where finally the Afrikaners almost yelled uncle. This was after I left and after P.W. Botha was gone.

Q: How about the Israeli connection while you were there?

BARCKLEY: Well it is a very interesting thing. There is a long historical background between the Afrikaners and Israelis. Way before there was a State of Israel, there was a belief among many of

the Afrikaners which are Old Testament Christians, that they were the last tribe of Israel. When they established their covenant with the Lord, of course, much of it was an eye for an eye kind of covenant. Indeed when Israel became a state, one of the first countries to recognize them was South Africa. And indeed the first official visit from South Africa to Israel was from South African President Malan.

Q: Well were we concerned about a too close a relationship with Israel?

BARKLEY: Well there was at one time a lot of speculation that indeed South Africa was developing a nuclear capability and they had some assistance from the Israelis in this effort. I don't think this was ever shown to be the case. There was no question the South Africans did have this capability. We apparently monitored an explosion in the Kalahari Desert, that nobody could quite explain, and thought therefore that indeed it was a nuclear device. I remember Ed Perkins discussing the issue of nuclear capacity with Pik Botha one time. Pik Botha looked over at him and smiled and said, "Well you know, whether we have it or not, the important thing is for the blacks in Africa to think we have it because it is white man's magic." Now of course the utilization of any kind of nuclear weapon is absurd in the face of it because I mean you know everybody lived together. I think that probably put a stranglehold on their capacity to convince the black majority that indeed these guys have access to a technology that exceeds our understanding.

Q: Well did you have any feel for what the Israeli embassy was up to?

BARKLEY: No, I think the Israelis kept their nose clean. I knew the ambassador quite well. He was seen but he was not overly active. It was a very correct relationship. There was a large Jewish population in South Africa, most of them from Lithuania, the vast majority from Lithuania, had been there for many years. In almost every intellectual activity, there was a large Jewish representation as well as in the business world. So they had influence in excess of their numbers. But most of them were members of the Progressive Party, they were active in these things. There were a number of people who left South Africa out of protest. Many of them were living in England, and many of them were living in Israel in the hope that after the end of Apartheid they would come back. We knew a number of people whose children had actually left. Interestingly enough, everybody that left out of protest couldn't wait to get back. Of course, they had to be able to wait until things had changed before they could return in good conscience.

Q: How did you find USIA work, information people? Did they have pretty free reign there?

BARKLEY: Yes. We had a very good group. They were obviously very effective in trying to get information out about where the United States stood on things. We had a cultural program, but quite clearly most American cultural groups would not come to South Africa. That was a form of showing their dislike of the regime. But I think in terms of trying to get the American position out, they were very effective. They were very professional. We had of course a branch PAO in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. They were very good. I was very pleased. As I said, Robert Gosende was the head of it most of the time I was there. He was extraordinarily effective getting American positions out to all segments of the media.

Q: How did you find moving back and forth between Pretoria and Cape Town?

BARCKLEY: Well I had the great advantage that my wife and I did not have children then. It was a burden for people who had children quite clearly. At the same time the idea of having two residences, and they were very generous and nice residences was appealing. Both residences were furnished, so what you would have to do every six months is take the pictures off the wall and then re-hang them. After the first move you began to know where things went. It turns out because of ongoing problems in the parliament that we spent a longer time in Cape Town than expected. But the movement of course helped us get to know the country pretty well. Of course we were talking over 1000 miles between Pretoria and Cape Town. It is a big country. In our movements back and forth, I would inevitably try to get down to Bloemfontein or Kimberly or see some of the parts of the country. Between the area was a very vast wasteland called the Karoo, not a total wasteland but it was not very hospitable area. It was a fascinating country, and an extraordinarily beautiful country. Alan Paton writes about, of course not only the traumas of the country but its incredible beauty as well.

Q: We talk about USIA, what about the CIA? In some countries the CIA gets in bed with the government and other times it doesn't. It can dominate. How did you find you know I mean obviously this is an unclassified interview, but how did you...

BARCKLEY: Well it was not a large station. They were very professional. Obviously they interacted with the intelligence services. As I say they were very professional. They knew perfectly well that the kinds of information that was passed to them usually had a purpose. It was not an active station in the sense that there was any undermining going on. We did have interestingly enough, an AID mission. By any indices we had we should not have had an AID mission because the per capita income of South Africa, even South Africa's blacks was much higher than that of most countries. But the AID mission had a political content. The political content was to show sensitivity towards emerging black institutions and groups. So we did put money into different elements. It was a difficult issue sometimes because some of the groups that had been the most effective in fighting in the anti Apartheid movement also had some Communist affiliations. We always had to be somewhat sensitive to that. Quite obviously it wouldn't have helped out aid program if it had become controversial in the United States. But we had labor programs, we had a number of programs that were really quite effective I thought. Maybe not so effective in development; that is not what we were talking about. But at least in demonstrating our commitment to the anti Apartheid movement.

Q: Well did you find that the Soviet Union was beginning its at least it lost its thrust abroad. It was having many problems of its own internally. This was the Gorbachev era. Was the Soviet Union much of a factor?

BARCKLEY: No I don't believe so. I think there were certain people perhaps in Washington that thought there was a constant. I am not an expert on this. I have never spent time in Africa before, what I believe some people were looking for political advantage in Africa, and that every time there was Soviet penetration we had to counter that etc. During the time I was there, Gorbachev

was just beginning to come to grips with Perestroika and Glasnost and it subsequently became apparent that the Soviet Union was not able to keep pace with the technological and economic advances of the western world. Soviet policy didn't play very largely here unless you were one of those people who believed the anti Apartheid movement was actively controlled by the communist party. There were some people who believed that, but none of them in our embassy. At the same time you know, it was becoming, not quite as clear as it did later on, that the appeal of the Soviet solution was waning everywhere.

Q: Well then was there any difference in the way Herman Nickels and Ed Perkins operated and used you?

BARKLEY: No. I will say both of them were quite generous. They let me basically run the embassy which of course was the DCM's job. I was looked upon as the executive officer. There were considerable times when I was the Chargé. Of course every ambassador has a different style. But in terms of working together, both of them were very harmonious. We were there for about a year and a half when Herman left. He had become sort of a lightning rod for the anti Apartheid movements in the United States. He stayed longer than his normal three years. He was a political appointee and could stay longer. He stayed almost four. There was increasing anger over his behavior. Apparently it goes back to a visit by Teddy Kennedy in which Ambassador Nickel gave welcoming comments to him to which he took offense later on. So he was looked upon I think quite unfairly, nonetheless as one of the architects of the American policy against sanctions, therefore against the anti Apartheid movement. It was not at all true, but nonetheless, he began to get that reputation. Ed Perkins had come out after being ambassador in Liberia. Initially it was my understanding they wanted Terry Todman. Todman at that time was ambassador in Denmark. I remember he gave a press conference in which he said he would not even consider going to South Africa unless we changed our policy, which of course made it extremely difficult for the Administration to ask him. I don't know if it was officially ever offered to him or not. Nonetheless I was called finally by Chet Crocker who said, "Ed Perkins will be coming out as ambassador," and he gave me some of his background, and of course it was a very impressive background. Ed came out. He is an imposing fellow.

Q: Very dignified.

BARKLEY: He is a large man. Of course so was John Burroughs. I am of short stature. I usually looked at them at the necktie level. Ed is a man of enormous dignity. It just exudes from him. I remember the presentation of his credentials. He went in and he saw P.W. Botha. Botha was extraordinarily generous to him, and I'd seen as you know, moments when Botha was not generous. Ed obviously knows the foreign service, He knew how to run it. He knew what was going on. He was very professional, and an extraordinarily nice human being on top of all of these other things, as well as intellectually curious. He had spent some time in Africa, and of course was obviously fascinated by the difference between South Africa and what he had experienced earlier, and particularly about that special tribe called the Afrikaner. What is that drives these people?

Q: Known as the white tribe of Africa.

BARCKLEY: Exactly. No one should ever mistake that these are Africans. I mean there is no homeland that they look to anymore except South Africa and southern Africa. I remember after Ed arrived, walking down the street in Pretoria. You could imagine the interesting looks we got, usually from the black Africans. I mean here was a man not only of enormous size and dignity but was well dressed as well. He said, "You know this looks to me like a little American city in the 1930's." I said, "That is fascinating. It is really accurate from what I can tell." I asked, "What did Liberia remind you of?" He said, "A Mississippi delta city at the turn of the century." Clearly P.W. Botha and Pik Botha liked him but what he represented they were very cautious about. He ran a very good embassy. He was articulate. He knew perfectly well what should be done and how it should be done. He had a very active social schedule. I remember one of the first things we did was invited him and his wife to Thanksgiving at our residence. We had a very broad group of people including one of the most prominent jurists and a number of the anti Apartheid groups from Soweto etc. I remember he said he had such an interesting time because he encountered people at all levels that were meeting together. If he had met them individually, they would respond differently. But he kept an extraordinarily full schedule. American groups that would come into town were also impressed. Here was a man as I said, of considerable intellectual stature with great presence.

Q: When you left in 1988, in your impression at that time, whither South Africa?

BARCKLEY: Well it is very interesting. I was still somewhat concerned that the Afrikaner had not come to grips with the fact that change had to take place. Nonetheless, on the ground astonishing things were taking place. If you walked downtown Pretoria or downtown Cape Town, you go into restaurants, there would be black patrons as well as white patrons, and these were classy restaurants. In the shopping areas, there was a great mix. Something obviously was afoot. But I recall one of his farewell calls that Herman Nickel had with at that time the Minister of Education, F.W. De Klerk who later on became president. He was a man a little bit like P.W. Botha. He was a large man and had great self confidence and presence. I remember that as we left, Herman asked him something about how he saw the future. He looked at Herman and he said, "You know, there are a lot of accommodations we can, make to the realities of South Africa. But one area we will never bend on is that the Afrikaner people cannot be controlled by anyone else. To the extent that they can maintain their independence and their future, we can accommodate anything. But if that is threatened, then we are prepared to go to war." Well that is quite a statement. Obviously how do you dismantle Apartheid without giving away the privileged position of the Afrikaner. I will never forget that particular observation. And it turned out that he indeed was the guy that actually did break positions on Apartheid secured the release of Nelson Mandela that subsequently led to elections.

Q: Going back to South Africa before this, Desmond Tutu, did he play much of a role while you were there?

BARCKLEY: Well yes. He had of course been given the Nobel Peace Prize and that gave him a

great deal of stature. At the time he got it, he was not an archbishop. He was a bishop, but he was later enthroned as the archbishop, the Anglican archbishop of South Africa. Of course we all attended the enthronement in Cape Town. Then he moved up into the white area of Bishop's Court and took over his official residence there. He was a man of enormous stature. He was not happy with American policy. He, most of the time I was there, would refuse to meet with Americans, official Americans, because he was unhappy with our policy.

Q: What did he want?

BARCKLEY: He was much more in support of sanctions and the other things, saying we had to show more vigorous convictions. I think the problem that many people had with constructive engagement is that it is predicated on a longer term kind of change. That you know, expanding economies take time. In some respects sanctions is an easier policy because you can show immediately your dislike or disregard for what is going on. The idea of growth and development is a long process, and I think he didn't think there was sufficient time.

Q: Jesse Helms, was he a factor?

BARCKLEY: Not during the time I was there, I was not aware he was a factor. He became a factor later on when I was supposed to be confirmed to East Germany, but he was not a factor in the South African area. He had a couple of people that worked for him, one named Bill Christiansen, who was a staffer, who would come out and who was convinced that the ANC was engaging in some rather nefarious kinds of activities. Indeed he was able to prove quite clearly, the admission came later, that they were engaged in torture and things against other people in their ranks who they considered to be either spies or somebody who was working for the South African government. When they were abroad, they did engage in certain activities that were surely in violation of their charter.

Q: Winnie Mandela?

BARCKLEY: Winnie was of course, at that time she was becoming quite a figure. She was the first lady if you will, of the anti Apartheid movement. She moved into Johannesburg, into Soweto. She had a whole group of young people who would do her bidding. She was an extraordinarily attractive woman, considerably younger than Nelson Mandela. People immediately took to her, but she had not had any experience in political life. She went through a couple of bumps in her career, but she had always shown great courage. Then there came a period of time where different groups in the black community were either identified as not being sufficiently anti Apartheid or maybe working hand in glove with the government. There were a couple of cases I think, where they were badly punished or even murdered. There was always an attempt to try to link her and her group to these groups. There were some legal cases that were brought against her for abuse of human rights.

Q: Did you feel that at all yourself or from our embassy were we watching her to see how by dealing with her?

BARCLEY: Well she was a little bit like Tutu. She didn't want to deal with official Americans. I met her actually at the Swedish embassy once, and she was perfectly cordial. She was really quite a socially attractive woman as well as physically attractive. She was very pleasant, and I think that certainly there were some groups that wondered whether or not she had been captured by thuggish elements, and there seems to be some indication that she probably should have shown more judgment at that particular time. I think there was also great respect that she had been through a real hell. They had put her into a township and restricted her activities. She could meet with no more than one person at a time for a number of years. She had borne that with great dignity.

C. WILLIAM KONTOS
Executive Director, South Africa Advisory Committee
Washington, DC (1986-1987)

Ambassador C. William Kontos was born in Illinois in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. Ambassador Kontos served in USAID throughout most of his career. His career included positions in Greece, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel, and an ambassadorship to Sudan. Ambassador Kontos was interviewed in 1992 by Thomas Stern.

KONTOS: Before closing this chapter of my career, I might just mention that while I was in S/P, when Bosworth left and Peter Rodman took over, the Council returned to being the Policy Planning Staff. It was during the latter part of my tour in S/P that the Secretary set up an Advisory Committee on South Africa. That consisted of twelve members who were supposed to evaluate, assess and recommend an optimal U.S. policy towards South Africa. The idea came from Secretary Shultz, Deputy Secretary John Whitehead and Chester Crocker. It may well initially have come from the Bureau for African Affairs.

South Africa was a hot issue, very volatile. There were marches in Washington, with picketing in front of the South African embassy and police arrests. Many editorials were being written. The administration was on the defensive as the concept of "constructive engagement" came into serious question. There were a lot of people, particularly African Americans, who felt that we were not sufficiently concerned about the problem of apartheid. The Advisory Committee was to consist of distinguished and influential Americans, representing various walks of life and sectors. The idea was that this group would spend a year thinking through the problems of South Africa and suggesting possible U.S. responses in support of the voices of freedom and democracy and the elimination of apartheid.

In part, the reason for the Committee was to diffuse a domestic political problem; in part it was to help shed some new light on ways and means of dealing with an intractable problem. There was the hope that the educational process that was required to bring the twelve Committee members up to speed might shed some new light and that the attendant publicity might be helpful

in the education of that sector of the public that was interested in the issue.

Q: Did Chet Crocker believe that his policy of "constructive engagement" had hit a dead end?

KONTOS: He felt very much on the defensive. The whole concept had been over-simplified by his opponents. He was looked upon, unfairly I think, as one who was trying to work out an apology for the way the South African government was dealing with the issue and as one who was not as tough on that government as some would have wished him to be in pushing for greater freedoms for the majority black population. It was an unfair accusation, but nevertheless it was current. More and more people felt that Crocker had leaned over backwards to permit the minority white government to wiggle its way out of its dilemma. I didn't agree with those perceptions. I felt that on the whole there may have been a major role for the U.S. government to play, but that apartheid was essentially a South African domestic problem that had to be solved. We could be helpful and we should oppose, as we did, an apartheid system, but we could not resolve the issue. All of this was swirling about when the decision was reached to establish the Advisory Committee.

When I first came to S/P, there were the beginnings of discussions about an embargo, with a major reduction of exports to South Africa and the denial of imports from there. That was very much on the agenda. I was personally very much opposed to the idea of embargoes and of punitive measures because I felt it would harm the very people we were trying to help, namely the black working class, who would be deprived of jobs. We would also drive out the American investment community, which was in the forefront of the movement to bring blacks into supervisory positions, to help improve education and housing and training for them. The Sullivan principles, which were adopted by most American corporations in South Africa, were a major influence on how the whole South African corporate world began to treat its black employees. Every American corporation in South Africa was putting black employees in more increasingly responsible positions; they helped with housing, litigations; they pushed for greater freedoms for their black employees. All of that effort would have been terminated once an embargo was put in effect.

Q: While you were in S/P, was there any consideration given to placing the issue on the U.N. agenda?

KONTOS: South Africa had already been expelled from the U.N. That essentially eliminated any U.N. efforts to try to alleviate the problem. But outside the U.N., we discussed the embargo issue with the British, the French, the Germans, the Dutch, the Italians. There was a western European working group with which we were in constant touch as well as the Canadians. We were able to reach a certain level of coordination on such actions as demarches. As we moved, because of Congressional pressure, toward a more coercive and tougher policy, a number of European countries followed us. The Scandinavians were way ahead of us. They had long ago agreed not to deal with the South African government and had in fact agreed to support the ANC. There were ANC representatives in Stockholm. Both the Council of Churches and the Scandinavians supported the ANC financially.

Q: Let me now move to the Advisory Committee period. You were its Executive Director during the 1986-87 period. The very concept of a commission on a substantive issue was if not unparalleled, at least, very novel for the State Department.

KONTOS: Indeed it was. In effect, the Department was saying that it would welcome new ideas and new approaches to this highly volatile and sensitive issue which was of particular concern to the 15% of black American citizens.

The Committee consisted of 12 members. It had two co-chairman: Frank Carey, the recent CEO of IBM and William Coleman, former Secretary of Transport and a distinguished black lawyer. Coleman lived in Washington and Carey in New York. The other members were Dr. Timothy Healy, the President of Georgetown University; Owen Bieber, the head of the UAW, Vernon Jordan, the well-known civil rights leader and former Executive Director of the Urban League; the Reverend Leon Sullivan, a Philadelphia pastor; Helene Kaplan, a distinguished lawyer and chairman of the board of the Carnegie Corporation; John Dellenback, a former Congressman from Oregon; Larry Eagleburger, then with Kissinger Associates; Franklin Thomas, another African American and head of the Ford Foundation; Roger Smith, the CEO of General Motors; and Griffin Bell, the former Attorney General under President Carter. I should note that both IBM and GM had investments in South Africa and by coincidence, both corporations withdrew from South Africa while the Committee was in existence - these actions were already in train when the Committee was formed.

Once the idea of the Committee had been approved, I moved from S/P and became the full time Executive Director. The Panel had already been chosen when I became Executive Director. The membership was chosen by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary John Whitehead with some suggestions from Crocker. As time passed, however, it was Whitehead I dealt with; I really viewed him as my boss. The Committee became his baby. As far as I know, the Secretary and he had no problems in getting acceptances from those asked to serve. The major problem was to get balance on the Committee; it had to have representation from various segments of the American society: business, labor, the black community, academia, women.

Only a few of the members had knowledge or prior interest in South Africa. Only Franklin Thomas, when he was working with the Rockefeller Foundation, had participated in an in-depth study of South Africa. So he knew a considerable amount. Leon Sullivan, as the author of the Sullivan principles, was knowledgeable. Eagleburger had some background having been an Under Secretary of State; Smith and Carey had been in South Africa while visiting their operations. The rest of the Committee had no first hand knowledge.

As I said, we had a year to submit a report. We had to organize sessions to bring in experts to testify, we had to have papers written, we had to develop agendas for the Committee's private meetings. At first we met once every two months, then monthly. We had a pretty good attendance record from the membership. We met on the Seventh Floor. I hired a staff, which eventually reached twelve; we were located on K Street - getting space in the Department was impossible. The staff was good; Kent McCormick was my deputy. The staff was primarily State Department, but we had two outside experts on it as well. One was Helen Kitchen from the Center for

Security and International Studies (CSIS) and Michael Clough, a young African specialist that she had recommended. Ann Miller, my Executive Secretary, came from New York.

We began with briefings, starting with detailed analyses of the factors that had brought about the current political and economic crisis. We did that primarily with briefing papers. Then we had hearings. We had two sessions which were public; anyone who wished to testify was welcomed. We had a large number of non-governmental organizations and others who presented testimony. Then we had closed hearings during which invited witnesses addressed and exchanged views with the Committee. We had U.S. government officials, European experts, academics, etc.; people who knew South Africa. Of course, we held Committee meetings which were opened to members and staff only during which all day discussions were held. I was very much involved in developing the agenda for the meetings. Typically, we would meet in the morning and for another couple of hours after lunch. The morning session would be devoted to the testimony of various experts; lunch would be a working lunch during which and for a couple of hours afterwards, we would discuss the morning's testimony. That process helped the Committee to begin to focus on certain conclusions. The exchanges were very intense. We kept *verbatim* accounts of all the meetings. The Committee had access to classified information as well as to the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary. Frequently, the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary attended parts of the meetings. It was a very productive process, in part because the group was willing to work very hard.

As time passed, obviously the Committee became more familiar with the subject matter and the issues. You could begin to see the members becoming advocates for the positions that their constituencies favored. There was a certain amount of "looking over one's shoulder" although I should hasten to add that there was a surprising amount of amity and concord among the members. We had some problem with the co-chairmen concept. I think in retrospect that was a mistake particularly since they were in separate cities and not always available for consultation. Coleman was in Washington and I did see him frequently. Carey in New York was a little harder to get a hold of. The two personalities were completely different. Coleman was much more reflective, thoughtful, more measured; Carey had been a CEO who had become accustomed to issuing orders which would be followed without question. He was somewhat abrupt and curt in his handling of the group. I tried to manage it so that each co-chairman would preside at alternative sessions. But Carey would often interject his views to Coleman's annoyance. I found Coleman to be a very savvy fellow for whom I came to have a very high regard.

Q: Let me ask you to reflect on the process itself. Is it a good process for the determination of U.S. foreign policy?

KONTOS: It is a useful device, particularly when you have a situation in which ill-founded concerns dominate a major domestic political issue. A committee is a very useful device with which to educate a wider audience - certainly so far twelve highly influential people and the population at large who may have had access to the testimony and dialogue of the public sessions as well as the final report. But I must admit that this spread of knowledge and the final report may have had a marginal impact on policy development. Had the report been issued earlier, it might have had greater influence. But a few weeks before the report was issued, Congress passed

legislation which pretty much anticipated what might have been the Committee's conclusions. So that Congress in fact preempted the Committee, particularly by imposing an embargo on South Africa. The Congressional process just proceeded at its own pace without reference to the existence and the deliberations of the Committee. So we were faced with a resounding Congressional mandate that forced a major exodus of American firms from South Africa. We had asked members of Congress to testify before our Committee, but our chairmen or representatives were not asked to testify at Congressional hearings.

Q: Do you think it would have made any difference if some members of Congress had been members of the Committee?

KONTOS: That was considered, but I can't tell you why it came out the way it did. As I said, I was not privy to the selection process. But I am not sure that inclusion would have made any difference because by the time the Committee was established, Congressional views had already hardened on the issue of embargo. As it ultimately turned out, the Committee also agreed on the embargo, although there had been a serious view on the part of a number of members who thought that any punitive measures against South Africa would be counter-productive, they would create unemployment, they would penalize blacks, they would create greater levels of poverty and they would create a greater sense of defensiveness in the government - it would circle its wagons and strike out against the outside world. But as time passed, and in light of the Congressional action, the mood of the Committee changed so that in the end it came out for approval of the embargo, but with some caveats, such as it should also be adopted by all countries particularly Japan. That proviso was added so that American industry would not be disadvantaged by our own embargo. It was an effort to support greater coordination among the industrialized nations.

The majority of the Committee agreed to the report. Three members, however, formed a minority; they objected to the recommendations for an embargo. One was Eagleburger, one was John Dellenback and the third was Roger Smith. They thought an embargo was wrong; they felt that the end of apartheid could be hastened, but that a growing black middle class would be harmed and that American investment should not cease, but rather become a model for other investors. They didn't want Afrikaners rewarded because the embargo would force fire sales of assets of those firms departing. In fact the embargo turned out to be a bonanza for a number of South African business men.

Q: How did the Committee react to the Congressional action?

KONTOS: It felt that in a way its thunder had been stolen. It was prepared to address the issue of the embargo. The Congressional action took a lot of impact away from the report. I think because it was in fact preempted, the report had a relative small response. The press coverage was fairly meager. During the press conference at the outset of which the Secretary was to introduce the members of the Committee, Don Oberdorfer of the *Washington Post* asked about the Reagan proposal to have every senior government official take a lie detector test. Shultz said "Over my dead body" and ridiculed the whole idea. That was the next day's headline. The Committee got lost in that flurry of news. The report itself got some coverage, but as I said, not as much as it

would have had it not been for the preempting Congressional action.

Q: Do you believe that the report had an impact on the Bureau of African Affairs?

KONTOS: Not really because in part personalities came to the fore. For some reason, which I have yet to understand, Crocker antagonized the members of the Committee. They felt he was talking down to them, that he was being a bit condescending, supercilious; I am not sure what it was because I didn't notice any of that. Crocker, though somewhat austere in his presentations, is very articulate. Somehow he was resented. After two or three occasions, I suggested that Frank Wisner, Crocker's deputy, be sent to represent the Bureau. There were always questions about current policy and questions about the Department's reaction to testimony we had heard. So we frequently had to have someone from the Bureau in attendance and that was not usually Crocker. But Carey and Coleman did develop a dislike for Crocker and that created a reaction in the Bureau. When the report was issued, all the Bureau was interested in was to limit damage so there would not be a complete repudiation of "constructive engagement" - the report had said that it was no longer a viable policy. So there was a growing "we" vs "they" mentality and I found myself acting as intermediary in the last stages of the Committee's life.

The effect of such a report is very subtle. There are all kinds of examples in Great Britain of "Royal Commissions" and we have had reports from various Blue Ribbon groups on a variety of issues. The effectiveness depends on the particular chemistry existing at the time, the timing of the report and on its wisdom and cogency. In general, I believe such commissions are a good idea and it may be wise to establish them more frequently. They are time consuming and expensive; there are staff costs, travel costs - we went to South Africa twice, rentals of space and cost of witnesses. On our first trip to South Africa, we all went separately; we were to meet in Johannesburg. I was asked to accompany Frank Carey; he was accustomed to travel by company jet which of course we didn't have. On his way to South Africa, he wanted to see Mugabe, who can be difficult to deal with. It was my job to arrange this meeting. David Miller was our Ambassador in Zimbabwe; I would call him almost daily. It was a Saturday morning just prior to or departure when I finally heard from Miller that "chances were that Mr. Mugabe would see Mr. Carey, but I can not guarantee it". So I called Carey immediately; we were to leave that afternoon. I told him what Miller had told me. Carey said: "The hell with that. We are not going! Change the arrangements." So I told Ann Miller that we had to change all the arrangements. She did and we boarded a Sabena flight out of New York. Fortunately, traffic out of New York was being held up because otherwise I would have missed the Sabena flight. We got on a plane in Brussels, heading for Zaire, and I noticed that the plane was practically empty. When I asked why, I was told that the Belgian government was very unhappy with Zaire because it was not paying its bills on time. Hence some Sabena flights had been canceled but the one which we were on was expected to go to Kinshasa and then on to Johannesburg. Carey is of course in first class; I am back in steerage. Two hours after departure, the captain announced that he had been denied landing or overflight rights in Zaire because the government was upset by the Belgian government's insistence that debts be repaid. So the captain said that he would be landing in the Canary Isles instead. Carey by now is beside himself. We went up to talk to the captain, who wired back to Brussels for instructions. Of course, that was Sunday and no one was at Sabena's headquarters. We landed in the Canary Islands at 3 a.m. Carey held me responsible for the whole

mess. Of course, no one knew we were arriving; there were no custom people, no busses, nothing. Finally, we caught a couple of hours of sleep and took off again only to land in Zimbabwe - small world. Miller took us under his wings and explained to Carey that Mugabe would have seen him, but that the meeting was canceled when he decided not to come. So we finally landed in Johannesburg with this furious ex-CEO on my hands. It was a memorable trip.

I should mention that many such crises arose during the Committee's life, which lasted for eighteen months. I always found John Whitehead extremely helpful in those situation. We worked closely together and I enjoyed that relationship. Occasionally, one member or another felt slighted because papers didn't reach him or her on time or something else went amiss. They were all prima donnas, but on the whole, we were able to handle them pretty well. I found the public sessions interesting; a lot of different people testified. Some had very reasoned and comprehensive positions; others were emotional and erratic. The most outrageous and extreme were, of all people, the Quakers - the American Friends Service Committee. They wanted the stiffest possible embargo of every activity with South Africa. Bill Coleman, an African American, kept asking whether that might not lead to increasing black unemployment and misery. The Quakers were very firm; they said that would be a cost that must be borne by them. They were prepared to jettison a whole population to satisfy their particular set of biases. Coleman said to me, *sotto voce*, "You know my wife and I have been strong supporters of the American Friends Service Committee, but after this testimony, I think we will withdraw that."

After the report was issued in the Spring of 1987, I returned to S/P until my retirement in August. I had a lot of clean up work to do on the Committee's work and follow-up on the implementation of the report. That was my main task for those remaining few months before my retirement.

STEPHEN H. ROGERS
Counselor for Economic Affairs
Pretoria (1986-1990)

Ambassador Stephen H. Rogers was born in 1931 and grew up in Long Island, New York. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in India, France, the United Kingdom (England), Mexico, and South Africa, and an ambassadorship to Swaziland. Ambassador Rogers was interviewed by Raymond C. Ewing in 1994.

Q: Okay, Steve, you left OES in 1986 and went overseas. Tell me about that.

ROGERS: Well, I hadn't had much experience in Africa, although I had touched a little bit on it, and when I got a call asking if I would be interested in going to Pretoria, my first reaction was one of surprise. Then when I thought about it, it was a time when there was increasing interest in South Africa and it was something new and built on my economic background in a different way, so I said, "That sounds fine."

Q: What exactly was the job?

ROGERS: Well, it had two aspects to it - Counselor for Economic Affairs but also the officer in charge. In Pretoria, where the bulk of the embassy was, the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission were there typically for about half the year and the other half of the year they were in Cape Town during the parliamentary session, South Africa having three capitals. One is judicial, Bloemfontein, and didn't figure in this. A large number of people and all the top leaders of government and ambassadors made the trek at least twice a year between Pretoria and Cape Town as the parliamentary sessions required. Twice there were extraordinary sessions, so the ambassador and deputy chief of mission went to Cape Town other than at the usual time.

Q: Who were the ambassador and DCM when you first went to Pretoria?

ROGERS: Herman Nickel was ambassador when I got there and, of course, he represented the policy of constructive engagement with the South African government, which I continue to think had some reasonable validity and some reasonable chance of success. It was at a time when P.W. Botha was Prime Minister and then President of South Africa. He, in his early years accepted more momentum towards liberalizing racial relations and breaking down the apartheid system and this was encouraging. Unfortunately that process pretty much stopped. I think President Botha worked it up to a certain point and it ran out on him. That was the end as far as he was concerned. So that was a time of considerable frustration for the United States, Britain and other countries that were interested in change, and obviously for Ambassador Nickel.

About two months after I got to Pretoria and right at the end of Ambassador Nickel' assignment there, Congress passed, over President Reagan's veto, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. I guess that was about October 4, 1986. Of course, the South Africans had recognized the threat of sanctions and there were other types of sanctions that had been in place, but nothing had happened with quite the publicity, the flare, the political force that the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 had. So that had quite an impact on us in the embassy and our relations with the South African government and our relations with the majority of the South African people, and that became a dominant factor in our relationship for the next several years.

Q: Was that impact of the sanctions, the US legislation, primarily political, or did it have a significant economic impact in terms of investment or trade?

ROGERS: That is a good question. Somebody is going to have to write a definitive study of this at some point and it will be interesting to see what the conclusions are. My own belief is that the principal impact of the Act was political and psychological, rather than economic. I mean there were other factors at work that were having more of an economic impact than the 1986 Act. We had restrictions on IMF loans to South Africa, which weren't necessary in themselves but could have been an important factor in supporting other borrowing that the government might have wanted to undertake in developed countries. And, perhaps, as far as investment is concerned, I think most observers would agree that the more important factor was the tremendous number of state and local actions against those who invested in South Africa. They were of different forms. Pension funds couldn't invest in some cases connected to city employees, etc.

Q: Those restrictions were on the investment of money in American companies who were doing business in South Africa. It wasn't necessarily funds being invested directly to South Africa.

ROGERS: No, that is correct. Or another typical form, I think, was that a company with an investment in South Africa had a harder time getting a contract with a state or city government in the United States. They would have to overcome a certain barrier which might be five or ten percent cost, or something like that. And this sort of thing led to the removal of more than half of the US companies that had been in South Africa.

Q: The typical economic and commercial counselor in an American embassy has kind of a dual responsibility. On the one hand he does reporting, analysis, assesses the implications of various actions, and on the other hand is promoting the trade and commerce and investment and trying to overcome difficulties and problems, etc. I assume in the case of Pretoria that you would pretty much do the first, looking at the analysis of sanctions, the effect of apartheid, etc. rather than promoting trade or investment.

ROGERS: We certainly weren't promoting trade or investment. That was not any significant part of our activities, investment not at all and trade very little. We did follow and try to assist the activities of some American companies that were there to deal with the situation that they found themselves with. A famous case was that of Ford Motor Company, which had a joint venture with Anglo-American or a subsidiary of Anglo-American, in producing Fords and other cars in South Africa. They made the decision that they had to withdraw so the question was what would happen to their perhaps 40 percent in this company, SAMCOR, which was their joint venture. They tried to do this in quite an innovative way by giving the majority of their share to the union of workers at SAMCOR. Well, that was not so easy to set up or to do, but eventually they did accomplish it and Ford withdrew, although they were still selling parts because Fords were still being built in South Africa, but without any direct investment from Ford Motor Company. There were a few things like that and we did interact with American businessmen, but it was not in the same promotional way as elsewhere.

Q: I would like to talk a little bit about this function of officer-in-charge when the parliament was in session in Cape Town. Other than, in the absence of the ambassador and DCM, managing the embassy, were there elements of the South African government still in Pretoria that you would make representations to, make demarches to?

ROGERS: Oh, yes. It is just the top officials, the ministers and their immediate staffs, who would go to Cape Town. The ministers were members of parliament, of course, so they had to be there and their deputy ministers to some extent. But the top civil servants tended to stay in Pretoria, along with their staffs. So at that level, things sort of continued as normal.

Q: I know that during the period of Ambassador Bill Swing, he tried very hard to straddle this divide and spend part of the week in Pretoria even during the parliamentary session and part of the time in Cape Town. It wasn't done, I guess, during the period you were there. They pretty much went away did they?

ROGERS: Most of the time I was there, Ed Perkins was the ambassador and he went to Cape Town and he would come to Pretoria; it is easy enough to go back and forth. I would sometimes go to Cape Town and he would some times come to Pretoria for one reason or another. But Bill did try to do that more. There was always the question of how to handle this situation. The inspectors came and gave their recommendation and, of course, we criticized their recommendations, but it was basically a difficult and ultimately impossible dilemma, and we just had to deal with it as well as we could. That meant I was on the phone a good deal with the DCM in Cape Town. It was important that I find out what the ambassador and he or she wanted and how to handle certain issues. But we got along.

Q: It was certainly important for them to know what you were doing and since the bulk of the staff of the mission continued to be in Pretoria, much of the every day work of the mission was done there.

ROGERS: Precisely.

Q: I would like to talk a little more about certain policy environment. If you come back to the United States side we had the elections of 1988 in which President Bush was elected; sanctions continued to be in effect; the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act was still the law of the land. Was there much change that took place at that point on our side or were we pretty much just reacting to some changes that were taking place as far as the nearing end of apartheid on the South African side?

ROGERS: Of course, we didn't know we were nearing the end of apartheid. In fact, for the first two years I was there, and well into the third year, I think the general feeling was one of pessimism in the embassy. There would be little things that would happen, there were differences in social contacts and that sort of thing. We certainly tried to contribute to them. Ed Perkins made a very serious effort to get closer to the black leadership and get to know them and develop a sense of confidence on their part about what US intentions were. It was done fairly quietly. This wasn't sticking a finger in the eye of the South African government to a very great extent, but it was effectively developing links with the country as a whole and de-emphasizing direct contact, more limited contact, with the South African government than had characterized the period of constructive engagement. That had some effect, I think.

Q: Was that something he did pretty much himself, or did he encourage you, as the economic counselor and perhaps others in the embassy, also to develop contacts with the black leadership?

ROGERS: That was clearly embassy policy to be followed across the board. In my time we always had a member of my economic section who spent full time on interacting with black economic institutions. Trying to get to know them and analyze where they were and help them to some extent. We developed in that time - the administrative section developed - a policy of trying to emphasize black companies as suppliers to the embassy. My people cooperated in trying to put that list of potential suppliers together. So that was there and was intensified. We tried in our social engagements to mix up blacks and whites, and that was quite fascinating. We would have

a dinner, for instance, and perhaps have 10 people around the table, including one or two black couples and one or two Afrikaner couples, or have a reception with a mixed guest list of the same sort, and find that these people who had hardly ever interacted on the basis of social equality on neutral ground, interacting some times quite vigorously over the dinner table. Sometimes there would be quite pointed exchanges and both sides seemed to enjoy it immensely. That was one thing that gave you some hope, that kind of reaction.

Q: The American embassy was doing this and certainly it was a great achievement. Were other embassies doing it? Were there other opportunities for blacks and Afrikaners to come together?

ROGERS: I couldn't swear to it. I suspect that we did it more than others did. The change had started before I got there, significantly in some respects, but even when I got there, the adventure of our church, the Congregational Church, making a kind of an annual pilgrimage to a black church with which it was associated in the Northern Transvaal, quite isolated, was a major thing, to have that kind of contact.

Q: This was a South African congregation that you attended, it wasn't part of the American community?

ROGERS: Oh, no, we were the only Americans there. In fact, the congregation was part of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, which in total was 80 - 85 percent non-white. So the total context was one of integration, but individual congregations were either black, colored or white. That was just a fact of life regardless of what people wanted. The interaction between congregations of different parts of the community were the interesting things.

Q: South Africa is a very large, complex country. We had consulates at that time and, of course, still do in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. Did you have a chance to travel widely around the country? How did you interact with the consulates?

ROGERS: Well, I visited all three consulates from time to time. Johannesburg often, of course, because it is the economic capital of South Africa and we have a large and very competent consulate there with many activities. The labor attaché was there, for instance, and the commercial attaché was there. So my staff and I had a lot of contact with them. I visited Durban two or three times and Cape Town quite a number of times to interact also with them. We saw a lot of South Africa.

Q: Did you have the chance to travel to other parts of southern Africa? Was there much sense of connection between South Africa and the rest of the continent? Certainly the rest of the continent, from my experience, was extremely interested in what was happening in South Africa and paying very close attention to it throughout this period.

ROGERS: All the neighboring countries, of course, had this conflict in their own minds, recognizing that South Africa was by far the dominant economy of the region and yet wanting to put pressure on and distance themselves from South Africa for very understandable political reasons. Zimbabwe was perhaps a prime example, where President Mugabe has always been

outspoken in his opposition and his wish to put pressure on South Africa, and yet trade between Zimbabwe and South Africa increased to Zimbabwe's considerable advantage, to its manufacturing sector in particular. It was difficult for those countries.

Q: I went to Ghana in 1989 and at that time Ghana Airways had a weekly flight in a DC 10 to Harare, which was explained to me partly because there were some special connections between Zimbabwe and Ghana, including the fact that President Mugabe's late wife was a Ghanaian and there were quite a few Ghanaians working there, etc. But I think far more important was that Harare was seen as a way station to South Africa and the rest of southern Africa. So it was not necessarily a commercial proposition, but it was one looking to the future and a political reason for being there.

ROGERS: That is very interesting and makes concrete something that Foreign Minister Pik Botha mentioned frequently and with some enthusiasm, that South Africa had economic relations with all but one African country. These relations were not advertised specifically and not generally by the countries other than South Africa, for good political reasons. But they were there.

Q: Did you get involved at all in issues like Angola and Namibia and Mozambique, or were those pretty much handled by other sections in the mission?

ROGERS: Pretty much by others in the mission, yes. These were factors in the thinking for all of us and part of the context for all of us.

Q: You left in 1990. What was the atmosphere like at that time compared to four years earlier when you arrived? Had much changed or was it still to come in the future?

ROGERS: We, of course, always tried to see how things were developing, to look into the future and see how things might go. About the middle of my tour in South Africa, we gave a little more attention to this and developed the usual three scenarios of what might happen, and they were really three degrees of disaster that we came up with. There was no sign of what was to take place just a few months after that. In fact, while we could see the pressures building and we could see some response to these pressures through time, the movement was so slight. We could find examples of progress, but it was the old question of which end of the tube are you looking through. You can look through one end and see that things are moving rapidly from that end, but you look at it through the other end of the tube you can't determine any movement because it is so far away. Well, things were happening but not to satisfaction of anyone in the majority black population. But there were some developments that were completely fortuitous. P.W. Botha's stroke for instance. Also certain developments in the schedule of elections that seemed to be important as things worked out. So, we were quite astonished to see the changes that took place in 1989 with F.W. de Klerk becoming head of the party and then President. In his speech on February 2, 1990 he announced that Nelson Mandela would be released and the ANC and other subversive organizations would be allowed to operate inside South Africa, and the process started that led to the change of government on May 10 of this year. [1994]

Q: The speech by de Klerk of February 1990 was when you were still there; however, the release of Nelson Mandela came after you left.

ROGERS: No, no, it was a couple of weeks after the speech.

Q: So, while you were still there it radically changed?

ROGERS: They radically changed. It was just astonishing the change that took place in that last year that I was there.

Q: To come back to the American side, the anti-apartheid sanctions continued to be in effect though for a while. In the last few months that you were there, did you see much sign on the American business side of new possibilities starting to take an interest, or was that later?

ROGERS: That sort of thing took time for a variety of reasons. One is that the state and local restrictions were still in effect, which inhibited some companies from even staying in South Africa, much less increasing or starting new investments in South Africa. In fact, if I recall correctly the city of New York was still imposing new sanctions in 1990, which seemed way out of line with the trend of things, but that happened. So, those sanctions were still an obstacle to any investment. But people began showing interest in coming and that was good. But it is a slow process to redevelop interest in a market for most companies and industries, I think.

Q: You were there under three ambassador; Herman Nickel, Ed Perkins and then Bill Swing. Each obviously had a different style, different approach, and was dealing with a revolving situation. I guess I am interested in the embassy's relationship with Washington. Did you feel that Washington recognized these changes or was the attitude in Washington still very hesitant, restrictive?

ROGERS: In the period I was there, there was no inclination on the part of the embassy to try to change the basic relationship. It was still waiting to see if all this promise that was there would really lead to the negotiation of a solution to the problem. It took three or four more years to accomplish. So, I don't think that it really was an occasion for a change of policy to be recommended. We became more open and more active in our relationships with the black sector of the community. Certainly Bill Swing built on what Ed Perkins had done and did it in a more public fashion, made more of a thing of it. It was presumably the right time to be doing that. We had had an AID program even when I arrived in 1986, a rather small AID program with one or two AID officials, to try to help black business and education and leadership development. That program expanded quite a bit and we set up a full-fledged AID mission with the unique aspect that it had no relationship with the South African government, almost unique in AID experience. So that expanded considerably up to a \$40 million a year program, I think it was by the time I left.

Q: When you first got there, was the AID operation part of the economic section?

ROGERS: My predecessor had a lot to do with that. By the time I got there, there was an AID

person there and the staff was being developed. I had interest and some involvement in it, but it was directed more in the way of a traditional AID program.

Q: I seem to remember during this period there was a lot of debate and discussion about the African National Conference, the ANC, in terms of its economic policies if it ever came to power - whether it would be communist, what it saw as the role of the private market. Was that an issue of interest to you at the time and did you have contact with ANC people on the economic policy side?

ROGERS: We certainly did. It was of interest and we did have such contacts. Not long before he was released, Nelson Mandela in an interview reiterated the kind of statements that had given concern in the past about nationalizing industries and that sort of thing, which was a little bit discouraging. But, you know, a process began and it continued through a lot of very constructive, I think, interaction between white business and black business in South Africa and between academics of different points of view, which has led to the situation we have today. I don't know that there has been any nationalization or talk of immediate nationalization. Certainly the ANC is committed to a basically market economy approach to development with a very large role for private enterprise.

Q: During the period that you were there, Steve, were there quite a few American visitors, members of Congress, staff members or members of the American academic community coming through?

ROGERS: There was a lot of interest and many visits. I guess there have been a lot more since, particularly at the time of the change of government and all. Yes, we had study groups coming through and we talked to them. I remember spending quite a bit of time with Senator Simon and others.

Q: Well, you were there certainly during a watershed period. The last year things really did happen quickly. Was there anything else you would like to mention during your tour in Pretoria?

ROGERS: Yes. I think what we began to see then and saw still more in the ensuing three years which I watched from Swaziland, what students might in future years analyze as kind of classic development of a new consensus in a country. Not a complete consensus, by any means, but a large measure of agreement as to what South Africa should be and where it should go. The general lines of that. And considering where the different parties were coming from, that is quite a remarkable event.

Q: And that consensus across the political spectrum does, of course, leave out those extreme fringes on both sides.

ROGERS: Yes, of course, there are always going to be people outside the sort of bell curve of opinion in something like that. But the extreme right discredited itself so thoroughly in the Bophuthatswana incident last year. The extreme at the other end seems to have been sort of brought along for the most part. Developing a consensus through this process was a difficult

matter with a lot of violence. It was so sad, the number of people who were killed in the process. But through it all the leadership of the main parties maintained a sense of an objective and through time developed a kind of momentum which led to continuation or sometimes resumption of negotiations despite pretty horrible examples of oppression and reaction and all.

Q: Most observers seem to give Nelson Mandela and de Klerk credit for that primarily, that finding of a common ground. Is that your opinion?

ROGERS: South Africa is certainly blessed with extraordinary leadership and that is a good thing, and those two men in particular, although it couldn't be limited to them. I think there are other factors that are perhaps deep in the various psyches of South Africans, if that is the right term. People talk about South Africa being a violent country and there is a lot of basis for that, but when you look at the characteristics of different parts of the population, the Afrikaners are most hospitable people, and we always found that even with the most conservative of them, with very few exceptions, they wanted to talk about their ideas, their situation and their interests. You go to the black community and you find despite all this experience of oppression, apartheid, increasing separation of the races, especially after 1948, that in spite of that I found almost no sign that the blacks had become racist. That is quite a surprising development, I would think. Sure, there was some bitterness and all that, but you didn't have the feeling that the blacks were out to destroy the whites. The most you could say was that there were black consciousness people who wanted to set the whites aside until blacks had developed their own socio-economic structures and then invite them back in to participate on an equal basis, but even that was a minor part of the black thinking. So, with some underlying positive factors there was the possibility of this extraordinary leadership to develop a consensus of a non-racist South Africa.

Q: You had a very optimistic view of South Africa at the time you left, is that accurate?

ROGERS: I am optimistic in terms of a long run evolution of South Africa and southern Africa. I wouldn't want that to be misunderstood. In fact, I think the important thing for us as observers from the United States now is to recognize that while the momentum is there and the consensus has been developed to a certain point, there are an awful lot of problems and there will be strains and we can still expect some violence. I am sure that we will hear things from South Africa that we won't like. There will be policies of the new government that we will think are counterproductive and we will find conflicts in our interests with theirs from time to time. So there are going to be occasions when people can say that it looks as if things are going in the wrong direction or that the changes failed, etc. But we need to keep in mind the underlying trends and the fact that tremendous progress has been made and that there is a kind of consensus, I believe. I hope I am right about that.

Q: On the economic side there are enormous disparities I think between those living in squalor, poverty in the townships and those that have been able to be educated and done well. So I see that as an area for change.

ROGERS: There are tremendous disparities in housing, education, and employment. There are so many unemployed blacks, especially young people, who are perhaps susceptible to leadership

and unconstructive direction. It is going to take a long time to overcome this, but if the new government can improve things and then continue a sense of step-by-step progress on the economic side, I think that the fact that there remain great disparities will not be as important. The disparities will become very serious if there is no sense that something is being done, even if at a pretty modest pace, to overcome that.

FRANCIS T. MCNAMARA
Economist, Southern Africa, South Africa Desk
Washington, DC (1987)

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

MCNAMARA: Then, for two weeks, I was on the South African Desk. In good conscience, I could not abide our South African policy, which was to quietly acquiesce in apartheid.

Orders came while I was in Zambia, assigning me to the South African Desk. I did not want to go and work on South Africa. I had just come from Dar es Salaam and Lusaka where I had regular contact with various liberation groups. Simply put, I did not agree with our policy towards South Africa and did not think I could loyally support it working directly on South Africa.

Q: *One of the so-called front-line states.*

MCNAMARA: Yes. Dar es Salaam had the headquarters for the African Liberation Committee, a committee of the Organization of African Unity devoted to supporting the liberation of southern Africa. Also, I guess...South Africa. I felt we were acquiescent towards apartheid in South Africa. I asked to have my assignment changed, but was told that I was assigned to the South Africa Desk, and that was that. I came back to the Department and went to work on the South African Desk as the economist for southern Africa, under a man named White, a very fine Foreign Service officer who later became the ambassador in Senegal.

The first business that came up after my arrival was the renewal of the sugar quota for South Africa. I took a [contrary] view writing a paper recommending that the quota be taken away from South Africa. The old timers on the desk were horrified. They thought this was a dreadful thing to do. White, who was the country director, said that he supported my view. He liked having a difference of view in his office. Even when he did not, or could not, agree, he liked having different viewpoints aired. Before my arrival, everyone on the Desk seemed quiet content with

the acquiescent policy that we were pursuing.

Anyway, the decision on the quota went against my recommendation. They renewed the sugar quota. I could see that this wasn't a place where I was going to really be comfortable. Clearly, I would have little influence as Henry Kissinger had already decided on a policy of "benign neglect" towards South Africa. I asked White if he would support me in asking for another assignment? "I'd like to have you here, but if you don't feel comfortable, I understand it, and I'll support you for an assignment elsewhere in Africa," White kindly replied.

JAMES MARVIN MONTGOMERY
Consul General
Johannesburg (1987)

James Marvin Montgomery was born in 1935 in New Jersey. He received a BA from Juniata College and also studied at Emory College. Mr. Montgomery joined the State Department in 1958, serving in Vietnam, Mexico, Thailand, South Africa, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Thomas F. Conlon in 1996.

MONTGOMERY: This happened in early 1987. Then the post of Consul General in Johannesburg was about to come open. This was certainly a substantial job.

Q: You applied for it.

MONTGOMERY: I applied for it. I called up people in the Bureau of African Affairs. I had visited Johannesburg in 1986 and said that I'd like to be considered for this position. And it was all arranged very quickly.

When I was in Johannesburg, I felt that I maintained the position of the Human Rights Report, unsullied by clientitis. I felt that that was important. I certainly was able to maintain the position that, if a country is going to deal with the United States, this is part of it. The American people demand it. Other countries may not like it, but there it is and it has to be dealt with.

I understand the view of my friends in the various bureaus who were annoyed when human rights questions would be brought out. There was always something that, to them, seemed more important - and in many cases it was.

Q: How far is Johannesburg from Pretoria, the national capital?

MONTGOMERY: About 35 miles.

Q: I think that you told me this once before, but did you regularly attend the Ambassador's staff meetings?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. I was usually in Pretoria at least once a week.

Q: Was this an awkward relationship, being so close to the Embassy?

MONTGOMERY: No, and for several reasons. I didn't find this relationship at all difficult to handle. In fact, for six months of the year the Embassy wasn't close to Johannesburg. It was down in Cape Town (about 800 miles southwest of Johannesburg). The Embassy was literally in Cape Town. When the Embassy was in Cape Town, our post in Pretoria did not have any pretensions of being the Embassy. It was reduced to a rump operation. Furthermore, Pretoria was a planned city - much like Canberra, and there wasn't much going on there but government. So when the government moved to Cape Town, the government moved, and Pretoria was just a little outpost.

If you were interested in black politics, you didn't do much of that in Pretoria. That was a Johannesburg or a Cape Town function. All of the black political organizations were centered in Johannesburg.

Q: You mean South African black organizations.

MONTGOMERY: South African black organizations. This was the period of "constructive engagement", a term coined by Chester Crockett, the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. This was a term which I found highly unfortunate. However, I note that the Clinton administration has decided, at least for a while, to apply it to our relationship with China. I thought that the history of this phrase should have kept them from doing that.

South Africa was actually a zany, incredible place. I was there at the period when the South Africans found it fashionable to condemn apartheid but felt that this was enough and that they could continue to enjoy all of its benefits. Looking back on this period, it was clearly the time when the South Africans were beginning to consider alternatives to apartheid. Giving the blacks practical elbow room was increasing. The blacks in South Africa had enormous purchasing power.

There was a very lively arts scene, especially the theater and "applefougart." I saw the first production of "Serafina" in Johannesburg. It was absolutely fantastic. It was produced in a run-down little theater in the market area. I gave a reception for the cast before they went off to the United States, fame, and fortune. I was struck by the incredible good will of the black community, which has since been borne out.

Q: For the U.S.?

MONTGOMERY: For the South African whites! The tolerance they had, the willingness to put apartheid behind them. And of course this was the case with Nelson Mandela.

Q: After 25 years in prison.

MONTGOMERY: After 25 years in prison. And the thing that I find just absolutely incredible

about Mandela is that, when he went into prison in the 1960s, it was the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) that "shopped him" (sold him out) to the South African police.

Q: When was he released?

MONTGOMERY: I think that it was in 1990.

Q: How long were you in Johannesburg?

MONTGOMERY: Two and one-half months.

Ultimately, we decided that, basically, it would be an adventure to go to Johannesburg. It was certainly an interesting place. The problems there were for real. Johannesburg was a senior assignment - bigger, probably, than 80 percent of our Embassies.

ROBERT M. SMALLEY
Ambassador
Lesotho (1987-1989)

Ambassador Robert M. Smalley was born in Los Angeles and served in World War II following high school. He studied at the University of California at Los Angeles. He worked for a number of years in the private sector until 1975, when he went to Paris as the U.S. Representative to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. He was appointed ambassador to Lesotho in 1987. Ambassador Smalley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Lesotho is in the middle of South Africa. We were having what turned out to be a very effective, but controversial policy at the beginning, run by Chester Crockett of constructive engagement.

SMALLEY: That was the phrase that he used. It was a phrase that a lot of people decided they didn't like and they attacked him, George Shultz and even the President. It was enormously unpopular in Southern Africa, mainly by people who interpreted it to mean we were going to continue to do business with the P. W. Botha government, which, of course, was what we were trying to get away from and in the end did. I think Chet should have gotten some marvelous recognition for that but he never did. I guess he got a medal from the President, but I am not sure. I will tell you that there would not be a free Namibia sitting there today, nor would South Africa be in the process it is in without him.

Q: What I gather from professional ranks is that people are certainly appreciative of how it worked out, I mean it was successful.

SMALLEY: And it was very, very complex and very difficult. It involved trips into Angola at a time when we had no representation there and they were torn by civil war. It was carried out under enormous problems.

Q: Was there a Lesotho card at all within this whole element, or were you mainly to try to keep this as a stable place?

SMALLEY: Lesotho has, and always will have, a very close relationship with South Africa. The economy is almost completely dependent on South Africa, although Lesotho is trying to develop an export business of textile and other things. When the P.W. Botha government was still in office, they had a long running feud with the king because he would make trips up to Botswana or over to Swaziland, or some place and talk about apartheid and what an evil thing it was. Finally he had a meeting with President Botha, I guess which he instigated thinking he could say let's be friends, and Botha whipped out a dossier, so I'm told, and said, "On such and such a date you said this about me, and on such and such a date you said this about South Africa and you can't be a friend of South Africa and you can't be a friend of mine." It was not a good meeting from all I learned about it.

South Africa almost always had police within Lesotho. Certainly they controlled the borders, Lesotho does not. In the mid-'80s they staged a couple of raids into Lesotho to whip out the ANC, the African National Congress, and in one of those raids more than 40 people were killed. When Lekhanya and king came into power in 1986, Lekhanya had a closer relationship by far than any other official in Lesotho with South Africa. When he came into power he struck a deal apparently with South Africa. He said, "If you will build for us this big water project we want up in the mountains, we will keep the ANC out of here." It was probably the South Africans who proposed it. They said, "Look, we don't want you to be harboring the ANC so if you will keep them out of Lesotho we will put in with you on this water project." It is now the largest water project in the world - an enormous thing. Lesotho has vast mountains, most of it is mountains, most of it is very high mountains - 10, 11 thousand feet. There are tremendous basins where they are going to be catching water building five dams, building tunnels through the mountains to carry the water down into the Orange Free State and the Transvaal all the way up to Johannesburg. So it is the first time that Lesotho will have an exportable commodity. It will be ready in six or seven years.

Q: On this, when the police would raid were we protesting or anything - sort of joining in with other countries about the violation of the border?

SMALLEY: Not really. If we had been able to prove conclusively that it had been South Africa we would have. The big raid that I described took place before I got there and I don't know what we did at that point. I think there was an official US protest because there was no doubt about it in that case. They came over in force and shot up people in a lot of places and then went back. Although it was never really clear whether it was South African police or military, or paramilitary units, or who it was, but it was South African.

The incidents that occurred when I was there were more or less individuals. I remember one case

of a man who was shot in a hospital. He was a suspected ANC type. His assassin was never found, but it was widely believed by everybody that it was South Africans. So there were those kinds of things going on. As far as the police being in the country, I think the Basotho wanted them there for some things because there were a lot of problems about rustling cattle back and forth across the river. Stolen cars going one way or another. A negligible, but nevertheless noticeable narcotic traffic. So they had a lot of common things and they did work together.

But the long 20-year government in Lesotho became very friendly towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries, generally. In the late 70s, early 80s they invited the Soviets to open an embassy and PRC to open an embassy, the North Koreans to open an embassy and others began to show up ad hoc. The reason the Soviets were particularly, and I suppose the PRC too, interested in going in there was that it was a listening post they could monitor communications in South Africa. They could much easier keep an eye on South Africa's military capabilities.

Q: We are talking about radio listening.

SMALLEY: Yes, radio, telephone and military communications. I am sure they had very sophisticated stuff in there. Furthermore they were probably sending people across the border illegally. I have never heard that said, but I never doubted for a minute that it was happening. Almost everyone who came to the Soviet embassy in the first year and a half I was there either had a GRU (military) background or a KGB (political) background. The embassy in Maseru was their furthest south embassy in Africa. The PRC the same. They were unable to get into South Africa legally, but it was sort of a place for them to have an intelligence outpost. So I think that is basically why they were there.

And, I am sure that our intelligence people, if we had any there, were looking at that. Probably trying to monitor what the Soviets were up to. Our people were, no doubt, interested in finding out what the South Africans were up to too. There were military bases in the nearby areas. If there was a threat to Lesotho from South Africa, we had to be aware of it. In fact, after the 1985 raid in which 40 people were killed, the United Nations had sent a watchdog type fellow down there to keep an eye on the borders. There are 14 border crossings and he had to constantly keep an eye on them to see that there was no danger of incursions and I am sure we were interested in that same sort of thing. So the intelligence game I am sure was being played all the time, with good results.

Q: You left there before the end of the Cold War, but did you feel any changes or changes because of the Namibia solution?

SMALLEY: Yes, you knew it was going to change. I was there in the period that de Klerk was serving as Minister of Education, he is now President of South Africa, and I remember very clearly in January of 1989 when President P.W. Botha had a stroke, which effectively terminated his career although he continued in office for a few more months. De Klerk was the logical successor, although he was a bit of a surprise because his father was one of the chief architects of

apartheid and his uncle was the man who coined the word apartheid. Along about the late '70s some of the younger members of the party, including de Klerk, began to see that maintaining the system was absolutely too costly in every way. In terms of money, in terms of internal security, in terms of resources devoted to police and military facilities that were badly needed elsewhere, international isolation and disapproval. It was just becoming a burden that South Africa could not endure indefinitely. So when he became the head of the national party in South Africa, which in effect made him the ruler of the government, de Klerk made it clear that the time had come for South Africa to change its ways. You could see this coming and it was almost too much to believe. But still you could sense it.

But also in the period when I was there was when this terrible violence began in the province of Natal between the ANC followers of Nelson Mandela and the Inkatha followers.

They started not very far from Lesotho. The word we were getting was that it was in effect ANC people who provoked the initial violence by going into Inkatha territory in Natal and trying to recruit. That is where the initial fighting began and it went on from there. I am not saying that the Inkathas have been blameless, because clearly they have not, but the fighting that has become so ghastly over the last four years has its roots in Natal which in some places is right up against Lesotho.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover on this that I may have missed?

SMALLEY: I don't think so. You raised South Africa so lets end it there. I will just say that I have kept very current with events that are continuing on down there. It has been a long time since de Klerk said, "We are changing course." They still have a long way to go to what is being called a new South Africa, but I guess I think in time they will get there. But the clock is running on that situation. He has a five-year term and he is well into the second year now, so he has only really about three and a half years left to get the negotiations going, get them completed, have an election and have it all wrapped up. In the meantime he is fighting off the extreme right wing elements that are opposing him every step of the way. And they are certainly going to continue to oppose him.

On the other hand, Mandela has been crippled by divisions within the ANC. He has had all sorts of unforeseen problems of weakness of the organization to cope with that he didn't foresee. He found that his own economic policies are 30 years out of date. So it hasn't been a cake walk for him either. Certainly this trial involving his wife on complicity charges of beating and killing of a small boy has been hurtful to him.

So, I don't see any quick resolution of this problem and I suspect the longer it goes on the more violent it is going to get.

PAUL GOOD
Executive Officer, USIS

Pretoria (1990-1992)

Paul Good was born in Kentucky in 1939. He received an AB from Cascade College in 1959 and then a MA from Ball State Teachers College in 1959. Good joined the Foreign Service in 1963 and has served with USIS overseas in Thailand, Columbia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Surinam, Australia, Yugoslavia, and South Africa. Good was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

GOOD: I went to South Africa as exec (executive) officer for USIS.

Q: You were in South Africa from?

GOOD: '90 to '92, and I left only because they asked if I would help them out in Morocco. They pulled the PAO and the exec out for discipline if you will. They said that they had mismanaged. Now that was a large fight, which I wasn't personally involved with, but the PAO had been a classmate of mine, back in '63 when we came in, and the exec officer had helped train me when I first was a PMA back in '76. So I knew them both well. There was a lot of politics between the area director in Washington and the ambassador at the post. The result was that they needed replacements for the management team. I had wanted to get into a Muslim country just to have the exposure to a different culture and had planned to go up there in '93. But they asked if I would be willing to go a year early. I said, "Okay, I'm not sure whether I'll grab it up," because we loved South Africa.

Q: Yes. Let's talk about South Africa a bit.

GOOD: It's a wonderful country.

Q: Things were really beginning to change, were they not?

GOOD: They were. Mandela had been released in April. I got there in August. Although he wasn't in power, of course, until just after I left in '92, the apartheid was changing. The misogynous laws were disappearing, and the restrictions on where you could live were being lifted while I was there. Because of the nature of my job and the fact that we had branch posts in Durban and Cape Town and Johannesburg, I could get around a bit and see the country. Even without business reasons for travel, it's easy to travel, or was easy to travel in South Africa. The roads are excellent because they were built to military standards to be able to move around the country well. I found myself an old BMW 728, which weighed like a tank and drove like a dream. You could sail along at 100 miles an hour with no traffic on an excellent road and feel like you were just really living well. So we did.

We took a trip just before we left, up to Victoria Falls, by car, came back down, went up to Botswana, came back down through Zimbabwe, stopped at Selebi Phikwe to see the staff there, overnighed, and of course got down to Cape Town on vacation, got down to Durban on vacation, went over to Swaziland a few times, got down to the Kruger Park. Johannesburg was in

the back yard of course, got down there regularly. We had a sub post at Soweto. We had a new office that I had to get involved, negotiate, get it built in Johannesburg, to move the office from one site to another. I'd go for a vacation in Hogsback, which is down just above Ciskei, halfway down toward the Cape, overlooking the escarpment, which then goes down to the Indian Ocean. It's a great place. It's high enough that it'll get some snow in the winter. It's got a nice little hotel.

But South Africa is hopeless. There's no way that the country's going to improve now. I was back down there last year, and no. There's no cohesion. Only in the Embassy did the groups or representatives from all the major tribes work together.

When I say tribes I don't mean to be bigoted. I realize that there are those who say that you shouldn't use the word "tribe" and I can see why. There's a book coming I just read recently, Mistaken Africa is the title of it. A fellow who teaches African history in a small college up in, I think, Pennsylvania, says that "tribes" provides a certain picture here in the United States that isn't accurate. He's right of course, but the Africans still speak of tribes. So I include the British as a tribe, I include the Boers as a tribe, just as I would consider the Sothos or the Xhosas or anyone else as a tribe.

They would work together in the office smoothly, but they didn't socialize outside the office. If you went to socialize with one of them outside the office, you were going into their group. You weren't bringing anybody else along with you. You were an American, a visitor, a diplomat who was outside, as you know, outside the fold, and therefore welcome because even if they made a mistake about you, you were gone in a couple of years anyway.

We had lots of good friends. We enjoyed it very much. My wife did a year at Witwatersrand, graduate work in simultaneous and consecutive translation work. My son had some problems and almost shattered his right arm completely in a cricket problem at the school. Some fat guy fell on him when his arm was in a bad position, and almost, it was completely loose.

Q: Oh, boy!

GOOD: That was, I think, the second worse personal experience I've ever had, sitting there with him that weekend while they waited to see if they would, how they would, operate. Total pain; they couldn't give him enough painkillers. That's one time I did use my diplomatic status to tell them to "get out of my face, and I'm going to stay here. I don't care what your rules are," because he needed support. He still doesn't have full radius of movement on the right arm.

Q: Oh!

GOOD: So that was a real downer. It disrupted my wife's schooling. From that point, she had to take care of him then, to get him physical therapy for a year.

The local school was fine. It was much better than the American school. We tried him in the American school. It started in August, and in November we pulled him out. The teacher was

unqualified. We were justified, but it took a year to get the justification. I went for a classroom visit after having corresponded with her for a couple of weeks. She was the wife of the principal. I corresponded with her on various problems that my son would bring home in his homework. So I went in to observe as we were invited to do, although that time the principal said, "I can't let you go in alone. I have to get somebody else to go with you, because I don't trust you. I think you're out to get her." She was unqualified. A year later, my buddy who was on the school board, said, "You were right. She didn't have the qualifications." She not only didn't have the guidance credentials that her husband had said she had, but she didn't even have teaching credentials. There were misspelled words on the board, on the signs that she had hanging in the room. So I pulled him out and put him into a local school, not a boarding school, but a day school, a private school, which was far more integrated than the American school was. I moved him to the school in Pretoria, which saved him having to do that daily to and fro to the school, which as I said was closer to Johannesburg. They were driven in Volkswagen vans on these good roads at high speeds with drivers who were having to get up early in the morning, something like five, to go to where the buses were parked, take the buses to get the kids, and they had to take the buses back, then do the same thing in the evenings, and then have to get home after that. They were tired. Sometimes, not frequently, but on occasion, some of the mothers would just take the driver off the bus and say, "Now you stay here and sleep, and I will continue your run," because he was falling asleep. They should have had some way that they could have taken the vehicles back to where they were at night, rather than having to leave them at a central location. It was an isolated school in the countryside away from any public transportation. It had been a stable originally, and they bought it up.

I didn't agree with whippings, which they still had. It was illegal in the public schools, but it was not yet illegal in the private schools, and these were. It was British tradition. Although it was illegal at that point already in England, it was not yet dug out of the minds of these people who had been raised in the '50s and '60s as students in that tradition.

The headmaster was a fine fellow, had come down from Zimbabwe, a white who led the black takeover. The facilities were fine; the teachers were very, very interested in the children, so much better than the ones at the American school, who were really those who hadn't fitted in anywhere else.

There was a problem, which coincided with my withdrawal of my son from the school. My wife had agreed to go out and teach Spanish. She had Afrikaans fluently, and of course, Spanish, and Portuguese, and others. She knew what was going on in both the English speaking side and the Afrikaans side. There were some Afrikaans teachers there. At the same time she quit, actually she was fired because she refused to go to a conference down in Lesotho. She said that money should better go to provide some lockers for these kids who have no place to put their stuff here at the school. So the principal fired her. The ambassador asked if we would please not make a fuss, although we turned out to be right, and I'll get to that in a minute. He said, "I'm trying to keep things under control there, so that there won't be a bad reputation at the school and that the people who are coming out as businessmen will know that there is a place they can put their kids." Now the businessmen are too smart to be worried about that. When they did come out, they put their kids into other very good private schools that were up in Johannesburg.

But I had been skeptical because the principal had bent my ear one day at the office by phone for 30 minutes trying to convince me to go in with him investing in gold shares. Yes. The RMO (Regional Medical Officer), who had been placed as the chairman of the board by the ambassador, Paul was interestingly ambitious. He was not focused so much on his medicine, although he was a good doctor. He was into photography; he was getting himself qualified locally; of course he was traveling; and he was very much involved in the politics of the school. I said, "There's something fishy here." And the administrative officer said, "There's something fishy here," but he couldn't for the same reason that the ambassador had asked me to back off after my wife was canned. The Ambassador told the admin officer, "Please don't make any waves here." I'm convinced that that's one of the reasons that he committed suicide a few weeks later.

Q: Who did?

GOOD: The administrative officer. Now that's my spin on what happened. Not everyone agrees with me, but he certainly decapitated himself on a day when there was no reason that he should have had this accident, clear road, dry, no traffic, and he ran his motorcycle into a pole. But in any event, he and I were in agreement on the fact there was a problem.

The reason that I feel justified in believing there was is that a year later they fired the principal for unspecified activities. Now at the time, as I said my wife left, the business manager also left specifically because she could no longer morally work with a fellow who was making the kinds of decisions with money that the principal was making. Now the RMO a few years later, when I was in Morocco, was found with his hand in the cookie jar in Moscow and was canned from the Foreign Service, lost his pension under bargaining. He was told, "You will lose your pension and no longer be able to have a job with the U.S. government. In return for that agreement, we will not prosecute you." I think he had walked off with \$5,000 on false vouchers. And this was the feeling that I had. As a person, nice guy, lovely wife, good entertainer, but he just was dirty. And he and the principal were, obviously, in my opinion and my wife's opinion, and her opinion was based upon what she saw at the school and what the Afrikaans-speaking staff was seeing. The principal was dirty too. His wife was unqualified. We were better off out of there. Of course, the side effect of this was that my son gained a year of school. When we pulled him out of fourth grade and put him into the local school, there as a three month gap. During the interim, I put him on Calvert, geared him up, and in January he entered the fifth grade.

Q: The Calvert system?

GOOD: Calvert is the correspondence system out of Baltimore, which I'd had for first grade, and which I had my other eldest son in Thailand on first grade. I continued Mark on Calvert throughout his time in South Africa in social science and in math because I wanted him to remember the decimals versus the commas, and I wanted him to be kept current on where he should be in American history and geography. He still of course is more comfortable in the metric system than he is in the U.S., but he understands the U.S. of course. He had a very good educational time there I thought.

We had a very interesting time there. We had good friends in the Afrikaans community, no particular reason other than that's where the embassy housed us. We still have good friends from there. I was back there, had dinner with my neighbor when I was traveling last year in Pretoria for my job. We get calls from the people who had owned the house and built the house originally, had moved up a few doors on the same street, even now, and email contact.

But it was a place of paranoia, if you will. The reason we had R & R out of South Africa was because of the psychological pressure. It was not because of the climate certainly. You could argue maybe on distance, but that's not unusual. We had no differential, but we had R and R because we were watched. I know my wife was followed for several months after we got there, tailed until she finally complained, and the boss backed off. We learned later that they never did believe that she wasn't working for the CIA. The South African station chief in Morocco was a good friend of ours, and she remained unconvinced. Her husband, their ambassador was never convinced that she was not because she's so good at contacts. That's just her forte. They couldn't imagine why anybody would be bothering with developing that kind of network if they didn't have an ulterior motive. But it did get us a lot of friends and a lot of contacts.

Q: While you were there, were you seeing a change in the society, getting ready for the end of apartheid?

GOOD: Oh, yes. You'd listen to the various groups. The Afrikaners were apprehensive, of course. The British or the non-Boer white, non-Portuguese were apprehensive. The Portuguese, of course, were naturally apprehensive because most of them had come down from Angola or Mozambique following the revolutions and change of governments independence there. So their discomfort was really not related to the changes that were coming. Their problems were ongoing, finding a niche in the community that they had come to. But they were very separate. They were into music, and they were into restaurants, and they lived in their areas. But it was the Afrikaners who were most apprehensive. We didn't have many Zulus working for us. The question of how they were going to integrate was certainly on everyone's mind.

The cultural officer, a superb officer, his wife was South African, they'd had to leave when he married her on a previous tour, and with her connections, he had connections everywhere. He was a natural net worker. He did not have fluent Afrikaans, but he could get along. That was, of course, a problem in the office because his contacts were miles ahead of the PAO's. The PAO had to piggyback at best. As a result, the PAO, who didn't like the CAO's personality particularly either, and CAO just didn't get along. I would frequently have to communicate between them; they wouldn't talk to each other. The CAO was a marvelous fellow in programming. He could get money for programs from the banks; he could get sponsorship for this; he knew the leading intellectuals all over the country; he was just plugged in because his wife had come from a mixed background. Her family had been originally educated and sponsored by the Moravian mission down near Cape Town which had a large reservation there for a couple of hundred years. They treated their people equally; they educated them; her mother was a principal of a school in Johannesburg; her brother was a doctor, etc. So she had intellectual connections from generations back.

So, as I say, we had a lot of interesting connections, and so we were plugged into the worries that were going on in a lot of the different elements. My clerk is presently the mayor of Pretoria. She retired from USIS after I left. It turned out she was a neighborhood organizer type from Transkei, chubby, stocky, happy, wonderful person. When two elements in Pretoria, after the apartheid takeover, after Mandela took over, couldn't agree on either of their candidates, she became the compromise candidate and is still there. (Laughing) Wonderful. She's had to postpone her retirement in Transkei, where she had already gotten her small house built.

PATRICIA D. HUGHES
Political Officer
Cape Town (1990-1996)

Mrs. Hughes was born in New York State and educated at Wellesley College and Rutgers University. Commissioned as Foreign Service Officer in 1962 she was required to resign her commission upon marrying. As the wife of a Foreign Service Officer, she accompanied her husband to postings in London, Cape Town and Helsinki. Following changes in regulations she was re-commissioned and served in Prague and Cape Town as Political and Economic Officer, as well as in the Department of State dealing with Personnel matters. Mrs. Hughes was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2002.

HUGHES: I went to South Africa.

Q: So, we probably left about the same time from the office and you did the language training and where did you go in South Africa?

HUGHES: Cape Town.

Q: You went as a?

HUGHES: I was number two, I guess in the building. I was a political officer.

Q: South Africa, this was post-apartheid?

HUGHES: Yes, just.

Q: Barely. So, the new Nelson Mandela and the new African National Congress Government was feeling their way and doing well?

HUGHES: I knew them all and actually in one of my EERs someone, one of the NIC people was quoted as saying that everywhere I was, there I was, it was a wonderful assignment. I think I did

well in Africa. So much was going on and you're right. Mandela was released in February.

Q: I think he was released early in '90, February of '90.

HUGHES: Yes, it was before I got there.

Q: But he wasn't really, hadn't had the full transition yet?

HUGHES: No, the last whites-only election was about a year after I got there and then the real election was probably about six weeks after I left.

Q: But you were there for all of the conventions, got the new constitution, you knew Nelson Mandela?

HUGHES: I knew Tutu was ours as opposed to the embassy's, because of an agreement that was made.

Q: Because he was based in Cape Town? How far is it from Cape Town to the, well the embassy spent part of the year in Cape Town, though the ambassador did? I guess that's still the case now because of the parliament moves back and forth between Pretoria and Cape Town?

HUGHES: They may not send the whole bevy of people that they would traditionally send, but certainly there was always someone from the embassy there and the ambassador is always there for the end of session.

Q: That must make it difficult for the consul general and for the other people in the consulate?

HUGHES: I spent six years there altogether. So, I have to tell everything that people were. Every once in a while the ambassador would ask for help and it would be either covering something that his folks didn't have time to cover or some sort of rush entertaining job. Ordinarily they both kept their sort of their responsibilities.

Q: So, the ambassador and the embassy were primarily involved with the government, maybe with the parliament and not so much with the local political figures in Cape Town or Cape Province or certainly the business community?

HUGHES: Right and we had, I can't remember his name, but there was another important political figure who ended up in jail.

I could never have another job like that. As you may remember there was some discussion about whether or when I was going to go because the embassy didn't know me.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

HUGHES: Bill Swing part of the time, and Ed Perkins before him.

Q: Certainly Bill Swing knew you?

HUGHES: Oh yes.

Q: Ed Perkins didn't perhaps.

HUGHES: After a while he certainly did because he was one of the ones who had to make the decision as to whether or not I should go.

Q: Because he had become the director general.

HUGHES: Yes, he made the decision and probably effected it. People change their minds. It's much better to have a positive mind and not a negative one with the people you're living with.

Q: You mentioned that you were in South Africa six years. Part of that time was with your husband earlier? Okay, during apartheid? So, you were certainly able to compare and contrast.

HUGHES: That's right. Yes, I was. Never to the degree that one would have been able to fortunately for those who lived in Johannesburg or anywhere else in the country. Things were never quite, no matter how bad things were in Cape Town they were never quite as bad as they were anywhere else.

Q: The apartheid was not enforced as tightly or?

HUGHES: It was not enforced as tightly. I can remember the mayor who was opposed to the enforcement that was ordered by Pretoria to put signs on the park benches, you know whites-only signs. The mayor said if you want to do it, you do it, I'm not going to do it. It was that kind of thing because when we arrived in 1970 they were using the old South African terminology. There were three colored city counselors who had been elected by everyone in Cape Town.

Q: Already, at that time in 1970? How about your language, your Afrikaans?

HUGHES: It's actually good. Every once in a while, for example, somebody in the Conservative Party would be speaking in Cape Town from Pretoria and there just weren't enough people to handle all of it. It's an easy language.

Q: Had you studied some previously when you were there in the '70s?

HUGHES: No.

Q: I'd like to talk about, just to probe a little bit more about this period in Cape Town when you were there. It must have been an exhilarating and exciting period. Had the United States a role, did we have lots of visitors coming?

HUGHES: Yes, we did and we had quite a number of tutelage programs for the ANC members. Allan Boesak is the name of a person of some importance who belonged to us.

Q: Because he was in Cape Town?

HUGHES: Because he was Cape Town based.

Q: Not because he got into trouble?

HUGHES: No, although interestingly enough the money that he got into trouble with came from Denmark. So it was kind of fun trying to track that later when I was in Copenhagen. When I look back on it, it was a fairly dangerous posting, although I think probably one of the things that television does to us is make us inured to things that are really happening. I've climbed walls and tried to get out of the way of marauding mobs. I've heard guns shot in anger although I don't think anyone ever shot one at me. At the same time, the Pan African Congress, for example, which declared war on the United States, also whenever they had a meeting they always made a place for me. Come on Mama, sit here.

Q: You're welcome, huh?

HUGHES: Yes. So, it was an extremely heady place to be and I still keep in touch with quite a number of people.

Q: Part of the problems in South Africa, and I've never been there myself, so I may be wrong in this, but there's been a fair amount of crime. Was that a problem in Cape Town at the time when you were there?

HUGHES: If you go from 1960, when there was virtually none, to our departure, yes, there was quite a bit, but nothing to compare with Johannesburg where everything was boiled up. I haven't been up there since the last sort of step of people warring themselves up.

Q: Trying to protect themselves? Cape Town is very different you mentioned a couple of times from Johannesburg. Why is it different do you think? Is it because it's more English?

HUGHES: No, it's probably about half-and-half. It was settled first in 1642 or something like that, but from the very beginning, certainly from the first 50 years, the Afrikaners thought that everything was much too liberal, they wanted to get out. So, by the 19th century they were heading north.

Q: The Boer War was?

HUGHES: Yes, that was the late 1800s. It attracted a different kind of people from the very beginning, farmers for the most part, but wine farmers.

Q: Wine farmers? In the cape region, the Cape Province?

HUGHES: Yes.

Q: Lots of business people.

HUGHES: Lots of business people, but interesting starting from 1970 the businessmen couldn't speak English. I mean my husband had to use his German to communicate with them and that obviously had all changed.

Q: When you were there with your husband in the early 1970s that was in Cape Town also?

HUGHES: Yes.

Q: So, you really were in Cape Town twice. Your six years in South Africa was all in Cape Town? It sounds pretty good to me.

HUGHES: Yes, it was.

Q: It's a beautiful place in terms of the scenery, the natural layout.

HUGHES: I was very fortunate in my friends because for that first year when I didn't work, all I did was play tennis and swim and stuff and get to know a lot of the local people. The people I knew and still know from those days, they're getting on. Even though they were all older than I was, their children were all the same age because they married so much later because of the war.

Q: The same age as your children?

HUGHES: Yes.

Q: When you were there the first time in the early '70s were you able to have friends across the racial lines?

HUGHES: We were, because we were diplomats and every once in a while there would be a neighbor who didn't quite understand and would call the police and the police would explain that we could have people of any color we wanted to at any time.

Q: It was never an issue between the police and the consulate?

HUGHES: No.

Q: You mentioned Bishop Tutu as somebody who was obviously very important with the church, but also in political terms as well. Was he somebody you knew the first time you were there?

HUGHES: Only the second.

Q: Only the second time, when he was the bishop?

HUGHES: Right, exactly. I'm not quite sure what I think about saints, but if I really thought about saints he would be at the top of my list.

Q: Well, I've heard him speak at the National Cathedral here, probably more than once and he's certainly very impressive, very articulate.

HUGHES: He has prostate cancer and I don't think he's doing all that well, but some people are very lucky and they do well. He had a good office so that whenever we asked for anything or whenever we hoped for something, all you had to do was say something and somebody from his office would make a call and usually very often.

Q: You mean if you had a visitor you would like to take and see him and he would receive them? His office was good in the sense that it was efficient and functioned well?

HUGHES: Yes.

Q: What other recollections, memories do you have of that period, the second time especially when you were?

HUGHES: Okay, the first time just very briefly I can recall being terribly angry about being there for probably the first 18 months I was there.

Q: Angry because of the political situation and the apartheid and all that that represented?

HUGHES: People were still at the tail end of being moved out of District Six which was where the coloreds, so-called, lived and their houses were all razed and they still have been razed because nobody really wants to touch them. I mean, it's sort of like, Osama Bin Laden and what he's been doing. People just don't want to have anything to do with District Six anymore, but eventually they will because it's in town.

Q: Cape Town?

HUGHES: Yes. People whose families had been there for generations had been booted out and it got to you even if you had nothing to do with the situation otherwise.

Q: How do you feel look back on the American role, the role of the United States in terms of the way we staffed our embassy and consulate in Cape Town? Did that have any particular impact would you say over the years? We've had African American ambassadors, consul generals?

HUGHES: Oh, yes. We've had because times have changed; we've had some pretty oblivious employees as well.

Q: Oblivious to the past?

HUGHES: This is from 1990 from 1992 I'd say. I was delighted selfishly to be able to go to the theaters for example, they had built some excellent theaters there. The British weren't allowed to go by their ambassador.

Q: Why?

HUGHES: Just because it was under apartheid rule. We went. I wasn't working so I could do what I wanted to.

Q: This again was the earlier period during apartheid? So, the British were protesting or objecting to the manifestations of apartheid and we were going along with it?

HUGHES: We weren't going along with it. I think that's a little bit too strong, but just sort of ignored it. Overall, I don't think it made any difference, I don't think we kept anybody from doing anything. We did have an ambassador who was about to go hunting with the minister of justice and his political counselor advised him not to go and he didn't go. People listened. The difference between the political ambassador and Bill Swing, was like night and day. Nobody ever put anything over on him.

Q: Well, Ambassador Swing I know was very much involved in encouraging, assisting, helping Mandela and the new government and as you said before we also sent some ANC people out for training I suppose in the United States on international business programs?

HUGHES: Yes, and we also had people coming to South Africa to train.

Q: To do workshops and courses?

HUGHES: Yes. As I say, it was interesting because you went everywhere, you ran the gamut. Some of my Cape Town contacts and colleagues are still in the government and they haven't done anything bad which is nice. I think they're going to be all right. I remember when the congressman, the one who is Hungarian by birth?

Q: Tom Lantos in California.

HUGHES: I took care of him for one weekend and he said, "How do you think things are going to turn out?" This was again in the early '70s and I wasn't working. I said I think they're going to turn out better than any other system than they've tried so far. I think that was the case.

WILLIAM P. POPE
Deputy Political Counselor
Pretoria (1991-1993)

Mr. Pope was born and raised in Virginia and educated at the University of Virginia. After serving in both the US Army and the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. Mr. Pope served several tours in the State Department in Washington, dealing, notably, with Counterterrorism. His overseas posts include Gaborone, Zagreb, Belgrade, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, and the Hague, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter two embassies. Mr. Pope was interviewed in 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Okay, today is the 9th of June, 2006. Bill, off to South Africa. You were there from '91 to when?

POPE: To '93.

Q: '93. Okay, what was your job?

POPE: I was the Deputy Political Counselor in Pretoria.

Q: Talk a bit about the situation when you arrived in '91 in South Africa.

POPE: Well, it was really not in turmoil but it was in evolution because Mandela was out of prison and people were starting to come back from exile or were coming out of prisons. They were organizing themselves down in Johannesburg; the ANC had set up in an office building called Shell House. And the government was dancing around, trying to figure out how to organize itself as well. And they were being pushed by the clergy, both sides being pushed by the clergy, to find some way to engage and it was just fascinating to get to know the personalities and observe it. We were the stay-behind group. You remember that was the period and they may still do it, when the government went back and forth from Pretoria to Cape Town. There's a history behind that, and a couple of my colleagues went on down to Cape Town with Parliament. And the thing is the White parliament had really become more or less irrelevant at that point because everybody knew what was in the cards and the real action was in Pretoria and Johannesburg and the area in between, the Midrand area, where there was a big convention center where these negotiations eventually were going to take place.

Q: Why weren't they taking place in Cape Town? I would think Cape Town would be more neutral territory than, say, Pretoria.

POPE: Well they weren't in Pretoria. The negotiations actually took place between Pretoria and Johannesburg, and that was considered by them to be meeting each other halfway, an area called Midrand, midway between the two. And there was a convention center there and they organized this big negotiation called CODESA, Congress for Democracy and Equality in South Africa I think is what CODESA stood for.

Q: Well, who was your leader in Pretoria when the ambassador wasn't there?

POPE: The DCM was Marshall McCallie, a great guy, really great.

Q: And who was ambassador?

POPE: Well when I first came it was Bill Swing and then later Princeton Lyman.

Q: Well now, in Pretoria, Pretoria was still, correct me if I'm wrong but this is the heart of the Afrikaners, wasn't it?

POPE: That's right. Or the edge of the heart. The heart was a little farther east and south.

Q: Okay. Now, you arrived there in '91 and go out and make your calls and all. What were you getting? I mean, we're talking about a specific time. I mean, these clouds were, to them, were looming over the horizon. What were you getting from the normal contacts you had?

POPE: Well, it depends on what kind of contacts you're talking about. There was a certain level at which the government, the apartheid government, was still trying to keep business going. For example, when I would go to the Foreign Ministry and talk to the diplomats there, in many ways it was very much like going to talk to any others. They were still trying to keep things, they knew it was coming, too, but they were still trying to keep things on track. They were bringing in minority junior officers already and interns and smart young Africans. But it depended on where I was. If you talked to politicians, that was all it was about, politicians or business people, the whole rest of society, that was the issue -- the negotiations and the future and how would it come out and how much power different people would be able to maintain.

Q: Were you finding, did we have much contact, I assume there was a diehard, never, never, never type.

POPE: There was.

Q: Were these people you could talk to or did we find ourselves just bypassing them?

POPE: We tried to talk to them and we had some Afrikaans trained speakers in the Political Section who did speak to them, to the extent we could. And we would observe at large congresses and meetings just as we tried to do with the ANC. And so, yes, but we knew that they weren't the ultimate long-range future. If you think of a magnet, trying to pull iron filings in different directions, they were trying to pull the solution as far in their direction as possible. But I can't imagine many except the most extreme ones didn't understand where this was going.

Q: Was there any talk of an underground movement, an armed resistance?

POPE: Some talk of it but I don't remember that it was anything that was too serious or that people worried about. I think there was some talk at one point about trying to split off and create some kind of a separate little country somewhere above Bloemfontein. But I don't think any of that was very serious. South Africa was going to remain a united country under somebody, and it was pretty clear to most people it would be under Nelson Mandela, but it was just what the deal

was going to be.

Q: Well how, when you got there from one, your perspective and then two, from the perspective of say the Whites you were dealing with, what was the view of Mandela at that time?

POPE: It was mixed. But there were already a lot of people who understood that this was a very unusual individual, a very special and unusual individual, not your run-of-the-mill politician, Black or White, and that he was a huge moral force to be reckoned with. A lot of people were already thinking, "Do I try to get my assets and move to Australia or Canada or the United States?" People who lived in the wealthier areas. And some ended up doing it, didn't take much with them, others didn't.

Q: What about, I realize Johannesburg is the, sort of the industrial center, but when you were there, what was the business community talking about? Was this going to make it change?

POPE: Sure, absolutely. Because they'd been in a privileged position up to now. I don't think they were all necessarily diehard apartheid supporters, but I think they just wanted the most favorable deal, the most economic and political clout of the business class to come out of the deal. And even though the political situation was going to be turned on its head, everybody understood that they didn't want the business side to be turned on its head. They wanted business to continue and for there not to be large expropriations of land and things to go on.

Q: Well did you find, were the White community much resentment at the United States, saying you got us into this or something like that?

POPE: Some, but I didn't detect so much of that. Yes, there was some because we were pushing them, as were others, but we obviously were the big dog in the fight. And there was some of that and of course there was also still this residual fear that what it was really all about was still being run out of Moscow even though the Soviet Union had come apart. So it was still seen by some as an international communist plot to bring in Mandela and make it the Soviet Union of the south.

Q: Well up in Pretoria was there much of a Black presence? I'm talking about a significant, you know, either economic or political presence.

POPE: No. It was mostly servants, still pretty much a White city. That was Johannesburg.

Q: Were you all getting together with the people from consulate general and elements of our embassy in Johannesburg and also in Cape Town? I mean were everybody sort of seeing the same picture or were there, I won't say disputes but different perspectives on what was happening?

POPE: I don't remember different perspectives inside the house. There might have been, but they couldn't have been too serious because I think I would be able to recall them. I think everybody saw it pretty much the same way.

Q: Well what was the conventional embassy, country, American representatives in South Africa, conventional wisdom as to how this thing was going to come out?

POPE: More or less like it did. I'm not saying that we'd been perfect in predicting everything. You remember we talked about Yugoslavia. And I had my doubts as to whether Yugoslavia could hold together as one country but I never expected the violence. I thought it might stay together but even if it didn't there wouldn't be the violence. So we've missed the call on many occasions. In this one I think we got it pretty right, that it would be an ANC-led government and that they would be much more moderate and much more business-friendly and more human rights-friendly than some people feared.

Q: Well was there a concern about the breakdown of public order? In other words the servants would arise and rape and steal and all that?

POPE: There was some, sure. It was fanned by the extreme right that one day all the servants would rise up and kill everybody. I don't remember that anybody ever took that very seriously because I just remember being struck by how remarkably gentle and decent and forgiving people were. And not just Mandela, I mean down at the much lower levels, no matter what. I can remember talking to somebody and now I'm straining to think who it was, it was a man, an African; I don't think he was a servant but he wasn't very high either. And he was talking about things that had been done and some relative, a brother or somebody who had been rounded up and beaten up by the police because he was Black and I guess died. But my recollection of this man is that he was not bitter. "That was terrible and I've taken a deep breath and now we need to go forward and we must forgive and go forward as a nation and all be together, Black and White, etc." It was remarkable, in my view. Obviously not everybody felt that way. You had young firebrands on the left who wanted to rise up but the vast majority-

Q: Did you find yourself having to go through some sort of mental readjustment, carrying the baggage of Yugoslavia, which was again a divided place although the complexions were the same but still. You know, you could see how deep these hatreds lay. I mean, did you find that you were trying to equate Yugoslavia to this when you first arrived?

POPE: No, I don't remember that. It felt much more like a unified country that had been and should be unified. Exactly how it should govern itself and make those arrangements was another issue. But Yugoslavia was a very artificial kind of an entity with very distinct peoples who had a long, long history, hundreds of years older than South Africa. South Africa felt more like a United States or an Australia, a "young country carved out of the wilderness" kind of feel but one that should be one country. Most people, except those White extremists who were talking about some kind of a republic of something, I forget what they called it, bordering Botswana and Namibia.

Q: The Orange Republic or something?

POPE: Something, I can't remember, some name for it. But other than that I just don't remember much talk like that.

Q: Did you get much of a chance to get out to the sort of the heart of the White establishment out on the farms.

POPE: Not enough. That was not my principal tasking and I didn't speak Afrikaans. So I did do it some and it was amazing, it was another world. It was really another world. My wife and I were just discussing the other day about New Year's Eve of 1992, '91-'92, when we were invited to an Afrikaner wedding, deep, deep in Afrikanerdom, somewhere south of Pretoria and Johannesburg but really, really out in the bush. And almost nobody there spoke English and there was no alcohol. It was all Dutch Reform, and it was another world. And then we found out halfway through the wedding reception that way back behind some staircase there was a little place with some watered-down champagne that we would be allowed to go take if we could find it. But it was really another world out there and it was very, very isolated.

Q: What happened in Pretoria when the government moved down to Cape Town? I mean, from your perspective.

POPE: Not so much change because most of the permanent government stayed in Pretoria. It was really the politicians, primarily the parliament. Even they, in particular the ministers, were going back and forth flying, an easy flight, flying back and forth all the time. And so, for the permanent government, foreign ministry and other parts of the government, that we interacted with it wasn't such a big shock. As well as our principal focus, as I said, was these negotiations that were going on right there between Johannesburg and Pretoria, halfway at the place called Midrand. That was our focus. And we'd read the reports from our colleagues down in Cape Town and watch the news. "Parliament debated something today." It seemed like it was deck chairs on the Titanic.

Q: I would have thought, I mean, the parliament just wasn't engaging? Was this because they were shutting their eyes to developments or was it just that they'd been bypassed and that?

POPE: I don't know their reasoning. Probably both of what you just said. But the bottom line is that they were debating various kinds of bills and things that just didn't matter, as far as I was concerned. I don't want to speak for my colleagues who were down in Cape Town and responsible for covering the Parliament, because they did a good job and they went and they did what they were supposed to do, as well as covering the politics of what was going on down around that area and how the Blacks and the Coloreds and others were feeling about the events taking place to the north of them. But our very heavy focus was to some degree interacting with the government like anyone would here, a diplomat here with our government and to a considerable degree these negotiations. The negotiations were what dominated my time there.

Q: Well was there, in Pretoria, the equivalent to, was it Soweto or something? An area set aside for the Blacks which turned into almost a viable political area?

POPE: Nothing significant that I recall. It was really Soweto and similar townships and they were really grouped around Johannesburg. And people came up by combi, by vans and trains.

Q: Well what developed while you were there in the political process? You were there from '91 to '93?

POPE: Yes. I left before it all came to fruition and before the 1994 elections when Mandela became President. But it went a long way. They agreed, they formed their own internal teams and their own internal positions and began to have initial contacts with each other, the key players, Mbeki and Cyril Ramaphosa and those people on the one side and Roelf Meyer and the others on the other side and began to reach out to each other and have small meetings and then larger meetings and then finally they settled on the spot. By then it was like a huge political convention. It was really big and there were a lot of people and of course the press was all over it and people swarming every time some important delegate would come out of a negotiating room, people swarming with microphones. We were swarming in our own way, trying to peel them off to ask them, because Washington was really interested, Washington wanted to know everything.

So what happened was organizing internally, both the government and the opposition, and then coming together and figuring out how to begin the negotiations. And then actually starting the negotiations.

Q: Were we playing any role at this time in preparing South African Blacks, you're talking about interns and all this? You know, trips to the States sort of to prep young up-and-coming men and women from the Black community to take over? Not power, I mean take over responsibilities.

POPE: We had a large USAID mission. In fact, when we moved into our new secure embassy, as large as it was because we had been in downtown office buildings, as large as the new embassy was, the USAID mission was still outside because it was so large. To my recollection, it did anything any aid mission would have, kind of more structural things like digging wells and those kinds of things. But also it had lots of exchange programs and training young Blacks and all of that, the kinds of things you're talking about.

Q: What happened to your, well embassy, when the ambassador showed up? I mean, did it change or did your job change?

POPE: I can't remember any extended time when we didn't have one. We had Bill Swing when I came.

Q: I was thinking when the ambassador came to Cape Town, or were they back and forth all the time?

POPE: When the Parliament was in Cape Town, the Ambassador was down there more and the DCM was Acting up in Pretoria. I just don't remember that it changed things that much. It was an easy flight, he came back and forth and we were heavily focused on our business. So no, I don't remember that that had a huge effect. Both of them were great ambassadors and extremely popular with the troops, both Bill Swing and Princeton Lyman. Those are both people you should have, if you haven't-

Q: I've talked to Princeton but-

POPE: Bill Swing you absolutely should get. Boy, he's a smart-

Q: I don't know where he is now. Is he still in New York?

POPE: He was out doing, I think Liberia peacekeeping. Where he is right now I'm not sure.

Q: What about other embassies, particularly, you know, an awful lot of European countries particularly had a stake in this. I mean, the British of course but the Scandinavians and the Germans, you know, the community, certainly the Western community was heavily engaged in this.

POPE: They were.

Q: I was just wondering what were your relations, what were you seeing there?

POPE: Well of course the Scandinavians were always heavily involved in assistance. When I met my wife, who was at the Swedish legation, they didn't have an embassy; they had a legation because they didn't quite recognize apartheid. They wanted to be on the ground but they didn't want to have a full blown embassy. She was doing aid work for their SIDA, their equivalent of USAID. Others had a more mixed role like ours, the Brits and the French, the big ones. Everybody was represented, the Dutch of course had a kind of a special long-term relationship, the Germans, everybody was present. Their governments were very interested and they had their own reporting sections reporting whatever they could pick up on political developments. And of course they had their aid missions as well.

Q: Well, you're all working the same side of the street, was there a lot of collegiality at this point?

POPE: There was with me and as far as I can recall, with other officers, too. I used to meet the Brits and the French and the Dutch and others to compare notes: "What are you hearing? What are you seeing?" Sure. And not only about that but other things that were going on around, too. For example, I had a French colleague down there with whom I served later in another post and he and I used to talk, not only about what's happening inside, and we probably had the best view of that of almost anybody, probably anybody, what was happening in the negotiations but also the region. They had, for example, relations with the Marxist government in Luanda, in Angola. And of course we were rather heavily invested with Savimbi at that point. And they knew a lot of things, the French Embassy in Pretoria knew a lot of things and so we compared notes.

Q: Well then, this is where you met your wife? Was there any problem in marrying, two Foreign Service officers of different services, different countries, getting married?

POPE: I was a bachelor at that point, I never expected to meet anybody, much less anybody who wasn't an American. And SY was remarkably reasonable about it. I had to fill out some forms,

but they were remarkably reasonable. I guess if she'd been from Russia or North Korea or something, they might have been a little more concerned. Sweden somehow just didn't strike anybody as a threat, I guess, of any kind.

Q: What was your wife's background?

POPE: She was a Foreign Service officer. She wasn't a career SIDA person, a USAID-equivalent career officer, she was a Foreign Ministry officer who was detailed to work with the SIDA people.

Q: Had she served in other countries?

POPE: Oh, lots. She, honestly, if you were ever doing these on other people she'd be somebody who'd be really interesting to talk to. She had her first tour in Beirut and it was a tough time. It was a tough time out there because of the civil war going. And so she'd had a lot of experiences herself and had served in Zimbabwe right after independence and in Prague. So that was tough because the Czechs obviously didn't care whether you were an American or a Swede or what; if you were a Westerner you were followed and tapped and listened to and just a lot of pressure all the time that she didn't particularly care for. So we had both together had a lot of interesting experiences.

Q: Well then, is there anything else that we should cover do you think?

POPE: On South Africa?

Q: On South Africa.

POPE: I would just say I had the privilege on several occasions of meeting Nelson Mandela and he is, to this day, the most remarkable individual I ever met. I recognize everybody's human and everybody has faults, but there was something, being in his presence. I obviously never met Gandhi, but a kind of something, a kind of an aura around Mandela, at least that's what I felt, that must have been like being around Gandhi. I marvel that Mandela could be so absent of bitterness, given that he'd been sent away and broken rocks for all those years. And I think they were unbelievably blessed, just like we were with our founding fathers. We got an exceptional group of people in the mid-18th century. And I think it could have gone very differently, if South Africa hadn't had this really remarkable individual. So I just can't say enough about Mandela.

Q: Well, when you left in '90-

POPE: Three.

Q: Three, were you feeling optimistic, I mean, was that sort of the feeling, that things were heading in the right direction?

POPE: I was, I was very optimistic about South Africa. I don't recall that we understood what a

toll HIV/AIDS was going to take yet. It was there, but I don't think we understood the toll it was going to take all the way across Africa but particularly in Central and Southern. And the other thing that already was worrying everybody and was already quite serious was crime. Even if the rest of the political transition went well, went really well, and even if there were an election and Mandela became president and he brought in lots of officials of all kinds of creeds and races and had the best possible administration, there was at a minimum that cloud on the horizon. Crime was so pervasive it was driving people out of Johannesburg. People were living in armed compounds already, and I'm just not sure in retrospect that I understood how bad it was going to get.

For example, there were a lot of carjackings. I had a little red sports car, and I'm really amazed in retrospect that I wasn't carjacked. There were a lot of carjackings but they used to run up to you and stick a gun through the window and tell you to get out. And if you got out and gave them the keys and didn't resist, they'd drive away. And later it came to the point where, even if you didn't resist, they'd kill you and then drive away. You see the difference in the ferocity of it. And so that's something about South Africa that my wife and I both found heartbreaking.

Q: What was the analysis or common wisdom of why this was? Was it the breakdown in the police force which had been this, you know, apartheid but very tough force, was that it or was it just the times were changing or what?

POPE: A combination of things. I don't remember exactly how, whether we did a formal analysis of it, we probably did. But it was what you just said about the police but it also was the whole sociology and the change and lots and lots and lots of young men with virtually no education. You remember that whole Soweto generation, the boycotts that started in '76. They called them the lost generation, the whole lost generation of young men, just feeding on each other and more and more violent. So a combination of factors and extreme poverty. By African standards, South Africa was so advanced. I've forgotten, we had the statistics, but it generated something like 60 percent of all of the electric power on the continent, it had 80 percent of the telephones. Those kinds of infrastructure percentages. But still there were pockets of deep Third World kind of poverty with no electricity, no running water, no chance for any kind of advancement. So it was a combination of things. That worried me when I left, and it's just gotten much more tragic.

SCOTT E. SMITH
Director, Southern Africa Drought Emergency Task Force
Washington, DC (1992)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He earned a BA from Johns Hopkins University and an MA from the School of Advanced International Studies [SAIS]. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974, serving in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1997.

Q: Comment a little bit about the scale of the drought issue as you understood it.

SMITH: The scale was tremendous. There were major failures of the rains in that region the summer of 1991-92. Tremendous loses of crops. The production maize was 30-40 percent of normal. There were tremendous shortfalls that needed to be met by either relief food or commercial imports. South Africa, which was normally produced tremendous surpluses of corn, was also seriously affected and had no surplus at all, in fact was drawing down on its own stocks. Zimbabwe, which was the other surplus corn producer in the region, was very, very severely hit and complicating that, it had in the previous year or two sold off a lot of its substantial maize stocks to gain foreign currency for some of its expenditures. So the drought came at a time when Zimbabwe's buffer stock was at a particularly low ebb. So, there were tremendous problems, basically from Tanzania south, affecting all of the countries in southern Africa - Zambia, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as South Africa. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were at risk of dying from starvation or other drought related causes.

Q: What was the main problem you had to address in trying to meet this need?

SMITH: The main issues were transportation and supply. In both cases the response was magnificent, both from within the region as well as from outside. On transportation first. Much of the port system and rail system which serves southern Africa originates in South Africa. There was in the region at that time considerable antipathy between South Africa and its neighbors over its internal policies. And yet, despite that, there was a very close, if not very high profile, working relationship between the frontline countries and South Africa around port and rail transportation issues. There were even, and this was pretty hard to imagine in the environment at that time, government people, middle level people, from the governments of some of those countries who actually went and worked in South Africa with the transportation people coordinating the ports and rail system as a way of keeping communications going and working a whole structure of transportation in the region. There was an increase of our assistance to the ports and rail corridors from Mozambique into Zimbabwe and Malawi, and also some assistance came in through Dar es Salaam and Tanzania and down the rail to Zambia and across into Malawi as well. So, there was a lot of effort. The regional program in southern Africa was still headquartered in Harare and Ted Morse was the director there at that time. And, of course, Ted is one who is very experienced in emergencies and played a key role and was sort of a local, on-the-scenes or in-the-region coordinator for a lot of the US assistance. The whole transportation mechanism worked extremely well.

The other side was supply. There was a lot of flexibility even within countries to swap supplies, to use what buffer stocks there were, for some commercial sales from South Africa to other parts of the region, even though South Africa, itself, was under a bit of a strain.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Election Monitor, UN Mission to South Africa

1994

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

CARNEY: I went to Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Political Advisor in the UN observer mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) for the elections that brought Mandela to power. I met a number of characters who will figure in our subsequent chats. Susan Rice was on the NSC staff and became Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I got to know a number of UN people who I've stayed close to as well as seeing again Reg Austin, who had been in Cambodia as the head of the electoral unit. He was head of the electoral monitoring aspect of the UN mission in South Africa. He was a Zimbabwean. Interesting mission.

Q: You came right back and went to this election. You were in South Africa from when to when?

CARNEY: In Johannesburg... I want to say I arrived in March, but I will have to check that. I stayed through the election in May. Then Brahimi asked me to stay on an extra month, which I did.

The election itself was fascinating. First of all, there was a pre-Brahimi mission led by Angela King. She did not have enough horsepower and Brahimi did. He was a former Algerian foreign minister, Special Representative of the UN for the Congo. Then sent to South Africa as the Secretary General's man for the South African elections. Brahimi immediately recognized that I could be enormously useful. He picked the slice of my experience with white South African politics from when I had been political counselor in Pretoria from '83 to '86. Indeed I did know a number of white South African politicians and of course black South African politicians. He had a little stable of special political advisors - an Egyptian who is active now, another American who was a professor at City College, an African specialist who is now in the DC area. I had dinner with him the other night - Herbert Weiss. Brahimi had his own team which has continued with him now, a fellow whose name betrays an Armenian background, Seryadarian, an Iraqi Ala Almaman, who was chief of protocol, is in Bosnia now, if I'm not mistaken rather than in Afghanistan with Brahimi.

Brahimi was exceedingly good working with the very competent South African negotiators and that negotiating process included Rolf Meyer and Leon Wessels, and the ANC people also engaged in it. The big problem was getting the Zulu prime minister, Gatsha Buthelezi, on board the effort. He had been an early ANC member. He had become creator of the Inkatha Freedom Party, the political wing of the Zulu. Over the years of his return to South Africa, Inkatha had become very independent. The Zulu never accepted to become a Bantustan, to become independent themselves in the vision of the apartheid government so that all black tribes would

have their own and rather small quasi independent mini states. The Zulu completely refused ever to buy into that. It looked, and the ANC began criticizing Gatsha because he was so clearly a pole around which Zulu were rallying, rather than joining the ANC itself. Negotiations succeeded in getting Gatsha to participate at the very last minute.

Q: Your role was just to watch this?

CARNEY: No, it was to talk with the political figures, find out what was going on, see if there were any grievances that the UN needed to address, see if there were any trends that were leaning in an unhappy direction. At the election itself, I joined other UN monitors at polling places.

Q: You have a white government. You have a challenging ANC, an opening up of the electorate for the first time.

CARNEY: A number of other parties as well.

Q: Yes. What was the role of the UN?

CARNEY: The mandate was to monitor the elections and see if they were free and fair. But in fact it was bigger than that.

Q: Could you talk about what you were...

CARNEY: As nearly as I could tell, a major effort was at facilitating, where needed, early identification of any problems, facilitation of their resolution so that the elections could go forward smoothly.

Q: How did you get involved?

CARNEY: April Glaspie.

Q: But I mean, with this UN mandate, what were you doing?

CARNEY: I was basically advising Brahimi on what was going on in white politics and notably in the Afrikaner political elements.

Q: What was going on with the Afrikaners? This had been the group that had been the most adamantly opposed to black rule.

CARNEY: Yes. A personal friend of mine was the chief of staff for Frederik Willem De Klerk, the State President. It was De Klerk who had looked at the situation in South African with his close friends and decided that P.W. Botha's, his predecessor's, direction was going to produce chaos if not bloodbath. It was De Klerk and his associates who decided there had to be a negotiation. Mandela had to be let out of jail, and South Africa had to move forward as a non-racial state with apartheid ended. Now, not all Afrikaners agreed. But what De Klerk did was, he

set a referendum among whites for the very direction that I've outlined. That referendum passed overwhelmingly. But there were nevertheless strong, armed unhappy, ultraconservative whites who insisted De Klerk was wrong and there could never be a unified, non-racial South Africa.

Q: As the election approached, was everyone looking at these ultraconservatives and saying, "Is there going to be an assassination or an armed uprising?"

CARNEY: There were plenty of incidents. There was a bomb at the airport. There was a major bomb downtown which killed a number of people and set off what could have become a major riot that was damped down. There were clear provocations certainly done by these very right-wing Afrikaners. It didn't work. Mandela was able to keep the lid on.

Q: How did the voting go when you watched this?

CARNEY: It was interesting. I myself went to Sharpeville of historical fame, where the major riot over Bantu education took place that essentially set South Africa on its course for the last third of the 20th century. I went to a number of other places where there had been serious riots and important killings of rioters and activists. Everybody wanted to vote. The first place we went to was in Soweto. There were two polling stations. There was about to be a riot there because people were breaking into line and the lines were enormous. There weren't quite enough ballot boxes. We helped bring over one of the peacemakers, which was a title given to younger men in their 30s who were part of (black) civil society groups organized to help effect the transition by acting at the very local level to resolve conflicts and disputes. A couple of them came over and restored order. They had the mandate of the ANC and everybody knew it.

Q: You stayed on after the election.

CARNEY: Yes. It turned out that there wasn't any real need to have me around. But Brahimi wanted enough of a staff so that he could do things as needed. I left at the end of July.

Q: This would be July '94.

CARNEY: That's correct.

SEJAMOTHOPO MOTAU
Member of Parliament
South Africa (1994-2010)

Mr. Motau was born and raised in South Africa and was educated at the University of South Africa and the University of California, Berkeley. He was the recipient of an Operation Crossroads Africa grant to the United States as well as a Fulbright scholarship for study at the University of California. A newspaper editor and a reporter by profession, Mr. Motau was elected to Parliament and has

since been an active member of the Opposition Party. Mr. Motau was interview by Daniel F. Whitman in 2010.

Q: Now you are a member of parliament.

MOTAU: Yes, now I am a member of parliament and a member of the official opposition in this country. We have what we call the official opposition which we call the Democratic Alliance which comes out of the long history of a party which was the Progressive Federal Party and the Progressive Party and then the United Party way back then. The guys in the United Party split and went to the Progressive Party.

I never thought I would go into active politics. I have always been very, very politically aware. I can probably tell you more about American politics today than some Americans or some British because I just like doing that. In my work as a journalist I covered politics, I covered labor, and I covered education so it is something I have always believed.

When I was in the U.S. I used to tell friends, colleagues at school that, guys, I am going back home when I graduate. They would say, “No, no, no. Don’t go back home. Those Boers are going to kill you.”

I said, “No, it’s my home. I’ve got to go there and I’ve got to go do what I can do.” We came back, was the struggle. It was always going on.

Once in 1984 I then said to myself something else had to happen. Political liberation is fine but you also need economic liberation and to get that, you need a balance of forces. You need a strong opposition. Obviously the American system had a strong impact on me, where parties vie for power. Every eight years, four years somebody gets kicked out and somebody comes in but they all go in the same direction. They all do it for the country. The American flag is the driving thing and I said to the guys that what we need is a situation like that where we don’t have the typical African situation where one party is in power forever and ever, amen and takes the country down the tubes.

Over the years these things have been happening and you look around and you think about yourself. When I came back from the U.S., I had to think about myself. Work hard. I was always lucky, got the big companies, the good jobs, mostly communication, sort of escaped but things then things started happening and you feel, no, this is not right. This is not why we went to war for and then you start moaning.

Q: At what point did you begin to see you had to go in a different direction from the prevailing one party

MOTAU: Seriously from day one; 1994 and I will explain why. When I went to vote I said to my wife, “I am voting. I am voting for the ANC but I am voting for the ANC of Nelson Mandela.”

And she said, “Why do you say that?”

I said, “Because I see that in this party,” there are two parties here, the Nelson Mandela party and the other. At that time it was not well defined. Now we know, of course. It was the only time I ever voted for the ANC. There was a very good reason for it. They would be the only viable party to kick out the Nats, which is the national party. And they did. The next time I voted I voted for the, at that time it was called the Progressive Party. The important thing was right from the beginning my position was very clear; for this country to have a viable democracy you need two parties vying for position.

Q: Now was it partly the American system that gave you this sense or was it also the logic of what was happening in this country?

MOTAU: Well, partly that but partly because I have always internalized and believed that if you believe in democracy, then you’ve got to believe in the balance of power, very simple. I still hold that view. For me going to the DA now was the easiest thing to do. It was just a matter of when.

Q: The DA was created relatively recently?

MOTAU: Yes, after the Progressive Party, it became an alliance and that happened about 7 years ago. It might be ten when they joined with the National Party and the then Progressive Federal Party came together to form what they call the Democratic Alliance. It didn’t work. It was a bad decision but some of them are still there and stuff.

For me it was very simply this; after a while you start complaining. No, this is not going right and somebody has to do it and you ask yourself, who? Who is going to form this opposition? One day you wake up and realize if you don’t do it, how can you expect other people to do it? That happened about 2008.

Over the years I have been doing a thing on nation building called ‘spirit of nation’ and that spirit of nation was a thing that I started formulating about ten years ago when I was asked to address a matric class at Kimberley Boys High School, and I worked for the De Beers at that time. I did not know what I was going to talk to these 15, 16 year olds about and I had several ideas; one was international competition, patriotism and I called it spirit of nation and the reason was very simply that I felt that we needed to forge a South African nation. At that time Desmond Tutu was talking of the ‘rainbow nation’ and Mandela was talking reconciliation and I thought I would add my voice to that. It was ‘spirit of nation’. I used to talk about it and many times I got invited by businesses and other social organizations to talk about this thing. It was purely about international competition, work ethic, patriotism, and the kinds of stuff I say patriotism has nothing to do with your political affiliation. It has to do with love for your country. Because of that, I was invited to talk to the Rotarians in Johannesburg and in the audience was a guy, Mike Moriarty from the Democratic Alliance and my host said, “Sej, I want you to meet this guy” and I met him and we started talking and I said, “We’ll get together.”

Once I decided I wanted to do something, he had given me his business card, I called Mike. I said, “Mike, let’s have lunch” so I went and he said, “What’s happening?”

I said, "Well, I am tired of complaining. I need to do something about the strong opposition that everybody seems to talk about but nobody wants to do anything about. I want to join you guys."

He said, "OK, well, why don't you pay your ten rands? Where do you live?"

"Would you be interested in standing for election?"

Why not? And we went through a very serious, rigorous election process and I made it and got put on the list. That's how I ended up in parliament.

Q: How close is it in this country that a currently splintered opposition might come together? I know there are negotiations.

MOTAU: Not negotiations. In South Africa they are very careful about how they phrase things. Well, we are talking about talking.

Q: From what you said earlier I gather that you believe the best hope for an effective opposition is for the entire opposition to work together.

MOTAU: No question about it. It is just figuring out how. It is the how that has to be done. The DA is talking to the Independent Democrats and Congress of the People. There is a piece of paper, a document that has been put out.

Q: The DA is in control of only one province.

MOTAU: Yes.

Q: Is it demographically possible or likely that, you wish, I guess, to become a national party. What are the chances of that happening given the demographics?

MOTAU: The chances are there but it is going to be a long haul and it's going to be tough.

I can explain it to you. We think that Gauteng Province is probably our next best bet simply because of the fact that the ruling party in this country is no different from any other ruling party in Africa. Most of the people who support the party are people in the rural areas and in South Africa a lot of the people also in the urban areas. But you are more likely to get somebody in an urban area voting for the Democratic Alliance than you would get from the rural areas for the simple reason that many people still think in racial terms. The Democratic Alliance is a white party, that's what they say. Therefore, you cannot vote for people who previously oppressed you. They will oppress you again because you are not applying your mind to the thing; you are applying your heart. In fact, most of the time you are applying nothing; you are just told, "You vote for the ANC. It was the liberation party so it will liberate you." What you forget to ask is now that they have this power, how have they used it in my best interest? The score card doesn't look good, doesn't look good and that is why we think we're making some inroads in parliament.

I can give you some very practical examples. When we got there about nine months ago, it was the in thing for every ANC person to stand up and say, “We decided this, we did this and now we have 12 million people on social grants” and stuff like that and we started very quietly saying to them, “Nobody should be proud that there are 12 million people in this country on welfare grants. It is not something to be proud about. It is not something to be proud about that people are losing their jobs. It is not something to be proud about that people live in shacks.”

We started turning this whole thing around for them to realize you can’t boast about the fact that people are on welfare. That’s helping. It’s changing. Now we are beginning to hear, “Let’s work together” from the people who never would have said it a year ago because at that time they had more than two thirds majority in parliament. Now they have just under two thirds and they need us.

Q: They are losing very gradually.

MOTAU: Of course they are losing gradually. On Wednesday when one of our members took up an issue with the deputy speaker and he was thrown out, we went out. We didn’t go out because Dianne Kohler Barnard was kicked out. We went out because our Chief Whip stood up on a point of order. The deputy speaker said, “I don’t hear a thing, I will not hear a thing” and we said, “If we parliamentarians in the House cannot exercise freedom of speech, what are we doing in the House? So we walked out.”

Q: So this happened, it was all the opposition, I believe that walked out.

Explain how this could have happened simultaneously.

MOTAU: Very simple. When a COPE member was talking, it was in reply to the president’s state of nation address, right? Then he made certain statements about the president. He made a general statement that the party but it came across as if he were saying President Zuma is leading this country to a part of lawlessness. So then somebody objected. This was on Monday. Somebody objected to say, “No, you can’t say that.” He said ‘deliberately’. He said, “No, no. That’s not parliamentary. We want him to withdraw.”

So the deputy speaker wasn’t sure what had been said. She said, “I will take this on advisement and I’ll come back to you guys.” So we went home.

The next day she came back and she said, “I have looked at the thing and this is dah, dah, dah.” I thought she did a very nice thing, good homework. “In terms of this I would like to ask the honorable George to withdraw this statement” and George said, “What should I withdraw?”

I think the deputy speaker made her mistake. Instead of saying to honorable George, “This is what I want you to withdraw”, she says, “You were not listening to me. I have read all this long statement. I am asking you to withdraw.”

The guy said, “No, no, no. I don’t know what to withdraw. What do you want me to withdraw?”

She said, “OK, I will begin again” and she read the section and said, “I want you to withdraw and Honorable George said, “I didn’t say that.” They started arguing.

Q: In the session?

MOTAU: Yes, in the session. The deputy speaker lost control. They started arguing and as they were doing this one of our members, the one who finally got suspended was very agitated because at that time Ian Davidson who is our Chief Whip stood up on a point of order at the same time Shilowa of COPE stood up on a point of order. The deputy speaker said, “I will not hear you. I will not hear anybody except honorable George. Honorable George, do you withdraw this thing or not?”

George said, “No, I will not withdraw.”

Said, “Marching orders.”

Q: Then everyone else left too.

MOTAU: Exactly. As Honorable George walked out, we walked out because our Chief Whip was not allowed to speak. At the time apparently one of our members, Dianne Kohler Barnard had been so agitated that she spoke French. She has been given a week’s suspension. But of course, the deputy speaker doesn’t do the work. The secretaries do that. She had a very nice prepared document as to step by step. Whether that was right or wrong, to me, it is irrelevant. She gave the impression that she had done some work.

My problem with her and for the first time history was made on Wednesday night. I agreed for once with a member of the ANC. That’s true. People in the ANC are amazing. It doesn’t matter what you say. If you are not a member of the ANC, they just disregard what you say. We were on the bus going home and I said, “I think the whole thing went out of kilter because the deputy speaker was weak. She did not handle this thing with the authority that she should have.”

The woman from the ANC said, “I agree with you.”

Q: So this was the ANC agreeing with you rather than the reverse.

MOTAU: Yes, for once somebody in the ANC actually agreeing with a DA member about something.

Q: But not in public?

MOTAU: Well, it was in public, not in the House but as we were traveling home. I mean, these guys would deny anything. If you looked outside and said, “Oh, the sun is shining” and you are a member of DA, a member of ANC would probably say, “No it is not shining.”

Q: Does this indicate to you there is a real possibility of an opposition becoming stronger?

MOTAU: Well, I can assure you . . .

Q: And of eroding the ANC of some of its own members?

MOTAU: In any normal democracy, Zuma would never have been president; that's number one.

Q: Why?

MOTAU: Because of many, many things. He was investigated for this, for that, for whatever and he never stood to contest the leadership with anybody so there were many things.

But the other thing that would not have happened was that Zuma is not, has not been to school. People react as a gut thing very negatively to people who don't have formal education. They admire the fact that Zuma had been self-taught and whatever but they always say, "Wait a minute. She spent 25 years at school to get her PhD. Why should she be sitting here listening to you who didn't do it?" So instinctively people react that way.

I think just on the flaws, he wouldn't have done it but he did it because here they vote the party.

From us, from our perspective the challenge is to get the average, and there is no creature like that, but to get the average black South African to realize they have a choice. You have a choice. You have a spectrum of political parties. You can vote for any one of them. It is not a crime not to vote for the ANC. I know that. I have done that. So and so has done that, other people have done that because we think for ourselves. That's the challenge for the opposition.

Q: Devil's advocate. Before I was in South Africa I was in Spain. There are some parallels. It is forty million people, it had been in a period of great repression under Franco. It suddenly had great liberation when Franco died in '75 and because of the tumultuous past, there were many Spanish people who would never, ever, ever leave the Socialist Party, even after it became dysfunctional, corrupt, and unable to guide the country. There were many people who felt because of the very violent history of Franco and the Socialists were the republican opposition to Franco evolved into something else. Instinctively they could not leave the party, even no matter how dysfunctional.

You see why I am mentioning this?

MOTAU: Oh, yes.

Q: Disprove me.

MOTAU: No, I am not even going to try to disprove you because you could be right and that's the problem. That is why some of us are so afraid and getting more afraid because what you are

saying could be true. I have had people who have told me in my face, “Sej, I agree with what you are saying. The party is going off the rails,” meaning the ANC, “but I am a diehard ANC guy so I am going to stay with the party.”

So you could be right and that’s the problem. The challenge for us in this country is that whatever needs to happen, this intervention that needs to happen to open up the people’s heads and minds and brains to say, “This is for my country not for the party.” That’s our challenge. It is a tough one, I can assure you. We are there in the trenches. It has gone to the irrational level where people are very irrational about it and as I say, that’s the thing that really is worrisome because if we don’t do that, if that creature I referred to the average black South African does not wake up to the fact they have a choice, we will end up like Zimbabwe or like anybody else. Seriously, it is possible.

Q: You say they should wake up one day and see that these things are possible. Surely you have a strategy to assist them in waking up?

MOTAU: I was being flippant but the real thing about strategy is exactly that. The strategy is very simple and it is simple things that work but those are the most difficult things. It doesn’t matter how you slice the numbers, why people in this country can make the numbers. For the DA or COPE or any of those parties to win, it must have a black majority so when we from the DA side are talking this is exactly what I am saying. I say, “Look, I am doing what I am doing because I believe first in the vision and principles and whatever of the DA.” I truly do; open opportunities and all those things.

But as a black South African, grew up in a township I do it for another reason; people who grew up with me, came after me can see that a black person can belong to this party and make a difference. If we are really serious about the fact that we want to form a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa, then we cannot have a party that is made up of exclusively black people or exclusively white people or whatever. We can’t do that.

Right now as we talk it is a statistical fact the Democratic Alliance is the most, most integrated party in this country.

Q: Yes, now they say again, I am the ignorant foreigner here; they say the DA was able to win in the Cape because of Cape coloreds.

MOTAU: Indeed, that’s what they say, yes.

Q: And that it implies a demographic reality so what, do I understand correctly you see that there is a demographic challenge and you are trying to overcome that challenge?

MOTAU: Yes, because in this country and everyone will tell you that, anybody who denies it is not observing South African politics, we still vote on old racial patterns.

Q: Your task that you want to succeed is to break that pattern. Is that what you are saying?

MOTAU: Of course, you have to. You have to have a black person voting for a white party and a white person voting for a black party, OK?

Q: It's a tall order.

MOTAU: It's a very tall order but I am saying that because we claim, the ANC claims that the Freedom Charter upon which they keep on harping when they should be harping about the constitution because our constitution is supposed to have taken all the things we have put them in there. But when you listen to ANC people they keep on talking about the Freedom Charter, the Freedom Charter. The constitution is supposed to supersede every other document we produced during the days of the struggle. That's why we have the Constitution. That's why people came together and said, "What do you have?"

And they said, "We have a Freedom Charter."

National Party, what do you have? We have this.

At that time it was the Progressive Party, what do you have? We have this.

All of the 19 or so parties, each one brought their thing, put it together, welded it together to form the constitution. Now I am not saying people should not refer to those documents but when you listen to many of the people, they still make them as if the Freedom Charter is above the constitution of this country. That's absolutely not true.

Q: How compatible is Inkatha Freedom Party with DA and COPE?

MOTAU: In terms of values and principles, I think it is the same. The problem with Inkatha is a very simple one. The problem with Inkatha, it's ethnic. It is perceived as being a Zulu, a party for Zulu speaking people. Of course, the leaders will deny that but mostly, dominantly Zulu.

Q: Do you think they would say the same about the DA?

MOTAU: They would say that but you see, the DA has this good fortune that statistics deny it. More black people voted for the DA than white people.

Tutu was at loggerheads with the ANC and for some time Zuma wouldn't talk to him because he was saying exactly the same things to this government that he was saying to the last government because he is walking the straight and narrow. If you walk the straight and narrow, you will be critical of this government, probably even more than so of the previous government because the previous government didn't pretend to be anything democratic. This one declares that it is democratic. So when they do wrong things, you nail them.

Q: Is Zuma Zulu?

MOTAU: That is the problem and unfortunately, I don't think Zuma can transcend that. What has been encouraging is that many of his strongest supporters, Zulu speaking peoples but he cannot seem to get away. Look at his appointments. Most of his appointments have been sort of leaning toward the Zulu.

Our leaders need to transcend race and ethnicity. We need to do that. Zuma, in a lot of ways, is trying to do that. The things he says though, his approaches to the Afrikaners and stuff like that but his actions belie that. His most significant appointments have all been leaning towards . . .

Q: Do you think you will ever again be a journalist?

MOTAU: No, no. I've done this, been there and that's been the good thing about me. Once I moved on, many times when I was in business, once I left journalism, I would meet many of my former journalist colleagues and they'd say, "Sej, do you want to come back?"

I'd say, "No, no, no. You can't even afford me now."

But for me I think it was a building block as a journalist, a great experience but I won't go back there.

Q: None of this hurts as valuable experience for a future cabinet portfolio.

MOTAU: If you think about it I actually have a cabinet portfolio. I am Shadow Minister of Energy. One of my colleagues remarked the other day the party said, "Hey, guys. We need your profiles" for all of us, 77 of us. The leader said, "Some of you guys have not sent your profiles." I think one of them went to the leader and said, "What do you want me to put in my profile?"

So he said, "Oh, OK. Let me send you Sej's profile." She used to be a professor at the University of Pretoria and she saw things and then she meets me in the passage one day and says, "Sej, I feel so small."

I said, "What do you mean?"

"I looked at my CV and your CV and it's like you've done it all."

Not all, but yes.

I think I have been fortunate that I have always been able to move on. Once I have done my stint somewhere I moved on, no regrets and I have always felt that every step that I have taken was a building block for the next step.

That's also my philosophy in life. I tell the young people that you must always be going somewhere. That means you must always be thinking about where do I want to be next? My life has been a life of coincidences.

I went to the municipality as my first job because my father had a friend, a church colleague and friend who worked for the municipality. He was a big, big black guy there so I got a job. I didn't have to look for one.

I went to the Pretoria News because I made a phone call as I told you and I went to Operation Crossroads because I had a visit at the embassy and I went to Germany because when I was at an American Embassy function there was the cultural attaché of the German embassy, Mrs. Zenker who was a guest there. In conversation I mentioned I would like to study economics and journalism. "Well, maybe you should go to Bonn and talk to those guys in Bonn."

In two weeks a trip to Bonn because I had this thing. When I came back I had a talk with somebody and said I would like you to write a couple of pieces. Wilf Nussey editor of the Pretoria News said, "Sej, I want you to do a piece about the student leaders in the communities" because the Nats used to say the student leaders came from broken families and whatever and we said no. We knew that many of the student leaders came from the middle class black families because they would say the kind of education they were getting they would never compete their parents. So don't talk about it; write it. So I wrote it, a five piece series in the Pretoria News and then John Oxley saw it, John Oxley used to edit Optima. He saw it, said to Wilf Nussey "I like these pieces. Who is this writer?"

"It is Sej."

"I would like him to write this thing for me."

"Well, talk to him."

We talked and he said, "Sej, would you be interested in doing this series as a magazine piece?"

I said, "Well, I'll give it a shot."

It is published in Optima in 1985 or thereabouts. It is there, "Profile of a Student Leader". Because of that, Neville Huxham saw this, wanted to talk to me, gave me a job. So everything sort of . . .

Q: One thing led to another.

Anything to add about the past, the present or the future of your country?

MOTAU: This thing, I have talked about it, thought about it. When we were in the struggle, we call it the 'struggle' we had common purpose; get rid of apartheid. Many people are now beginning to say it used to be better in the old days when we knew what we all wanted. Now because we have this democracy, the spoils are being shared. Only those in the inner circle are getting them and this has disillusioned a lot of people.

My personal view is that we need to build on what we have; we have to. My last speech in

parliament was that this is an exam or test we dare not fail. We've got to build this thing. We've got to make sure that we keep on building this strong opposition.

It is in the best interest of any ruling party to have a strong opposition party and I tell people, "These things now, I mean the DA, when the DA is in power, I will continue to say them so that somebody else must continue to hold us to account." You need that. It is not about the DA, it's not about ANC, it's not about COPE, it's about South Africa.

For me I am a very optimistic person. Absolutely optimistic. I believe we have a long haul but we can do it. Some of the optimism is based on fact. When you have people like Trevor Manuel, the former finance minister and the current finance minister in the party where you have moderates like Kgalema Motlanthe, there is hope because they still hold this thing in balance.

I think Motlanthe was very presidential.

There is hope, there is hope but one thing we cannot do, we cannot continue to vote for the same party and expect different outcomes. We just can't. So we in the opposition have a hell of a job to do convincing people that they need to be active in forming or supporting those opposition parties so that responsibility, accountability can become a reality.

ESHAAM PALMER
Lawyer
South Africa

Mr. Palmer was born and raised in South Africa of mixed race parents. He received his education at South African Universities and several US institutions. A lawyer by training, Mr. Palmer devoted much of his career in improving the criminal justice system for the youth of South Africa. He also served in a number of senior South African government positions, including Director of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning. In 1986-1989 Mr. Palmer visited the United States as an Operations Crossroads visitor. Mr. Palmer was interviewed by Daniel F. Whitman in 2010.

Q: It has been five days after the twentieth anniversary of the releasing of Nelson Mandela. It has been a very exhilarated week here. I am fortunate to have Eshaam Palmer here, who visited the United States in 1986 with Operation Crossroads and is Director of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement in the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, also the former Chief Parliamentary Legal Adviser, and Chief Director of Legal Services and the Office of Premier of the Western Cape. Dr. Palmer, tell us first – this is history. Tell us a little bit about your origins, your childhood, and your education; how it is that you fit into this very complicated society and your early professional development.

PALMER: My name is Eshaam Palmer, I am the son of parents of mixed race – you can term them colored people - a specific sub-group of the colored people that was classified as being of Malaysian origin. Essentially it is this group that follows the Muslim faith amongst the colored groups in South Africa. I had a normal childhood in Cape Town, went to a junior school and then a high school. We were an average working class colored family. My father was a carpenter and my mother was a dressmaker who worked from home. They have three children, two boys and a girl. We are all completed high school. My father worked to support us, and we had our own house. My mother worked to give us the extra bits that the other people did not have. So we did not have a deprived childhood, we had most things, we had a domestic worker, we had food every night, we had a car and a house. So we were a little above the average colored family. My dad opened up his own small construction company – which made life a little easier for us. But we were restricted since we were colored, and we did not get the opportunities to attend universities since they were beyond our financial capabilities.

When I completed high school I had little motivation to study further. I feel that I wanted to work so I got a job as a clerk in a government department. I worked there for nine years. The Department does not exist anymore as it was part of the “apartheid” administration, but compared to now it would be the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. We dealt with welfare organizations and grants, and assisting them in establishing welfare organizations. After one year of being employed, when I was 19 years old – I realized that I couldn’t work as a clerk for the rest of my life. So I decided to study on a part time basis. I registered for evening classes to study public administration in order to rise in the ranks of my employment. I completed a 3 year diploma course in public administration, and one of the subjects I took – was law. Immediately after completing that diploma, I again embarked on part time evening classes to gain a diploma in law. And after three years of part time study, I decided to continue my education in law by correspondence tuition. I continued working full-time whilst studying by correspondence. Eventually I spent 23 years at various universities studying part time. In this manner I acquired a B.Juris and B.Proc degrees in law in addition to the two diplomas I mentioned earlier. I also completed as BA in criminology, an honors degree in criminology, a masters degree in criminology, and ultimately a doctorate, in constitution law and criminology – looking specifically at punishment and how the new constitution in 1996 changes the whole “ethos” of punishment in South Africa by the abolishment of the death penalty and corporal punishment and also examined ways of alternative remedies - especially for juveniles.

Essentially UNISA’s (University of South Africa) faculty of criminology supported the death penalty. I tried to get help publishing an article, but they would not, because it was not in line with their view on the death penalty. So they advised me to go to the University of Cape Town because their faculty of law and criminology were more supportive of the abolishment of the death penalty.

Q: We have gone a long distance in a very short time, we had you as a clerk, and in the social welfare department, and then you later – after many years of study – you acquired a doctorate in constitutional law and criminology. Now, always in the Cape?

PALMER: Mainly in the Cape, although, while studying at UNISA for a period of 23 years, I

also studied at other institutions, and took shorter courses, for example, a two year course in labor relations at the Institute of Labor Relations. I also took a course in Business Management at the University of Stellenbosch, as well as a course in Criminology at the University of Cape Town.

Q: You are a professional student, in addition to the many other things, study is apparently a passion?

PALMER: Well, I believe in the principal of life-long learning, and that one never reaches a point where you could have learned everything you need or wish to know. Life changes so quickly and what you have learned during your university days has changed and adapted to changing circumstances and practices. If you are a lawyer, medical doctor or an engineer, that which you have learned at a university in the earlier years has changed dramatically within 20 to 30 years. Unless you stay up to date, and you keep abreast of changes, and technological advances – you will remain mediocre or even stagnate. And I mean Einstein and so many people have said that you use just a little part of your brain's capacity, and we reach a point that we feel that once we have a degree, once we have studied then we are finished and we can go to work. I believe that once you have completed your degree is actually the beginning of your education – because then you will find out so much more of the little that you already know. It does not have to be formal; it just means you have to increase your knowledge and your skills base as you go through life.

Q: As you have done, in shifting so many things – you are professional. You are now Director of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement – does that deal with Criminal or Civil law?

PALMER: After the nine years of working as a clerk had its advantages because it wasn't mentally taxing or stressful – I had evenings free to study. It was during that time that I completed about three degrees. After that because of my legal qualifications I was transferred to the Department of Justice to become a public prosecutor. I worked as a public prosecutor for four years before I was identified as to become the first colored magistrate in South Africa along with Pamela Sickle in 1984. I stayed as a magistrate for a year, and the reason being that it was a tumultuous political period in the Cape in 1984 when public violence and political violence was mostly confined to black townships. But in 1984 – it extended to colored townships as well. That then embroiled people I lived with daily, and as a magistrate of course you were requested to preside over political trials of students who were protesting. And when I realized that I had no choice as a magistrate to preside over those trials people who had similar political views as I had I resigned from the bench. I resigned into unemployment, but immediately thereafter I was recruited by a law firm, and then decided to complete my articles, and, as such, I spent two years at the law firm. During this period I spent a lot of time defending the very students I was expected to punish and sentence. I defended a lot of young school students who were drawn into this whole sense of 'freedom was close by' and that education should come after liberation.

Q: What was your opinion of that notion about liberation then education?

PALMER: Well, it sounds nice, but it is a short term goal, which could have long term negative consequences, because once you have liberation you must have education to manage that new found responsibility. And if you are not educationally ready then even though you are free politically, economically you are not free. Because you will remain an ‘underdog’ and will only be able to do menial tasks. And those who had the opportunity to educate themselves would retain economic and employment positions.

Q: So you were asked to be a prosecutor and a magistrate, but it was implied that you needed to prosecute people accused of violence, but they shared the same political views as you, therefore you resigned to rather become a defendant?

PALMER: Yes, remember this is South African law in the “apartheid” era, and at that stage had a legal principal for a common purpose for it had a specific interpretation. The common purpose doctrine means that if a group of say a hundred people, or part of that group committed an act of violence, then anyone associated with that group, by their mere geographical location could then be found guilty on the basis of common purpose, as they are presumed to have associated themselves with the act of violence. Especially young students in big groups were charged, because often when the police arrived at the scene the actual perpetrators would be long gone, because they stand the greatest danger of being arrested. So the police, not wanting to leave empty handed would arrest those persons close-by who they felt associated themselves with the group, whether they were by-standers or on-lookers or maybe they associated themselves with the event. Drawn into these events were many students who would have their career severely impeded if they were to go to prison because the only sentence they could get was imprisonment. Boys and girls of 16-18 years, who were in the beginning stages of their career and life, this would be significantly severe for them. I must mention that most of the cases they would be charged would prevent them from remaining in school. The majority in the judiciary had a very firm policy that those children who got involved in what seemed to be acts of violence should take the consequences. Many of them went to jail for a year or two.

Q: The system had many paradoxes and contradictions, so the principal of common purpose has to do with geographic location? The people were obliged to be there, they had no choice but to be there, if they violated various acts. So the system almost didn't permit the person to be innocent ever?

PALMER: To give you a very simple example, there could be tyres burning in the road in front of your house, you could come out to have a closer look and to see what was happening, and it could be viewed that you associated yourself with the act. Because it is not about your mental intention, it's about you being physically present when something wrong is happening. It was freely used as a way of making examples of people whose only crime it was to be present when an offence was being committed.

Q: This is not a perverse version of the legal system?

PALMER: I think it is a rational legal doctrine that comes from the Roman- Dutch law, and if

properly used could have a just outcome, but it's also open to abuse. So you can extend the ambit of the doctrine, whereas the doctrine says you should be in very close proximity, the court could say 'well, close could mean 20 meters away', so depending on the views of the judge and the prosecutor they could give it the necessary weight that would make them get the conviction they wish for.

There were some judges that would not use it, such as Judge Didcott of KwaZulu-Natal, and there were other judges that used it depending on their own political feeling.

Q: So seeing that with your legal experience, you preferred not to be a part of it?

PALMER: Yes, I made a decision of conscience in that I was not going to be making any contributions to society. I would not put those people into prison. I am not saying that by defending them, I would be justifying any criminal actions. What I did feel was that these young people got swept up in this sense of freedom being around the corner, and to show the government that there were other ways of dealing with them. If, of course, they committed serious criminal acts like murder, arson, assault, etc, then the law must take its course. Most of them were swept up due to their adolescence, and their lack of knowledge and understanding of consequences.

Q: You implied that people got sucked up to the sense of imminent change. Many people in the 1980s could not predict that there would be, in fact that the changes from 1990. It was said in the 90s that it was difficult to predict any of this. Your sense is that the youth – there was something intangible feeling, that something really was imminently changing?

PALMER: Yes, because remember that in the colored community this type of resistance was not prevalent at that stage. It was mostly in the African townships. In the mid and late 80s they became prevalent in the colored townships, and the sense that people got was that the un-governability of the country was weakening the government's resolve. The government may decide that 'okay let's close up this African township and not allow the violence to spread'. Colored townships were a little bit different, they were closer to the main centers, and the white communities, and they were closer to the country's resources were. So it was a bit different when other groups got involved in the struggle for liberation.

Q: So in the 1980's you went to the US?

PALMER: Well, after I resigned from the bench as magistrate, I went into private practice as an attorney, and it was then that Frank Sassman contacted me and said that they were going to nominate me to go to the USA on an OCA scholarship. I had one interview which was unsuccessful, and I had another interview, and I think the chairperson was a man called Samir Qutab. I was successful after the second interview. I went in November 1986 to January 1987

Q: How did you know Frank Sassman?

PALMER: I said in my two years of private practice, I dealt a lot with students who had got

involved in political unrest and he was on one of the committees where we tried to prevent 17-18 year old school kids from having to go to jail, and to appeal these matters to the Supreme Court. Frank was on that committee, and that is where I got to meet him.

Q: What committee was that?

PALMER: I think the committee was simply called 'Campaign to save Bradley'.

Q: Oh, so it was the Ed Heart committee?

PALMER: Yes, to rally around the boys' parents and I think he was around seventeen at the time. He was found running away from broken school windows and the police arrested him, and he was sent to a year in prison. We were rallying to get support to get an appeal to have the sentence suspended.

Q: So there was a committee formed for that particular case?

PALMER: As there were many committees in the community to try and raise funds public awareness around young people being imprisoned for public violence.

Q: Seeing Frank step out of his role as an employee of the US government, did that make a favorable impression on you?

PALMER: People I found who have worked in institutions like that, they don't only make themselves available in their free time, but also access to resources that we would never be able to reach. And I think one of the people that Frank Sassman got us into contact with was a British Lord who was temporarily in Africa. His name was Lord St. John. It was also a way of getting a member of the House of Lords to issue a small statement to say that 'young students shouldn't be in prison'. So he gave us access to people we wouldn't normally have access to because of his employment.

Q: So you met a visiting member of the House of Lords, and introduced to you Frank?

PALMER: Frank Sassman was part of a group that spread out its feelers to contact influential people who would rally to our cause. Frank was not necessarily the specific individual who introduced us to the Lord, but he was a part of the group that was looking at influential voices. The name of the Lord was St. John, but it is pronounced Sinjen. He stayed in South Africa for a few months; he is now back at the House of Lords.

Q: At this time, South Africa was not part of the common wealth?

PALMER: No, they were not, but in addition to him being a member of the House of Lords, he was also a director of Shell International which made him very influential in the business sense.

Q: The government of South Africa did certainly not appreciate this?

PALMER: No they were unhappy with it, and I think that he was a person who spoke his mind. And his view was that young people should not be in prison especially when they are around 17 years old, and if it's not a very serious crime, like you know in a political sense, breaking school windows. He spoke his mind, and the government publicly criticized him for meddling with South African affairs. But he stood by what he said, and he eventually left for Great Britain.

Q: This adds to a story of international pressure?

PALMER: Yes, part of the international pressure.

Q: On the one hand is the stick, but also the carrot of the bursaries that were provided by various contributors and programs, like OCA. Was there any difficulties of a political nature in the UK when you came, even being here if the South Africa had been exiled ...from the common wealth?

PALMER: No.

Q: Easy for him to come here, and difficult for South Africans to go there?

PALMER: Well, he lived here for a while; he spent his childhood here, because he is a hereditary Lord which means that his grandfather was a Lord. So he grew up in South Africa, and then he went over to Great Britain, and then he came back as a result of being stationed here by Shell. It was during that period that we got to use his expertise.

Q: So his grandfather was here during the Boer War. So this brought into contact was context where one thing leads to another, and he encouraged you to apply?

PALMER: It was a nomination, he nominated me. And then I had to fill in application forms.

Q: These six weeks must have been disrupted to your work?

PALMER: No, what I had done then, I had just completed my two years of articles. And then I got permission to get unpaid leave for that period. So it wasn't disruptive to my work. I decided that when I came back I would not continue in private practice, but instead lecture in law at a tertiary institution.

Q: So this was a break from private practice as you might have had anyways?

PALMER: Because, remember I wasn't young at that stage, I was in my late early 30s, I had a wife and three children.

Q: Did you understand what you were getting into when you became a candidate for the OCA trip, did you want this? Did you understand what it was all about before going?

PALMER: Well, at that stage I had never been outside of South Africa, and due to my relationship with Frank and with other people who had been to the USA, especially in the field of juvenile corrections, I had a yearning to visit foreign countries, including America and to see what the rest of the world looked like. At that time, South Africa was reasonably isolated, and we did not have much foreign exposure. After that I was lucky, I got to go to the USA, on two later occasions to go and study. They were not through scholarships, but through employment related opportunities. I went to New Orleans in 1996 for a few weeks to study legislative drafting at Tulane University. And I also went to an IBA conference in San Francisco in 2001 for a week. I was a member of the International Bar Association (IBA).

Q: Focusing on the OCA trip, the point was to see America, where did you get to go?

PALMER: I started in Boston with a little orientation, from there to the University of Nevada, in Reno, Nevada. The University of Nevada has a faculty that actually specializes in teaching judges, and magistrates all over the world in the art and principles of judicial sentencing. And that was what eventually my masters degree and doctorate.

Q: So that is a direct result perhaps from you're your trip to the US?

PALMER: Yes, absolutely! It widened my understanding of the importance of punishment and appropriate penalties. It was a unique faculty, because you don't get faculties that specifically train judges and magistrates, it's usually left to trial and error.

Q: In the US?

PALMER: No, all over the world. But in the US, the University of Nevada had this program with some faculty.

Q: Now, those were the luxurious days when people had six weeks, now it is three weeks I think. So did you spend a week or two in Nevada?

PALMER: A week, and then we spent five days in Washington DC, five days in New York, two days in Salt Lake City in Utah, and a brief weekend visit to a farm in the South. It was a southern farm, owned by a black farmer in Mississippi.

Q: Most Americans don't even get to see that much of the country. And this was a mixture of professional, cultural and social. Which aspects of it were most appealing to you, or was it equally appealing to you?

PALMER: The University of Nevada, was the best place for giving effect to my intention to pursue a doctorate in punishment and constitutional law, but the visits were not only sightseeing, we visited institutions that dealt with juvenile delinquents. In New York, the House of UMOJA fascinated me - and the lady, which I don't think is alive now, her name was Falaka Fattah. She managed the institute and what they did was, diverting young people from the criminal justice system. So if they were found guilty of theft, for example, instead of sending them to jail, they

were sent them to the House of UMOJA and essentially what they did was to teach them responsibility. They went into the poor areas, and they would choose a house that was dilapidated, and they would rebuild the house to make the inhabitants feel like they lived in a decent house. The program included repairing and upgrading abandoned house for their own use. Then they lived there and paid rent, and the money went to the institution to further its program.

Q: So instead of prison terms, they did work that the community would benefit from? Discipline and environment outside of prisons.

PALMER: They had to be, of course, suitable candidates, so there had to be some sort of review and assessment. And once they were found to be suitable, they were sent to this half-way house for about six months. Essentially they were taught levels of responsibility by having to build a house, and it was extremely successful.

Q: Have you seen anything of that sort before?

PALMER: No, that was the most practical manifestation of giving people the sense of belonging by actually having them build houses and apartments that they could eventually rent and live in and get the sense that they made some contribution to society. And the level of recidivism was extremely low. I don't think anyone of those who had actually been a part of the problem that built apartments and lived there went back to lives of crime.

Q: This is remarkable. Was this a model that was useable at all in South Africa? Theoretically or practically?

PALMER: Well, aspects of it. One of the aspects was the aspect of getting ownership of projects. Often you are a part of a project then you leave. And there is no lifelong sustainability involved, whereas this could be a project where people are given some land and are allowed to farm and own parts of the land, so they can develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. A lot of the principals and aspects of the program can be used in similar projects and programs in South Africa.

Q: Could there be such an establishment, and do you think it should be in South Africa? Of offenders, and let's say the lesser offences. Who could do this type of constructive behavior rather than being in prison?

PALMER: Yes, but such programs are in its infancy in South Africa. NICRO (National Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Rehabilitation of Offenders) and other organizations do have diversion programs, and now with the South African Child Justice Act – which was passed 2-3 years ago. There is now a formal process of which children can be diverted from the criminal justice system into programs, similar to those that I saw.

Q: Fascinating, where there any other models, obviously the sentencing specials that you know led to your doctorate – that's an amazing story. And then your farm stay was that a weekend or a long weekend?

PALMER: The farm stay was a little bit of relaxation and getting to meet the average American family.

Q: So this is a vast experience and you hadn't left your country prior to this trip, how did this change things?

PALMER: I think being exposed to a sophisticated, well developed and financially strong country was crucial. Also to travel with many other people from Africa and the Caribbean, because although South Africa in comparison to America is not nearly as developed, in comparison to the rest of Africa it is reasonably well developed. You just have to look out and see.

Q: Yeah, it's amazing. South Africa is really a first world country in Africa, particularly this part of Cape Town. What did you gain by meeting other participants from the Caribbean and other African countries?

PALMER: Well, to see how far South Africa has progressed, even without being a democratic society, and how much further we have progressed from other African countries, merely because there was a will, even if the will was not always politically correct, to develop South Africa economically, into a stable environment.

Q: So this put your own native country in a more favorable light in some way than it had been previously?

PALMER: Yes, and if you look at some of the African countries, even that time Sudan, Zimbabwe and Angola, they had favorable natural resources but they weren't being used to develop the country in a sense of education and economic development. South Africa – despite the fact that it had abhorrent political policy, nevertheless developed its people, although the white elite that ruled the country did not politically give people rights, but they certainly developed it economically to be a model that Africa could emulate.

Q: How were you accepted in the OCA group... sometimes South African were considered different by the general group of people from Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan as you said. Did people easily integrate you into the group of an African?

PALMER: Besides the language differences because certain African states, that speak French – only speak French, and there is a language barrier there, those who speak Portuguese – only speak Portuguese, and no English. The Francophone and the Portuguese tend to group together, but the English speaking African states were much easier to converse with, like Zimbabwe and Zambia. And they did view South Africa as being a little bit of a big brother, being developed and not having to go through the same pain and suffering that they did, although they went through political pain too, they go through economic pain and suffering, because of their poverty. Even under “apartheid” there wasn't the level of poverty amongst the black that you see amongst the rest of Africa.

Q: They either admire you or envy you?

PALMER: Yes, especially on the educational level that we had a very good school system in South Africa, even under “apartheid”. The African schools certainly had the ‘thin edge of the wedge’ in this regard, although some former colonial countries had good education systems, like Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Q: Did other Africans consider you privileged? Did they just perceive South Africans as “monolithic giant?” Did they appreciate these differences that you just mentioned.

PALMER: I don’t think they understood the differences, they saw South Africans as generally being economically privileged.

Q: Where there other South African in the group you where in 86? Sometimes more than one, usually OCA gathers 30 or 40 people at a time.

PALMER: Not in my group. Because I certainly would have hung out with a South Africa, but my friends were from Ghana, Zimbabwe and Somalia. In order to prevent people from the same countries from congregating together, formal groups were made up from different countries.

Q: Somalia?

PALMER: Yes, she was a doctor, a medical doctor. She spoke many languages, Italian, English, Somalia and Arabic. Her name was Nurta Hassan.

Q: Those were they good days. When Somalia had a government, not a good one, but they had a government.

PALMER: Siad Barre was the president, and he was a dictator, but at least he kept Somalia together.

Q: Oh, Somalia - it seemed so promising in the 80s. One wonders, what might have happened with your friend?

PALMER: I often wonder what happened to her, she worked for Siad Barre, I mean she was connected to that political elite. So politically she might not have been in order, but she lived outside of Somalia for many years, so maybe she went into exile. Her husband was a businessman, and she was a medical doctor, they lived in Italy for many years, and that’s also why she could speak Italian. So maybe she is living elsewhere, but she gave me a book when she left – an English version of the Quran. The reason why she and I became friends was because we are both Muslim.

Q: OCA divided up in little sub-groups; she spoke English, and you did too so was it possible that you were in the same sub-group?

PALMER: Yes, she was in the English group too, and then the French were in a different group.

Q: Again, the theme of this study is outsmarting apartheid. In what ways do you think you were able to do that? With or without the exposure to the United States?

PALMER: I think that the way in which I could by-pass the “apartheid” limitation - was by educating and skilling myself, even though it might have been window-dressing by getting blacks into the justice system, without that education and exposure we would not be able to get into the justice system, so by educating ourselves and exposing ourselves to different cultures and different ideas, I think that made me bypass the rigid restrictions of “apartheid”.

Q: Tell us about what is happening with you and the country since '87?

PALMER: I think that what the government feared was that people would see that people of all races could live together in the same neighborhood without killing each other. And those are the things we saw, though America still has racially divided communities, if you go to New York, in the suburbs for example, almost all the suburbs are racially exclusive. People were not forced to live there; people lived there because they wanted to or because they were forced to due to economic circumstances, as opposed to South Africa – where we didn’t have another choice. I think South Africa has come a long way, and has gone through a steep learning curve, so much so that we have almost surpassed a lot of countries in its nation-building. Although the one thing you do notice when you are in America – is that people do have - especially amongst blacks – unhappiness over the economic lot. There is a sense that if you are American, that in itself is a big plus, and a bonus in your life, the sense of being an American. The Africans are starting to develop that sense of nationhood, and you know, we think that these things are not going to happen over night. And when I met with a Danish group one day when I was lucky to study the parliamentary system in Denmark, they said that South African transformation, would take at least 75 years. And I don’t think they are completely wrong. I think it will certainly not take 20 years, but it will be a long process. It’s going to take many years before South Africa becomes an equal society.

Q: Did the Danish government invite you to come?

PALMER: I worked at the South African Parliament; I was the Chief Legal Adviser for a number of years, and as part of my work, parliament sends people to different parliaments to see how they work, and to bring back some of the ideas, so I went to Denmark for about a week, to study the committee system, and to see which aspects of it we could introduce, cause at that time South Africa parliament was now developing. And that’s one of the reasons I went to New Orleans as well - to study legal drafting, so we could implement some of the methods and programs.

Q: Go back to Denmark for a minute – did you find a committee system comparable to what you saw in Washington? You were not studying that in Washington per say, but you must have had a sense?

PALMER: Well, yes there is a contrast between the committee systems in the American system that separates it from the European systems. And that is – that in the American system the committees are very powerful, and they can make or break legislation and politicians. And if you look at sub-committees that interview people for senior positions, sub committees, or committees (the European and especially the British system are at a much more docile level, and they really look at the technical aspects of legislation. And in the American system there are certain powerful committees whose power derives not from Congress, but from the committees themselves.

Q: A judge appointment will go forward and there can be political distractions. Which of the two does South Africa resemble more?

PALMER: The South African system is a bit of a hybrid, and certain committees have developed a level of power like SCOPA (Standing Committee on Public Accounts), that monitors government spending. But other committees have become merely just mechanical, for examining legislation, corrections and otherwise, but they don't have and any independence from parliament. So not all committees have a level of independence. It also depends on the power of the minister, he/she pushes through legislation, it takes a strong and independent committee to withstand the ministry and properly interrogate legislation.

Q: So the executive has the greater role here?

PALMER: Yes, that is true, and I think that it depends on the role and style of the President. Under President Mbeki, the executive was strong and power was centralized whereas the committees were weak and merely rubber stamped legislation. President Mandela allowed committees to speak their minds.

Q: I think in any system, the personal strength of the individual who is a head of executive does affect the system. Lyndon Johnson knew about committees and understood how they worked in Congress in a way that other presidents did not. I think that it's a personality thing.

PALMER: Absolutely, it does have an effect.

Q: This is all rich information, do you have anything to add? This country has come to an enormous decision as you have said. It's an unrealized mission as any country I guess who's doing some good things, it's not perfect.

PALMER: Well, Also on my trip to Denmark, we met with the minister of Environmental Affairs, and what we saw there was that Denmark does not have many of the problems that many other countries have. Crime and poverty is low, the government is stable, so they excel in the area of protecting the environment, and that made me realize that at some point South Africa and other countries in the world must reach a point where protecting the environment becomes 'top of the agenda'. Because ultimately a good environment will lead to a good economy, because if you destroy the fields – you are not going to have corn growing, and if you destroy the rivers – you will not have any fish. Although environment sounds a little bit fluffy and up in the air – it is

also very practical. And now when you see what global warming has done , you realize that it actually makes you spend money on repairing things, rather than see what the climate could do and then take preventive and rehabilitative measures, and use the money in a wiser way. And by using the power of the sun, and the power of the water, you could create jobs and energy at the same time!

Q: At the Copenhagen Conference in December 2009 – if you remember there was a leaked memo and some people were saying that there is no scientific basis to say that there is global warming. I believe that this is only a tiny minority, and very few scientists believe that. As a person deals with environmental issues yourself, is there any doubt that we are seeing a climate change? Do you have an opinion of that?

PALMER: There are good examples of climate change. Millions of years ago there was an ice-age, and after that the world's climate changed to what it is today. The question is about whether or not the activities of human beings contribute to weather changes, because we moved from ice age, to a dry age and all different ages. So, yes - but the questions are: are we speeding it up, and are we doing so to our detriment? At the end of the day – you need to protect the environment for future generations, they are going to have to be able to plant on soil that is usable, and if you misuse the soil and the sea, then you might as well decide not to have children, because if you have children those children will suffer the consequences of whatever you do to the environment. So whether or not we contribute to global warming, we should ensure that we ourselves in our old days live in a world that is sustainable.

Q: This is now your fulltime position, did this occur from your trip to Denmark?

PALMER: No, well the seeds were planted there, but I have reached a point where I have practiced law and I understand that I can perhaps use my knowledge of law in the area of the environment to ensure and to regulate compliance with laws that have been drafted to ensure that we have sustainable development and sustainable economic policies

Q: Where does South Africa stand on the Charter of Nations in terms of self-abuse and self-correction?

PALMER: In South Africa that happens more as a result of poverty and ignorance than as a result of government wanting to develop like perhaps, China – who is pushing the level of development to the extent that it is going to hurt the environment. Whereas in South Africa I think they do it on a much more logical and rational basis. But poor people will cut down trees and fish in rivers if they are hungry. Unless you can educate them, or you can try to rehabilitate the land, ignorance and poverty is probably what causes a lot of the degradation of the environment.

Q: So you have shifted three or four times in a major way in your profession. It was administration, then the penal system, then you were an advocate and now an environmentalist. What is the next step for Dr. Palmer?

PALMER: I try not to plan far ahead, and I take life as it comes, and this opportunity presented

itself. I didn't look for it, it was said to me 'look there is a position there as they are trying to fill' because there are not many environmental lawyers around, and I said: "Well I can learn." So I took the challenge and now I am in the deep end and I enjoying it.

Q: That is fantastic. This brings us up to the present moment. Any other thoughts that you want to have on record?

PALMER: It is heartening to see that America – which has so much economic power, and such a beautiful and vast country - is also starting, or the government is starting, to reflect the American peoples' concern about the environment. Because although the American government has the image of not being adequately concerned about the environment. Clearly the people of America are very concerned about the environment; you just have to look at how the Americans look after their gardens, after lakes, rivers, hybrid cars...

Q: My personal politics is that the subject has been neglected and I think it can be said that previous executives did not assist the Environmental Protection Agency, in fact, quite forcibly limited the powers of EPA, whereas now some of those powers are being restored in what appears to be hopeful.

PALMER: I think the focus of the previous administration was driven a lot by what happened at 9/11, it almost consumed the administration with the consequences, and the causes of 9/11, that environment was not a top priority. And I think as more pressure groups in America raised their voices and people all over the world, probably tried to make America understand that there will be no dramatic change on the protection of the environment unless America also does its part.

Q: So your perception is that the American public is actually driving policy in the US?

PALMER: I think there is a greater understanding for the need for environmental correctness amongst the people of America than amongst the government over the past 10-15 years. That's just my perception.

Q: Fascinating, that's what we are here to discuss. Sometimes the perception of a country includes certain accuracy that comes from outside the country because when they are emerged in a sort of information overloads, and inevitably they're biased because of constantly being swept inside the Petri dish.

PALMER: One image that I left America with was the significant and strong love Americans have for their country. Americans cannot be adverse to a good environment, because they love their country, they love the gardens, and they love their rivers that flow by, so Americans have a very strong sense of the environment. And the fact that the government hasn't expressed that doesn't mean that the American people themselves haven't had that strong feeling for the environment.

Q: Well, thank you very much, you comments have been great.

End of Reader