

## TOGO

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**HARVEY E. GUTMAN**  
**AID Officer**  
**Lomé (1961-1963)**

*Harvey E. Gutman was born in Switzerland in 1921. From 1942-1946 he served in the American Army overseas. Upon returning in 1949 he received his bachelor's degree from University of Portland and later received his master's degree from American University in 1958. During his career with AID he held positions in Laos, Paris, Thailand, Morocco, Liberia, and Nigeria. Mr. Gutman was interviewed by Stuart Van Dyke in August 1997.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here, I must digress here for a minute. American commodities, financed by the aid program, had to carry a decal showing the American colors and two clasped hands, both of which were white. On the day before the equipment turn-over to tile GOT, I verified that it looked spic-and-span. Dozens of Togolese were admiring the shiny machines. Several seemed to notice the decals. I asked one what he thought it meant. Without hesitation, the citizen replied "two whites congratulating one another on having pushed off these machines on Africans."

We sent a query to the AID/W's office in charge of the labeling act - I can't recall its acronym but there was a separate office monitoring this statutory requirement - asking why one hand could not be shaded. Two months later, we received a ten page airgram (remember them?) with at least a dozen clearances.

It advised that the thought-provoking question had been discussed at the most senior levels and had been extensively researched by graphics experts. However, it had been impossible to achieve a consensus regarding hues and shadings. The problem revolved around finding a formula that would be acceptable not only to Africans but also to oriental and brown-skinned people. Thus, for the time being the design would be retained though a high-level working group would continue the review of this sensitive issue. We heard nothing further, at least not during my tour and - who knows - the WG may still be pondering this issue.

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

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

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

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

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

idea was to respond quickly to meritorious proposals and make contributions to local development projects (and permit the Ambassador to cut some ribbons).

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

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

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

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

The relatively small number of graduates had a choice of university stipends, offered by France, the USSR (Lumumba University), UNESCO and some European donors. We found it difficult to attract qualified candidates for our four year college training programs. For one, our fringe benefits were not competitive with the annual home leaves, generous allowances, etc., offered by the French. Moreover, the candidates had to pass an English language test and sometimes were apprehensive of the U.S. (these were the early 1960s). We hoped to overcome some of these handicaps by enlarging the pool of lycee graduates and by co-opting students that were studying under AID auspices during their final two years of lycee attendance.

I recall once accompanying the Ambassador to a meeting with the President who wished to review the AID program. When the subject turned to the difficulties we were encountering in identifying Togolese candidates for our training program, the Ambassador took the occasion to point out the dangers that would confront the country once students returned from communist countries. The President laughed, saying he was not concerned. The very exposure to communism was immunizing Africans against indoctrination attempts: "I spoke to some students back from the USSR. Their visions of the workers' paradise had evaporated when Russians

approached them in the streets wanting to buy their neckties. What I am worried about are young Togolese who study in France and get exposed to the Marxist atmosphere of the French university milieu. They are the potential revolutionaries."

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

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

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

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

**MICHAEL G. WYGANT**  
**Political/Economic Officer**  
**Lomé (1965-1967)**

*Michael G. Wygant was born in Newburgh, New York in 1936 and was raised in Montclair, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth college, where he passed the Foreign Service exam during his junior year. He served briefly in the U.S. Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1959. Mr. Wygant's career included positions in Zimbabwe, Togo, Vietnam, and Gambia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 14, 1990.*

*Q: Your next assignment was to Lomé, Togo. You were there from '65 to '67.*

WYGANT: That's right. I arrived out there about five years after Togo had gotten its independence. There, we had an opportunity to be in a French-speaking country for the first time. I had studied French a lot in school and found it, obviously, of immense use when we arrived in Lomé.

Togo had not really changed all that much, I don't think, from the colonial period. Lomé was a very small, sort of sleepy town. There was a civilian government, headed by Nicolas Grunitzky, that had been installed some years before by mutineers who had actually murdered the first president of Togo. The government was rather benign. There wasn't a great deal going on, but some economic development programs were underway.

Interestingly, the West Germans were providing a great deal of economic assistance, to some extent as rivals of the French.

*Q: This goes back to their pre-World War I experience there.*

WYGANT: Sure, sure. The African coast along Dahomey (or Benin as it is now) and Togo is very straight. There are no natural ports, and it was difficult to arrange for proper docking and port facilities unless a completely artificial complex was constructed. So the French put in a large berm to enclose a man-made port in Cotonou. And they had more or less told the Togolese that they could bring their products in through Cotonou, that they were not going to build two ports--one for Benin and one for Togo.

So the Togolese went and talked to the Germans, and the Germans agreed to build Togo its own port. They were working on it when we were there, and in fact it opened just about the time we left in 1967. The new port was at least as good as the one in Cotonou and the Togolese were very proud of it: they were able to export and import products through their own port without going through the neighbor next door.

This was the kind of rivalry that often developed between the French and the Germans at that time.

*Q: Did we have an embassy? Who was the ambassador?*

WYGANT: We had established an embassy in 1960. William Witman was the ambassador during our time. Bill Witman was a distinguished senior Foreign Service officer who had quite a background in African affairs. He had been at one time director of the Office of North African Affairs when that office was in the African Bureau. He was ambassador for the full two years I was there. Also, Terry Todman was the DCM, he of course has gone on to real glory in the Foreign Service, now working, I believe, on his sixth ambassadorship, this one in Buenos Aires.

*Q: What were you doing?*

WYGANT: We had an administrative section, which was a joint administrative operation that handled AID, USIA, and the Peace Corps. But for the substantive work, we had Ambassador Witman, Terry Todman, myself, and a junior officer. The junior officer did some of the consular work and was commercial attaché. I was political officer, economic officer, sometimes commercial attaché, and sometimes consul. So I did a little bit of everything.

*Q: What were American interests in Togo?*

WYGANT: Rather modest. We did have an AID program, and we had over a hundred Peace Corps volunteers.

*Q: That's a big Peace Corps.*

WYGANT: Well, we had a smaller Peace Corps, and then Sékou Touré threw the Peace Corps out of Guinea, so we picked up about fifty or sixty volunteers who had been working in Guinea and came down to Togo. We had three or four major programs that the Peace Corps was working in and several smaller ones.

With AID, as I recall, they were mostly working on agricultural assistance. And I think there might have been one infrastructure project, a bridge project.

There was no significant American private investment in Togo. Occasionally, businessmen would come through to see what the possibilities might be for import-export. The Germans made a major investment in a brewery at the time that I was there. It became a very good moneymaking proposition, I guess for the Germans, but also for the Togolese. The beer was good, and they doubled the capacity of this brewery in the first year of operation because it had been such a success.

Subsequently, of course, Lomé has taken off and become much more a center for joint ventures and economic development, but this was only just beginning to happen when we were there.

*Q: Is there something about the Togolese that make them particularly adept? It's a small country.*



WYGANT: It is a very small country. Sometimes the older Togolese will tell you that the reason they're more disciplined and organized is because they were a German colony for awhile. The Germans taught them organization before the French took over at the time of the First World War. I don't know if that's valid or not. But the Togolese, or at least the coastal Togolese, are a very industrious hard-working and efficient people who were able to get Western education at an early stage and did very well by it. I understand that during colonial days when there were numerous French colonies all over Africa a number of Togolese were in the French colonial administration. Also, they provided a lot of cadre for the big French trading companies in other parts of West Africa--not so much Togo, but in the Ivory Coast and even as far north as Senegal.

While we were in Togo a number of other Francophone African countries were resentful of these outside Africans within their borders. These countries were forcing Togolese and some Dahomians to return home to their countries to seek work. And of course those two countries being so small and impoverished, there wasn't much in the way of work for any of them, which was a hardship.

Togo has been a very stable country. In early 1967 the present president of Togo, Etienne Eyadema, came into the presidential palace and asked Grunitzky to get on the plane and leave. Eyadema had been an Army sergeant, actually, in the French Army during the Algerian War. I guess by 1967 he felt he was old enough and mature enough (he was then in his early thirties) to take over, and he did. By and large, I think, over the twenty-plus years that he has been in charge, Togo has been quite stable.

The government has been reasonably effective, and I think this has been translated into a fairly successful economic situation, by African standards. But I would hasten to say that I have been away from the country for a long time, and these are just some general impressions that I have; I don't have any specific knowledge of more recent years.

*Q: How did you deal with the Togolese government?*

WYGANT: We had good relations with the Togolese government; we had good access. The French still assumed proprietary interests in everything that was going on there, and I think the French were always somewhat suspicious of any country, be it the United States or Germany or any other, that might even be perceived to be displacing French influence.

But French influence was waning in any case, and the Togolese were quite eager to develop relations with other Western countries. They also had good relations with the Soviet Union. In fact the Soviet Embassy was quite active when I was there. Togo was asserting its independence and its desire, while still maintaining close ties with France, to develop ties with other countries. We had good access, and I would say that the relations between the U.S. and Togo were very good at the time.

In fact the United States signed a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation when I was there. This was the first such treaty to be signed between the U.S. and a newly independent African country. It had been negotiated over a period of years, but I was there for the final negotiations and the actual signing of the treaty, which was about 1966, as I recall.

**TERENCE A. TODMAN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Lomé (1965-1968)**

*Ambassador Terence A. Todman was born in 1926 and raised in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. He attended the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico and served in the U.S. Army. Ambassador Todman received a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University. His Foreign Service career included positions in Tunisia, Togo, Chad, Guinea, Costa Rica, Spain, Denmark, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Michael Krenn on June 13, 1995.*

*Q: Your next assignment was, I guess, quite a promotion, to Deputy Chief of Mission in Togo. Was that quite a jump in terms of your own duties and so forth at the mission?*

TODMAN: Oh, of course, of course. Because the DCM is the alter ego to the ambassador and is responsible for the entire mission when the ambassador isn't there. He becomes the acting ambassador, if you will. That's not the title used, it's chargé d'affaires, but he's acting ambassador. So, you're it. And as I told you, the reason that happened is that the person who hired me in the first place, in the office of South Asian Affairs, William Witman, was named ambassador. And I guess that he considered that the experience with me earlier had been good and so he called and asked if I would come down. I was absolutely delighted, because it was nothing that I could have had any basis for expecting. Going down there as DCM meant that I was responsible for the management of the mission on behalf of the ambassador, in consultation with him, and in his absence, for the totality of United States relations with the country. As it turned out, the ambassador was away quite a bit, so out of three and a half years that I spent there I was in charge for two years. And I was in charge during several attempted coups and during the actual coup that brought Gnassingbe Eyadema to power over Nicolas Grunitzky. I had, I guess, about a half a year of being in charge while Witman was still ambassador and then I had a year and a half between ambassadors. This was a fascinating period because I was able to do quite a bit that made a difference in the lives of the Togolese. We had a fund called the Self-Help Fund, under which you were given \$25,000 initially, but it would be increased as you used up that money for different small projects. And I helped in the building of markets, which meant economic growth for areas, putting in of wells, building of clinics, building of schools, fixing up of roads. A number of institutions in Togo were named after me.

*Q: This Self-Help Fund, was that something that was at your discretion? Was this matching funds with the Togolese government?*

TODMAN: Twenty-five thousand dollars was allocated to the ambassador, coming from AID and you made the decisions on what you were going to spend it on. The only restriction was that you couldn't spend more than \$5,000 on any project. So, what we did was to go and see what things they wanted to do, because that money was used only for the foreign exchange content. We'd buy cement, or we'd buy a generator, if they were going to do some things that needed

those inputs, They did all the work and usually it was the villagers. We didn't deal with the government ever on this. We dealt with the people, the recipients, the beneficiaries of the project directly. So, if there was some village where they couldn't get their products to market and, paving some roads, not paving, but straightening up, leveling, digging out some stones would make a difference, we would put the money in for getting some pick-axes and other things to work with. You'd help build up a market, cover it, so people would come and bring their goods, come and shop. Lots of wells, lots of schools. Simple, always. And I say \$5,000 maximum, but \$5,000 in foreign currency went very far. We did a lot with that. I started out with \$25,000, I usually ended up with \$100,000. because you'd go right out and get some projects done. And I found a way to bring the Peace Corps volunteers into it. Peace Corps volunteers had no funds, but they knew what was needed. We needed somebody to supervise the utilization of the money, so we'd say, "OK, I'm going to sign here and you have this, and you can watch it." Looking for these little windows of opportunity made an enormous amount of difference. I got from a U.S. sporting goods company surplus uniforms, jerseys and surplus footballs, and we helped organize teams so that kids learned cooperation, working together, sportsmanship; still got their exercise. And all it took was to clear some ground up, get some poles and put them down. But it was that kind of thing, in terms of development, that made a big difference.

*Q: You mentioned before that one of the problems you faced from some of the African nations that you served in was the relationship with the former metropolitan representatives. Was that a big problem in Togo?*

TODMAN: It was a problem, but, again, the Togolese accepted the fact that we were a power, that we were dealing independently. They knew that we saw the French and dealt with them. But that was a case where I was far better informed than the French were. They confided in me and they told me what was going on, and I found out a lot of the planning and so on, taking place, of one kind or another. The United States was a power, and there was some resentment of the French, because they always felt that the French might come back in and try and force something down on them. They saw, in some cases, the United States as a counter-weight. Once they came to recognize that we had an independent stand, that made a difference.

**JOHN E. GRAVES**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Lomé (1968-1970)**

*John E Graves was born in 1927 in Michigan. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Michigan, and served in the US Navy overseas from 1945 to 1946. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he was assigned to Leopoldville, Bukavu, Antananarivo, Rach Gia, Lomé, Yaoundé, Tehran, Montevideo, Sidi Bou Said, and Rabat. Mr. Graves was interviewed by Richard Jackson on January 12, 1999.*

*Q: So, you're off then to Lomé, Togo from 1968-1970 as public affairs officer. It was a small post, but the first time you had your own USIS operation.*

GRAVES: In Bukavu I was public affairs officer, but that was a branch post. You're right. Togo was a good experience. The ambassador and the DCM were excellent officers. I was lucky to have the chance to learn from them.

*Q: Togo was a sophisticated francophone success story while Dahomey, now Benin, was the opposite. Those two have since reversed. Is that a fair reading?*

GRAVES: I don't think Togo has become a basket case. I wouldn't contrast it so much with Dahomey, which, as you suggested, was then suffering great political unrest and economic dislocation. In Lomé the immediate neighbor was Ghana, which, thanks to Nkrumah's far left dogma, was a disaster. So we watched and laughed when Ghanaians, who had been rich and arrogant in the Gold Coast before independence, tried to continue bamboozling the Togolese. But the relationship between the Togolese and the Ghanaians had changed. The Togolese had a solid economy, a stable regime and French advisors while the Ghanaians were wretched. Togo became a large exporter of cocoa, even though there wasn't a tree in the country, because cocoa from Ghana was fleeing a rapacious Marketing Board which didn't pay producers anywhere near the world price for cocoa. The producers were skinned in favor of the city folks and the politicians, who sold it abroad at world market prices. But the farmers, the people who were working, didn't get enough to make the effort worthwhile. So they either stopped working or figured out ways to export their cocoa through neighboring Togo.

*Q: Togo was a very francophone one party African state.*

GRAVES: Right. President Olympio was murdered. He managed to crawl over the wall and into the American embassy to die.

*Q: Was that in your time?*

GRAVES: No. Colonel Eyadema was president when I arrived. We were probably wrong to be as friendly to Eyadema as we were. I'm not suggesting that we try to undermine or tear down or change governments. But it's not in our interest to be visibly promoting or supporting or in cahoots with unsavory governments and leaders.

*Q: We were not in any way attempting to undermine Olympio.*

GRAVES: On the contrary. He was anti-Communist so we supported him. We should have been neutral and distant, making it clear that the tribal conflict which brought Olympio down was an African affair.

*Q: These actual events were before you arrived.*

GRAVES: The murder of Olympio occurred before my arrival.

*Q: Did you have the impression that Eyadema's coup caught us and the French flat footed?*

GRAVES: Eyadema presented us with policy problems. We considered that he may have personally killed Olympio, whom we rather liked and supported. I don't think we did the right thing. We were consistently wrong in thinking that we had to be either for or against Eyadema. We could have remained neutral, making it clear we didn't condone what had happened to Olympio, we didn't support Eyadema and his military government. But making it equally clear that we were not going to do anything to scuttle Eyadema. Togo is a very small country. We could have risked being true to our values without risking great loss.

*Q: Not that we in that country at that time were a major player, but the French surely were. How did they scan it? How much did their action affect our policy?*

GRAVES: I don't know, but I can say that the French ended up being supportive of Eyadema. What they most cared about was business as usual. French policy makers probably had a tougher row to hoe than we Americans. They had to take into account not only the views of their anti-Communists and their colonial businessmen, but they also had to cope with the anti-colonial views of France's powerful far left. The resulting policies oftentimes were complicated and contradictory. On balance, however, I would say that Jacques Foccart's Machiavellian realism determined French policy in Africa.

*Q: As such a strong French speaker, what were your own relations there with the French embassy and in general with the French over the years?*

GRAVES: Many good friends and close relationships. My wife was a good counterbalance, good at developing relationships with English speakers. Our six children are all francophone because they had most of their primary and secondary schooling in French or Belgian schools, but they admired America and got on well with American children on holiday at post. The French invited us into their homes and welcomed us into their social and recreational clubs. I even ended up being president of one. When one of our children became ill or had an accident, we didn't rely on State Department doctors. The French military and medical system was readily available to us. Their doctors would come immediately to our house when we needed help but always refused to accept any honorarium.

The French had something like civil war going at the Quai (foreign office). They probably gave with one hand and took away with the other and thereby created some of the disorder in Africa. Their functionaries did not see eye to eye. Then there was the overriding concern which had to do with French prestige in the world, the grandeur of de Gaulle.

*Q: Bud Sherer was a very distinguished ambassador with a good reputation. That must have been a collegial country team to be part of.*

GRAVES: It was. I couldn't agree more. He was one of the princes of the Foreign Service. Realistic and frank, well informed and hard working, but not at all convinced he always knew the right answer. A delightful sense of humor. Caring and concerned about his staff.

*Q: Before we leave Togo for Yaoundé, is there anything we haven't touched on and should?*

GRAVES: The Togolese were always seen by the French as the most able Africans and were used as functionaries throughout black Africa. My experience in Togo confirmed the French evaluation. I had never seen black Africans that were so enterprising and clever. I was tempted to cable Washington: Don't assign any dumb Americans to Lomé because the Togolese will run circles around them and make off with the kitchen sink.

**WINIFRED S. WEISLOGEL**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Lomé (1970-1973)**

*Winifred S. Weislogel was born in New Jersey on August 8, 1927. She received a bachelor's degree from Barnard College and a master's degree from Otago University in New Zealand. She entered the Foreign Service in 1956. Ms. Weislogel's career included positions in Geneva, Tripoli, Tangier, Rabat, and Lomé, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 24, 1992.*

*Q: You went to Lomé, the capital of Togo, where you served as Deputy Chief of Mission from '70 to '73. What was the political situation in Togo while you were there?*

WEISLOGEL: The political situation was that we had a president, President Eyadema, and he had been president, well, it was one of the longest reigns in the African world. He had unfortunately disposed of his predecessor, it was quite a story, President Olympio, who was the first president of Togo. The story goes that President Eyadema had been a sergeant in the French army. He came out of the boonies. He came out of Lamacada from a different tribe than Olympio. He did pretty well in the French army, got to be a sergeant, and he applied to go to officers' school. He was turned down by the President. In those days the President had to pass on those assignments. He held a grudge against him and one evening (President Olympio lived in a house next to the American embassy), Eyadema or some of his henchmen came after him and Olympio to escape them went over the fence into the American embassy parking lot and crawled into one of the cars that was open, but they got to him and they murdered him. And, of course, Eyadema never personally took credit for it, at least not in public. But it was just generally known that this is what happened. Then he put in another man, I think his name was Grunitzky, who was the product of a Polish father and a Togolese mother and he was president for a while, but Eyadema was back there pulling the strings. Then Eyadema took over himself and he was president and still is. He started off actually being rather benign. When I was there, we sort of felt that he was doing his best for the country given his own personal limitations, and of course he was surrounded with French advisors. Togo was quite different from the countries which had been colonies. It was a German colony up until the First World War. After the First World War it was turned into a mandate of the League of Nations and then became a trust territory of the UN until independence. But the French had administered it as a trust territory and their presence was unchallengeable. For instance, the French ambassador was automatically Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. It did not go according to seniority, the time that the ambassador was present in the country. But getting back to the way he ran the country, he was trying to build roads. We really

felt he was using money wisely up until a certain point, but he did have the single political party called the RPT and they held elections if you can call it that. But you had a single slate to choose from, you know, what you'd expect from those countries in Africa which had similar systems. Then he decided to build a great new headquarters for the RPT and up went this enormous building. Then he began having the international conferences there. I remember we had OCAM while I was there, the Organization of the French Speaking Countries of Africa, and of I guess it was the west coast and central Africa. He began a campaign to have people adopt native names instead of French names. Many, many of the Togolese either had English or French first names, given names, and many were Christian or Christian with certain overlaying of their original animism, but that has since become, if not law, at least the practice. I guess anybody who wanted to get anywhere had to adopt an African name. And he's tightened his grip. He got rid of people he thought were threats against him. We knew of some very, very fine people in the government and in the military and he gradually got rid of anyone who was seen as being too friendly with Europeans possibly of democratic persuasion. They were eliminated not very kindly, not pleasantly. They played hard-ball. And then of course it happened after I left, just about four or five months after I left. but I remember he went up to his hometown of Lamacada in a military plane, a DC-3 I think it was, with a French pilot. In fact, I knew the pilot, he was a Commandant Major in the French army. They crashed, but the president came out alive. After that they practically turned him into a saint. They've got a big monument, I understand, where the plane went down and where he emerged alive. Most of the people on the plane were killed. A cult of personality has developed and here you are talking about a man who has a very rudimentary education, a very rudimentary understanding of the world.

*Q: How did we deal with him while you were there?*

WEISLOGEL: With respect. We had an aid program. It wasn't a specific country aid program, we left that to the French. This was a regional program and what we were running was a regional road maintenance training center. But it happened to be in Lomé and we had an aid officer stationed there and they brought students from French speaking African countries in to learn how to operate road machinery and how to design roads and build and maintain them. That was one of the projects we had. We had a very active and very effective Peace Corps. They did a wonderful job. They really did. They were working an English language instruction, basic health education particularly directed at women. That was very effective. And they were doing things like building small dams, digging wells, trying to get potable water into villages so that poor women didn't have to walk 10 kilometers in each direction with buckets on their heads and in their hands while carrying baby on the back in order to get water into the villages. And a lot of those were working very, very well. And again, they had the phosphate industry which was the big industry, if you can call it that. Mining, open-pit mining but it didn't directly affect us. We kept an eye on it, we were interested, but again, they exported. That was one of their sources of foreign currency. They also exported things like cocoa. They exported far more than they grew because it was brought over from Ghana in head loads across the boarder by smugglers because the support price was better than it was in Ghana. And they were trying to develop tourism, and they were getting some Europeans, particularly Germans and Scandinavians. They would come down because of the sunshine and the sea was right there. Not the best swimming. It didn't have all the attributes for tourism that Morocco has for instance. Morocco had a fascinating culture, an indigenous culture, and buildings -- their mosques, their old cities were fabulous. You didn't

have anything like that in a place like Togo. It was very, very limited. Even culturally it didn't have a great civilization like the Nigerians did in Benin or the Ashanti did in Ghana. It was nothing like that in Togo.

*Q: What were American interests there as you saw them?*

WEISLOGEL: American interests were basically to show the flag. I don't really think that you could say much more for it. Shortly after I left the British ambassador was pulled out. I think they kept a regional ambassador who operated out of Dahomey. We had a United Nations mission there and they were doing various projects. I don't even recall anymore what they were but one of the big projects, it wasn't part of the UN, but they built the Volta dam on the Volta River in Ghana, not too far up from the river's mouth and they were supposed to supply electricity from the dam to Togo and Dahomey now beneath. That project was working, that is they had an engineer associated with the UN who was working on that project exclusively. Whether the system of distribution ever materialized, I don't know because traditionally Togo and Benin were at each other's throats, and Benin had a government that kept changing. They were rivals. But with Eyadema there was no change there and no possibility of change, he kept a tight, tight, control. Our interests in those days were primarily to keep China out of the UN. Remember that? It went on for years and years and years. Well, many countries had representatives whose primary job was to hang on to the vote against China in the United Nations and to try to get their votes in the UN for other issues that we were interested in.

*Q: Okay, you must have been Chargé from time to time. Did you get involved with Ambassador Dickinson? How did we pursue, or offer, or what...*

WEISLOGEL: We just went up and we made the pitch that was handed to us by the State Department. I mean, told them that this is important for various reasons, and of course it could affect the friendly relations that we are maintaining with their country, which usually means money of one kind or another, or technical assistance. We weren't big in the country on technical assistance, but there was something there and every little bit helped in a country that was basically very poor and short on resources.

*Q: How did they respond?*

WEISLOGEL: For a long time it was rather easy going for us because they had a nationalist Chinese ambassador in Lomé for long after most of surrounding countries had established diplomatic relations with Communist China. China still had a nationalist ambassador He'd been there for years and years and years. He even had an adopted daughter, a Togolese daughter, and again I think it was shortly after I left they changed their allegiance. The Chinese ambassador was expelled. That is nationalist Chinese. They established relations with Communist China and Communist China, I've forgotten, probably offered to build a football stadium or something like that. It was something as mundane as that. We had a very amusing diplomatic setup in Togo. There were only about eight or nine countries that had diplomatic relations and actually had resident ambassadors. You had of course France, Germany the United States, England (UK) and I think Ghana and Nigeria. And then you had the nationalist Chinese ambassador who was not the Dean, he would have been the Dean because he was there the longest except that the



Frenchman was the Dean. But when the Frenchman was away, the Chinese became the Dean. You had the Soviet Union, we had Egypt, we had a UAR Chargé d'affaires, in those days it was called the United Arab Republic and Israel. Of course Israel had no interest there either except for the votes on the Israeli issues in the United Nations and his job was to maintain that. We had some of the most peculiar diplomatic dinners particularly when they were offered by the Togolese government because, just alphabetically you had the Russians and the United States and the UAR all sitting at the end. We couldn't talk to the Egyptian at that stage, and our relations with the USSR were very strained to say the least, and the Israeli was not recognized by anyone except the United States and the Brits at that stage. So you had this peculiar situation where a lot of people weren't talking to other people and I remember once as the Chargé, I think the Israeli ambassador was leaving and I was organizing this farewell thing because the Frenchman was away and the nationalist Chinese could not really operate too well because he had to deal with other countries that he wasn't recognized by. Everybody knew what you were doing in town, so here we were meeting at the only major hotel and planning this reception and it would be known what were we up to. So I remember calling the Russian and telling him exactly what we were doing so the rumors wouldn't fly. I said look, I don't think you'd be interested in coming to this party. It's for the Israeli. But we had funny situations like that. And at the same time the Russian was one of the most attractive. He and his wife had served in the United States in one of their consulates, back when they had consulates, and they were a couple of the most attractive and enjoyable people that you'd want to meet. It was just too bad that we weren't allowed to socialize on an informal basis.

*Q: How did we look at that time in that part of Africa on the "Soviet Menace."*

WEISLOGEL: Most of the countries had socialist governments in one form or another and there was a lot of sympathy for some of the communist ideas simply because they were searching for something that would make their situation better. Communism wasn't going to do it but they'd tried other things and failed so it was tempting, it was tempting to a lot of young people. I think you had a lot of radical elements, as we called them in those days, in the university and we ourselves were trying to hold the line on several issues. As you know, a lot of the black African countries were rather sympathetic. They either had large Muslim populations or, for one reason or another, they were getting money from the Saudis and from others who had money -- the Libyans. They were pushing hard for votes against Israel at the United Nations and here we were trying to demand votes in favor of our positions on those issues. That, and communist China were the two things I remember as being the big issues and that was why we were there.

*Q: It does seem awfully peripheral doesn't it?*

WEISLOGEL: It does now. Now, after all the things that have happened. Of course the Israelis are still with us. But even that is changing in its form a great deal. But the Russian/Soviet issue is out the window.

*Q: China we've recognized.*

WEISLOGEL: And China we've recognized, sure.

*Q: What about the subject of the Peace Corps? I would have thought the French would be unhappy with having people teaching English and that sort of thing.*

WEISLOGEL: They didn't mind at all, I'll tell you. They were in the English teaching business themselves. Actually, a very good friend of mine, a person I still keep in touch with who is in France now, is a French woman who studied English in the United States and was a teacher of English in France. She had the opportunity to go to Togo to teach English at the university level because she was qualified only to teach up through secondary school in France. So she took it and she spend a number of years in Togo and she was paid for by the French government to teach English at the university level in Togo. I understand from her, and this was many years after that, she said that we are no longer in the business of teaching English, but they were for the longest time. No, we had no problems with our Peace Corps running, they even had some sort of French cooperants, they were people I think who were in the military who were helping on various projects but they were a little different than the Peace Corps. I mean they were people who were sort of army recruits who were trained in more technical areas, I believe. So we didn't run into the English speaking union. They had a few teachers in Togo.

*Q: How about whatever our efforts were with the problem of corruption which is endemic in that area?*

WEISLOGEL: You don't find it so much where you don't have American business firms operating. There was very little American business interest there. We did have, though, one case of an American black woman. She had left the United States and decided to live in Africa because she thought that this would be a better, happier environment for her. She faced prejudice, I think. She came from Chicago, and conditions could be pretty bad there. So she just opened up a little inn and she had a business of dressmaking and a few things like that. Something went wrong with it. I think they said she owed more taxes than she had the money for and they were going to put her in jail. She got smuggled out of Togo with certain assistance, because otherwise she would have been in jail there for the rest of her life. Of course if she'd paid off the right people and all she probably could have gotten herself out of it, but she didn't or she wasn't savvy enough to do that sort of thing, or she just didn't have the money. I don't know what the problem was but she left the country eventually. She had no alternative. But, oh yes, also you have human rights violations. We knew that people were beaten up when they were caught by the police, especially petty thieves, people that they'd grabbed who'd been caught in a robbery or something like that. You could pass the jail and hear the hollers, they'd beat them up. They didn't fool around, you didn't challenge the authority if you knew what was good for you. Also we had no problems with crime, very, very little. No murders, nothing like that, it was practically unheard of.

*Q: How did Dwight Dickinson use you as a DCM?*

WEISLOGEL: He was a political reporter. He did most of the political reporting and handling of those reports and I did just about anything else. I supervised the consular, economic commercial officers and then when the Peace Corps director was away, I went over and I worked on Peace Corps things. And when the USIA director was away, I'd work on the USIS business and I loved it. I mean that's the sort of thing I like to do. I like to be in to everything.

Q: *What was your impression of the Peace Corps volunteers that you met?*

WEISLOGEL: Superb, with very few exceptions. Well, this was the age, too, of the hippie movement in the United States, maybe lingering. But in any case marijuana was still very much in the forefront of activity and we did have a Fourth of July party where unbeknownst to me a Peace Corps volunteer had grown her own marijuana in her back yard and was passing out brownies that were made with marijuana. But she was choosing her people carefully, I mean she didn't offer any to me but unfortunately for her she picked the young brother and sister-in-law of one of our officers and didn't know that they were connected with the embassy or embassy personnel in any way. They were given some of these things and realized what they were. The news spread around and she got thrown out of the country because it was against the law and of course she shouldn't have been doing it. She was one of these spaced-out types. But actually most of them were hard working very, very good people and I have seen since then that a lot of the Peace Corps volunteers that I knew of have gone into politics. They're even serving in Congress. I can't name any names just offhand but some have. Oh yes, they always retained their interest in service and in that type of social conditions in foreign countries. I think they were very good, I can't say enough for them.

Q: *How about South Africa and apartheid and all. Did it come up a lot and how were we seen?*

WEISLOGEL: That was of course one of the things where I suppose they were trying to get our votes against South Africa but there again it was mostly lip service. You go into the stores, you find canned goods that came from South Africa on the shelves. The same thing was true when I visited Zaire and a few other places when I was inspecting. It was an open secret. And in the case of Zaire, the train that carried the copper out of the copper mines had to go through South Africa to get to the ports. So it was observed in the breach. It was a political thing -- that all of them had to pay lip service.

Q: *And rightly so, as a cause.*

WEISLOGEL: Oh sure, it's like apple pie and motherhood, you can't knock it.

**DWIGHT DICKINSON**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1970-1974)**

*Ambassador Dwight Dickinson was born in Maryland in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Ambassador Dickinson joined the Foreign Service in 1945. His career included positions in Mexico City, Curacao, Beirut, Rabat, Paris, and an ambassadorship to Togo. Ambassador Dickinson was interviewed in 1988 by Thomas S. Gates.*

*Q: Well, you've led me again right into the next one because I was about to say your excellent high-level service in Africa was rewarded again in September in '67 with your appointment as Ambassador to the Republic of Togo. You certainly got your wish to go back to Africa. Would you like to talk a bit about our policy toward that country? How you carried it out, and if you can, what modifications you may have recommended? How did it work?*

DICKINSON: Well, Tom, our policy probably is best described in the terms of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, one of "benign neglect." It wasn't really benign neglect but there are literally dozens of countries in Africa. They're tiny, they're poor. They have really almost no effect on anything we do. We have very little commerce with them. The French, for example, in the former French colonies, dominate, as you know, totally dominate the commerce. But our only real interest in the West African countries--our only real national interest, or American interest--seemed to be in getting their vote at the UN for things that were important to us, such as Korea--maintaining the UN force in Korea, maintaining the Chinese representation in the UN. The only thing that happened in the three and a half years I was in Togo that interested the Department at all was the moment at which Mr. Nixon decided to have his so-called opening to Communist China and at the same time had to pacify his right wing in American politics. So he laid on us, and through the Department, the difficult and losing chore of maintaining the recognition of Nationalist China by the countries we were in (and of keeping the nationalists in the UN). It wasn't so much recognition because the recognition took care of itself.

During that period whenever a country wanted to get rid of the Nationalist Chinese and substitute the representation of the Communist Chinese, all it had to do was to accept the Communist Chinese and the Nationalist immediately withdrew their ambassador. They never had to say, "Out with you". The Nationalist Chinese policy was to withdraw immediately and it was a self defeating policy. They were going to lose out anyway but it was a self defeating policy, it didn't work. And that's exactly what happened in Togo. I remember that after Nixon had been to China the local newspaper--the only daily newspaper, Togo Presse--had an editorial in which they applauded the idea of Togolese recognition of Communist China and cited Mr. Nixon as their example. I remember they said, "Nixon isn't red, he's not even pink, and he's recognized China." I'm not sure whether they were a little premature at that point.

But it was at this point that our government decided to try to maintain two representations at the UN--both the Nationalist Chinese and the Communist Chinese, neither of which would have accepted that. However, we were under great pressure to get the Togolese to vote for a two China policy of some kind, to keep the Nationalist Chinese in. And that resulted in a telephone call from Washington--from then Assistant Secretary of State David Newsom. He had never called me before; it would have been a waste of time if he had. But he called me and told me we had to hold the Togolese firm. We didn't succeed but he later thanked me for my efforts. But that was the only time that the Department ever showed any interest in Togo.

I must say it was a joy to be Ambassador there. If Morocco was the country that (my wife and) I loved the most for its savage beauty, its raw beauty and its wonderful old cities, Togo was the country in which we were the happiest from the point of view of the people. The West African people are simply the nicest people there are. They're really lovely, delightful people. Somebody

who has served in Lagos would dispute that and I would too, but in the countries that you and I served in, Tom, that's really true.

**JAMES K. BISHOP, JR.**  
**Desk Officer, Ghana and Togo**  
**Washington, DC (1972)**

*Ambassador James K. Bishop, Jr. was born in New York in 1938. He received his bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1960. His career has included positions in Auckland, Beirut, Yaounde, and ambassadorships to Nigeria, Liberia, and Somalia. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1995.*

BISHOP: In 1972, I became the desk officer in charge of Ghana and Togo. That assignment was accompanied by my return to school because I realized that I was leading a life of undetected crime as an economic officer. I had fallen into the "economic cone" because I happened to have an assignment to an economic position while in Lebanon, when the cone system was introduced. I also had been an economic officer in Cameroon, but I thought that some one would realize sooner or later that I, despite tutoring by a Lebanese local employee in Beirut, didn't know much about economics. I thought that I might be sent to FSI which had a very econometric course. Having failed trigonometry twice in high school and never having succeeded in a math course other than statistics, I lived in fear of being shipped off to FSI to that economic course. Partly to preclude that fate and partly because I wanted to learn more about Africa from an academic point of view, I enrolled at SAIS (John Hopkins' School for Advanced International Studies). I took one course each semester for four and a half years, learning something about economics and Africa, and eventually received a masters degree.

The Ghana desk job was most remarkable for its economic aspects. The Acheampong regime repudiated its foreign debts soon after I became the desk officer; it also nationalized many companies including Union Carbide. It had "seized the commanding heights of the economy" as Ghana's leaders put it. Such action was unheard of at the time. I think it was the first African government and perhaps the first Third World government which repudiated its external debts. The creditor community reacted in a very hostile manner. The British, as the most significant creditor, formed a "Creditors' Club", headed by Martin Le Caine from the Channel Islands, one of Great Britain's senior diplomats. We met every three months in London, Rome--or Ghana. We tried to develop a unified creditors' response. Ultimately, the negotiations ended up in a rescheduling of Ghana's public sector debts. We also valiantly defended our US based multinational company Union Carbide. It gave us every assurance that it had not engaged in the tax evasion which was the justification Ghana had used for its expropriation. After we had stoutly maintained Union Carbide's innocence--both within our creditor community and in Ghana--the company settled out of court with Ghana conceding that it had indeed for years under-invoiced its exports in order to minimize the export taxes due to Ghana. That taught some of us a lesson about big business!!

During the four years that I was involved in Ghanaian affairs--this was after Nkrumah's overthrow--Ghana ranked quite high in the interest level of the Bureau, primarily because of the debt repudiation and nationalization process. The bloom had gone off the rose about Ghana's position in Africa. Nkrumah's overthrow in 1967, the series of lackluster military regimes which followed, compounded the waste of resources which Nkrumah had inherited when Ghana became independent in 1957, greatly reduced Ghana's influence on the continent. Nkrumah spent the country's considerable resources on an attempt to industrialize the country--on facilities that made very little economic sense and on other showcase projects. The government ignored the agricultural sector which was actually the underpinning of the country's economic base--cocoa in particular. The countryside was exploited for the benefit of the urban population and in particularly the swollen bureaucracy of a state modeled on the socialist pattern of Eastern Europe. The bureaucracy inserted itself into the economy in a manner that was well beyond its competence to manage. So Ghana was in an economic decline and political disrepute, but it was prominent on our foreign policy agenda because its economic policy initiatives might be replicated in other countries on the continent to the detriment of creditors in both the public and private sectors.

I found that the African countries which we I dealt had a very mixed bag of representation in Washington. Ghanaian Ambassador Deborah was very well known in Washington; he was extremely articulate and had excellent connections in the black community, academia, the religious and political communities. The Francophones were most often lost. Few of them spoke English; most of them were accustomed to authoritarian political structures--and I include France in that group. In those contexts diplomats dealt only with the Foreign Ministry; that doesn't work in Washington. To be successful in Washington, a foreign representative had to have good connections in Congress, the press, various parts of the bureaucracy (AID, the Peace Corps, Export-Import Bank and perhaps even the NSC), the non governmental organizations. It was not enough to just be in touch with the State Department. Most of the Francophone country representatives didn't have a clue on how Washington worked. They literally could not find their way around Washington.

**RICHARD L. STOCKMAN**  
**Communications Specialist**  
**Lomé (1973-1975)**

*Richard Stockman was born in 1940 in Kansas City, Missouri. He went to seminary at Cape Girardeau in Missouri, and was then drafted into the U.S. Army in 1963, where he spent most of his tour in Germany. Mr. Stockman entered the Foreign Service in 1966 as a communications specialist. He served in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the Soviet Union. Mr. Stockman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.*

Q: *What was the situation in Togo in those days?*

STOCKMAN: Well, politically Togo was quickly becoming one of the last bastions of freedom in West Africa that had survived the post colonial period when most of the European dominance and presence started to disappear. The British were virtually gone except for some influence in Nigeria. The French were there but behind the scenes commercially more than anything else. The Germans had disappeared. So therefore the President of Togo, Eyadema, was President for life in his own right. He certainly was no model of human rights causes or a pusher in that direction. I think the role of the US embassy there, as small as it was, was vastly more important in relation to its size than most people could appreciate. By that I mean there was a very large North Korean and Russian presence there.

*Q: This, of course was of great concern to us during the Cold War.*

STOCKMAN: Absolutely. If you recall in those days the Civil War and the takeover of Angola and a large Cuban presence there; the same thing in Ghana and on down the line it went. In other words, I think a lot of people truly feared there would be a domino effect in Africa. Certainly there was evidence of it starting to happen. So the only way I believe that the importance of Togo got on the map was some very shrewd appointments of US Ambassadors there. One was Nancy Rawls, one of the first female ambassadors who had risen up through the ranks; followed by Ronald Palmer, who was very astute and articulate.

*Q: He was there when you were there?*

STOCKMAN: Yes.

*Q: I had a long interview with him on Togo.*

STOCKMAN: So you can appreciate how dynamic he is. He was a great person to work for. I don't think there was one individual in that embassy, male or female, who did not surely appreciate his liveliness, his dynamic spirit. And he was very successful there. He actually was, I guess, in competition for the Deputy Assistant Secretary that Richard Moose was eventually awarded. I think he was somewhat disappointed that he didn't get it, of course and probably would have done very well.

*Q: We are talking about under the Carter Administration which is a little later...1977.*

STOCKMAN: Right.

*Q: How were communications in Togo?*

STOCKMAN: Like I had mentioned, one of the reasons that I wanted to go there so badly was...the State Department had looked over the entire situation and realized that we were quickly getting into a no-win situation on communications. You have one country not getting along with the next...keep in mind that we rely very heavily on commercial leased lines to do most of our communications...and we could see that that was not going to succeed very well, in fact it was becoming almost impossible to maintain communications in a lot of embassies. So they made a decision that they were going to go with a radio communication operation and that was my

background in the military and therefore it was quite natural that I would be interested in getting back into that type of operation. Little did I realize before I got there, however, that Lomé and all the equipment earmarked for Lomé was suddenly transshipped into Luanda, in Angola. Unfortunately six weeks after it arrived there and got installed, it fell to the rebels and we lost everything. So that put Lomé far back on the priority list and most of the motivation that I had for being there was kind of lost. I didn't know all of the reasons but I started to piece it together. But I did establish a very good working contact with the French manager of French Cable, the communications department there.

*Q: Well, we depended on lines.*

STOCKMAN: Well, it was a combination there. We would transmit in a very primitive fashion our communications, we called it off line, to the central office in Lomé, through the French facilities and then they would get it back to Paris which was a very big relay point for many, many African posts in those days. They had a huge operation out of Paris. One could spend hours there doing this work. It was extremely tedious and kind of redundant in the manner in which we did it and very time consuming. There were long days and short nights most of that tour. But we extended six months. We thoroughly enjoyed the social life. It was a small international community but people got along extremely well. The education was very elementary in various respects, but wives contributed, they taught school, everyone worked together.

*Q: Well, this is the real fun of the Foreign Service.*

STOCKMAN: It was.

*Q: Satellites were not even in the air at that time or not?*

STOCKMAN: Of course the military establishment had most of the resources. There were satellites up there and certainly were dedicated. I suppose you really had to be in the inner circle to get access to those things. It certainly wasn't in our budget and planning at that point. However, as progress and technology set in we quickly changed with the times.

*Q: But these weren't the times?*

STOCKMAN: No we are talking about 10 or 12 years prematurely here.

**ROBERT J. KOTT**  
**Economic/Consular Officer**  
**Lomé (1974-1976)**

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

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

*Q: Of African background experience?*

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

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

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

I was also, probably the most interesting part of my job, I was the Self Help Officer at post. This is the Ambassador Self Help Fund. We had a fairly large one because we utilized it very effectively, and I inherited that. We had about, in those days, about 100,000 dollars, and an average project was maybe 5,000 dollars, so we had maybe 20 per year of new projects. The reason we were so successful is we used our Peace Corps volunteers. We made sure that virtually every project went to a Peace Corps volunteer to implement. So we had an American on sight in remote places throughout the small country, implementing this project. I am sure our success rate, our completion rate was probably well in the 90 percentile and that is why Washington kept

giving us more money. I think we had about the third highest utilization rate in all of Africa and yet we were one of the smallest countries in Africa. That was good. It also enabled me to travel around the country. Obviously, the economic portfolio would not take me up to northern Togo, since virtually all activity, political as well as economic, was centered in Lomé the capital where French, of course, centralized.

*Q: And on the coast.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

KOTT: Yes, embassy vehicle with a driver, sure. I think my wife didn't accompany me on one of those trips. Togo is relatively easy to get around, relatively small country. You could be up north to the very far north in about eight or nine hours. Roads were decent. On the political side, the person in power then is the same person in power now, Gnassingbe Eyadema, one of the great dictators of Africa. He was of course an army sergeant, in the French colonial army, and then in the early days of the Togolese army. He is alleged to have perpetrated the first coup by personally assassinating, as the story goes, the first president of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, I am

told that he actually entered the United States Embassy compound which backed against the Sylvanus' residence... Let me back up a bit. The coup plotters, including Eyadema allegedly, entered into Olympio's compound, Olympio jumped over the fence, hid under a US embassy vehicle in the compound, soldiers went around, walked through the gates, busted open the gates, whatever, probably had guns in those days, yanked Olympio from under a car where he was hiding and put a bullet in his head. He didn't take power then. He installed, I don't remember if he was the vice-President at the time, Nicholas Grunitzky, and Grunitzky stayed in power from '63 till '67 when Eyadema lead another coup and took power himself.

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

KOTT: And has been in power ever since. Despite the various efforts, as I've tracked it over the years from afar, at democratizations imposed from abroad, mostly lead by the United States and few of our allies. He's been a great survivor, but a ruthless one. Even when I was in Togo, in fact I broke the story to the Ambassador because a friend of mine came to my house to tell me that the head of, or if not the head of at least one of the leading generals in the army had been done with, and he was a good friend of ours at the Embassy. It was quite obvious what happened to him. He probably stuck his head a little bit above the political water line and was removed, killed. This was a fairly common occurrence.

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

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

*Q: After the First World War.*

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

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

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

*Q: And they come in bails.*

KOTT: That's right, they get processed, they are cleaned, processed, packed up and sent in bulk. If you would go down to the market, in much of West Africa, probably much of Africa and

would see garments that looked in relatively good shape but they were obviously used, but they were cleaned and what have you, and they were for sale in the market place.

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

KOTT: No, we were not involved in the mining, it was a French Togolese operation as I recall. Togo was one of the three major phosphate producers in the world; Morocco, and I think Australia is the probably largest if I am not mistaken. And phosphates, like oil and other primary commodities, like bananas, the price goes up and down. When the price is good, I think when I first came to Togo, my first year, the prices were good. Togo was sort of flourishing in comparative terms, and then the price of phosphates dropped and then of course the economy turned south.

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

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

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

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

*Q: You've mentioned USAID a couple of times, and there was an AID representative as part of the country team and the Embassy. Did that person follow what the World Bank was doing, what*

*the Europeans were doing in terms of development activity, or did you have to do that as a part of your economic portfolio?*

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

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

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

*Q: World Bank?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

KOTT: I can't remember.

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

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

Interestingly, Shirley Temple was the U.S. Ambassador in Ghana, and again I think between Nancy Rawls, the woman in one country right next to another country where we had an American Ambassador, there was this sort of American professional rivalry there. I met Ambassador Black, she and her husband traveled over to Togo. In fact I spent reasonable amount of time with Mr. Black who was very charming and engaging gentleman. I remember our conversation, it was a real treat to me to sit down with him. He was a prominent businessman I believe.

*Q: In San Francisco.*

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

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

KOTT: Indeed, I agree with you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Q: But teaching was in English?*

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

**RONALD D. PALMER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1976-1978)**

*Ambassador Ronald D. Palmer was born in Pennsylvania in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree from Howard University in 1955 and a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1957. Ambassador Palmer joined the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included positions in Indonesia, Malaysia, Denmark, the Philippines, Togo, and an ambassadorship to Mauritius. Ambassador Palmer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 15, 1992.*



*Q: What was the situation in Togo when you arrived in 1976?*

PALMER: Well, it was very interesting. This was after a high point in Third World activity in Africa where the North Koreans had been quite involved in trying to bring resources and their methods of organization to African states. They did some work in training the Presidential Security guards and in Togo and the like. They also sought to put a much more sharp anti-American emphasis on the policies of the governments where they were working, including Togo.

I came into the situation where this kind of propaganda had been going on for a bit. Togo was a very, very militantly third world country. Still, I found that the Togolese President and I managed to get into a good man-to-man relationship...

*Q: This was whom?*

PALMER: This was General Gnassingbe Eyadema. Eyadema had been in the French Foreign Legion and had fought in Indochina and I think in Algeria. He was finally demobilized and sent home around 1958. When he and a few others who had been in the French forces came back the only experience they had had was being in the military. At that time Togo did not really have an army. So the government which was headed by Sylvanus Olympio, probably didn't handle these returning veterans as smoothly as they should have. Eventually there was a coup in 1963, the first in Africa and Olympio was killed. Eyadema and the other military people withdrew after the coup. Olympio was succeeded by Nicolas Grunitzky from 1963-67. Finally the Army mounted another coup and took over in 1967, Eyadema became President. So Eyadema has been in power from 1967 to the present, 1990.

I don't think he went beyond the 6th grade, but he was a man who has a great deal of common sense and who, of course, has the background of having worked and served in the French Army which is a very, very tough environment. He had a vision for his country, to try to develop it. His methods were authoritarian, but nevertheless he sought to develop the agriculture of the country, the infrastructure, its industries. And he has had a fair amount of success in that effort. There has also been a relatively stable political situation in Togo, although there have been continuing incidents between the people of the North, the home of Eyadema, and the people from the South, the Ewe, who are quite different culturally. This problem is not resolved. Nevertheless since 1967 the country has enjoyed relative stability. It aspires to become the Switzerland of Africa.

While I was there I worked on trying to improve US-Togolese relations. I had some success in that. I worked as well as trying to make an input in the development issues of the country. At that time we had an AID officer in the country, but I had a vision, myself, of trying to do something both with regard to water availability and also questions of health care. I was able to make progress with both of those issues.

On the bilateral relations, as my tour was coming to an end in 1978, an issue came up at mid year of possible cross border raids by mercenaries. I alerted the President at that time, having gotten the information from other security sources, and then after a couple of months, I believe in

September, there was another very strong report. I went to see him and told him that this information had been received. He didn't believe there was such a threat but I said that he should probably take security precautions in any event. It was some time after that that a person was picked up in Switzerland who said he had been a part of this mercenary force which had in fact come over the border in the earlier alert to make a reconnaissance and had been prepared to come across in force at the September alert. However, when they ran into heavier security arrangements they turned back. All this appeared eventually in the magazine "Jeune Afrique" and a couple of British newspapers. As you might expect, that led to a great warming of the relations between myself and the people there.

Subsequently Togo went on the Security Council and I think the relationship has been quite a sound one between the United States and Togo since then.

*Q: Did you find yourself either competing or trying to thwart the North Koreans?*

PALMER: No, by the time I got there I think the enthusiasm for their methods had already passed. Among other things, their methods and ideas went counter to a fundamental reality which was that Togo wanted to have a solid relationship with France. However, you may recall at the same time there was an effort on the part of Zaire to extend its influence politically, organizationally, to as many states as would accept their influence. The Zairois political party had been organized by the North Koreans. The Togolese Party called the Rassemblement du Peuples Togolais, RPT, had been also organized along these sort of mass front lines. But I think when the Togolese asked the North Koreans for resources, they didn't really have any to offer. So I suspect by the time I arrived that was already in the process of change.

The relationship between Eyadema and Mobutu has been and remains, I suppose, a very warm, very close relationship for reasons that have to do with being old military campaigners and friends.

The Togolese political party and the Zaire political party have a certain resonance between them. I would say that Togolese single party has been a fairly useful method of mobilization of people in the countryside.

*Q: What was America's policy towards Togo outside of having "good relations?" Did we feel that this was an area which France was going to play the predominant role and we would stay back a bit?*

PALMER: I am not sure I can give you a very precise answer to that question. Recall 1976 was when the Carter Administration came to power. I had been in the country really only a short time, but the Carter Administration had a positive attitude towards Africa. They had a positive attitude towards doing something meaningful in South Africa. Somehow we were made aware as chiefs of mission that all of our countries counted. The resources were not unlimited, but the Carter Administration let us know that there would be efforts made to be helpful and supportive to Africa. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Dick Moose and our Ambassador to the UN Andy Young led this effort.

There was a real effort to change the perception of the Africans that somehow the United States didn't care about them and was mainly interested in the South African issue. This was left over from the Kissinger period. The policy was to try to get the support of all the Africans for the things we were seeking to do in Africa which we felt genuinely were in their interest. In addition to the South Africa issue, which was harder, more difficult, there was also Rhodesia, what became the Zimbabwe issue.

Togo, of course, occupies an unusual position. It is a member of the Entente which is led by the Ivory Coast. It includes Niger, Burkina Faso, what used to be called Upper Volta, Benin, Togo and France. This was an effort to try to deal with that part of the world as a region.

In addition, Eyadema became one of the fathers of what was called ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, and he has continued to have a very significant interest in and impact on ECOWAS. There was nothing as definite as Eyadema becoming a figure of importance as the country is too small; yet, there was the concept that Togo counted for something. I had very good feedback on my reporting of what was going on. And, as I mentioned, in due course after I left, perhaps as a consequence of these several things, I don't know, we gave our support to Togo to go on the Security Council, which obviously indicated the US had respect for Togo.

I went to see the President on all the issues that counted for the Carter Administration during that period. He would give me very sound and solid support and advice. He was always very insistent on the fact that we ought to do more than just talk about the issues such as South Africa. He wanted the US to put more resources into Africa. I don't know what was happening elsewhere, but I do know that we had a good interlocutor in Togo.

*Q: For the benefit of those not familiar with the Foreign Service, how does an Ambassador work in a relatively small country in Africa?*

PALMER: Togo at the time had 2 million people. The city of Lomé had about 150,000 people. Of those 150,000 in the town, probably only 2,000 worked for the government. It was possible to get to know all of the Cabinet people and a good number of the people in what you can call the political elite.

I had relatively limited resources, but I did have the Peace Corps which I felt was the best one in Africa. There were about 100 volunteers who were all over the country. We developed an excellent program of working on mini-projects. We could build a school at that time for \$5,000. The Embassy at that time had some self-help funds from the State Department, money you could give to localities and villages, to help supplement the use of their own resources. Therefore, schools, health buildings and even small roads could be built.

One of my major efforts was to identify the United States with this developmental process, especially with our small scale program, because France was the major provider of credits and assistance. At that time the Togolese had a windfall of money that had come their way as a consequence of the increase in commodity prices in the early and mid 1970s. They exported phosphate rock which was one of their very few exports. They actually had some cocoa and

coffee exports show up in their figures but these were actually items that came from Ghana and were reexported through Togo because the Ghanaian currency at that time was not strong.

So, through the Peace Corps, I had contacts throughout the country. Whenever there was a school opening or something of that sort, I would go and spend perhaps a morning or an afternoon with the people there.

I mentioned water and schools and health earlier. Our effort resulted in people who were walking 5 or 10 miles to school having a school built within one or two miles. On the water side, my metaphor for the African experience is the woman carrying a jar of water on her head, often two or three times a day and often walking long distances to get the water. We collectively tried to do what we could to make water points more accessible to people than had been the case previously.

We did what we could to promote trade. We did not see many American businessmen but I had a constant litany of requests falling upon me from both the local trading community and from the government. They would want to see more American businessmen because by then they had become much more sophisticated and were aware that French prices were high. Moreover, often US items were being sold by the French after being manufactured in France under license. So they clearly could do better by getting some of those items like heavy equipment, directly from the United States. Unfortunately although there were some US bank representatives who came through and some businessmen, promoting US business was really quite difficult because there just wasn't American interest.

I took the view that it was important to make contacts in the military because it was after all a military dictatorship. I had developed a sound relationship with the President. I suggested that it would be useful for some of his people to have experience in the United States and get to know the American logistical system, etc. He blessed an effort that began with the training of some of his people in the United States.

What I am suggesting is that on a daily basis there would be a certain amount of office work to be done, but I spent a good deal of my time visiting people in their offices, getting around the country and ultimately becoming a part of the group in Togo that was concerned with issues of development. We succeeded in having the American Embassy considered to be a part of the process in which there was an effort to do positive things in the country.

**JOSEPH C. WILSON, IV**  
**Administrative Officer**  
**Lomé (1978-1979)**

*Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, IV was born in Connecticut in 1949. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and after working in a variety of fields joined the Foreign Service in 1976. Wilson has served overseas in Niger, Togo, South Africa, Burundi, the Congo, and as the ambassador to Gabon. He has also worked in the Bureau of African Affairs, as the political advisor to the*

*Commander in Chief, US Armed Forces, Europe, and as the senior director for African Affairs at the National Security Council. Ambassador Wilson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

WILSON: Americans throughout the country and they watched what they were doing. They didn't like the idea that Americans might be teaching English to Francophone natives because of their belief in the superiority of Francophony French. But by and large we got along pretty well with them. There were not any real issues there.

*Q: Were there any particular issues that absorbed us in Togo other than maintaining good relations?*

WILSON: No; we just wanted to maintain good relations. We thought Togo was a paragon of democracy in an otherwise socialist part of Africa - if not democracy, at least economic growth and stability. Togo was pretty much a success story.

*Q: Were the Soviets messing around there?*

WILSON: No, the Soviets were in Benin and in Ghana. There must have been an embassy, but I don't recall it. We didn't really run into the Soviets very much until we got to Burundi a few years later.

*Q: Did any of the neighbors like Benin or Ghana try to mess around in Togo?*

WILSON: There were always tensions between Ghana and Togo, but at that time they were pretty much under control. There would be occasion when we had border incidents; everybody would try and say that country was destabilizing the other. But it never got beyond that. As far as Benin goes, Kerekou was in power as the dictator - not as the elected president. Benin-Togo relations were not real good but they weren't bad. Togo basically benefitted from the chaos in the other two countries.

*Q: How did you find being administrative officer? Was this professionally challenging and career enhancing as it had been touted to be?*

WILSON: It was career enhancing! I got two promotions while in Niger, and then I got another promotion right after I left Togo. That made three promotions in three and a half years; so in terms of enhancing, I think it worked out just fine. I enjoyed being an administrative officer. I had more control over the budget function. That was the big thing. As GSO, I basically executed; as administrative officer I planned and controlled funds.

We had an American school in Togo. I was on the board of that school which was a lot of fun. I had the best office in the embassy. Mine was the only office that had a view of the ocean; as a Californian I appreciated that. I had good staff. The Togolese were talented people. The size of the mission was stable; we didn't have this great burst of staff growth when I was there. It was all very civilized. The country was stable and at peace.

The AID mission was very small under good leadership. We used to meet all the time and sort out our differences. The USIS operation was right across the street; it also was small so everything manageable. I think the U.S. government had very good little operation in Togo and I enjoyed it. I think most of all I enjoyed the Togolese. The people who worked at the embassy had been there for a long time and knew what they were doing. We had State specialists coming through on a regular basis who worked with them, particularly on the budget and fiscal matters. It was a good, professionally run, efficient operation and didn't suffer from the chaos of bursting at the seams as we had in Niamey.

*Q: Did Washington intrude much on what you were doing there?*

WILSON: Washington was pretty good to me. I basically learned early on that if you enjoyed their confidence, then you could do pretty much what you wanted. The same people who were in Washington when I first went out to Niamey were still there; they were very supportive. They wanted the mission to succeed. The AF/EX people in particular were particularly concerned that the mission succeed; they always gave me a full hearing.

*Q: At that time was there sort of an administrative center for western Africa?*

WILSON: We had a number of different support operations. The budget and fiscal operations went through a regional center. We had a regional budget fiscal officer in Ghana who used to visit and we had a regional personnel officer somewhere else who used to come to see us periodically. Periodically people would come out from Washington - the post management officer and others - but we had no regional administrative office to whom we reported. The administrative operation was run by me, and I reported to the ambassador and the DCM.

*Q: I would think that people in Ghana, for example, because of the lousy rule they had there all the time, would sort of enjoy coming down to Togo and enjoy a certain amount of stability in an R&R place.*

WILSON: They used to come down a lot. We had two or three really good hotels - two were right on the beach. We would have people from Ghana all the time. During the time that I was in Togo, the Ghanaians engaged a major U.S. accounting firm/investment bank to come to restructure their Ministry of Finance. These guys, including Theodore Roosevelt IV, were in Togo for the weekend when the Ghanaians closed their border and stole their money. They took all their currency and exchanged it for new CDs. This investment bank/accounting firm that was supposed to be restructuring the Ministry of Finance didn't have a clue that this was going to happen. The Ghanaians kept it a closely guarded secret. So these guys ended up having to stay in Togo for 10 days while the Ghanaians did their thing. They were probably our best known guys who were stuck outside of Ghana during that time.

*Q: Did you have any crises like people dying or things like that?*

WILSON: Actually we did. We had a Peace Corps volunteer who had a motorcycle accident upcountry. She had her wound, which was a knee wound, wrapped by a Polish doctor; she was then brought down to Lomé. Her injury got infected with gangrene, and we were fighting to get a

medevac plane. While we were doing that, the meds were basically having to go in every day or so and cut off another part of her leg as the gangrene spread. She finally died, which was real tough on all of us and especially the Peace Corps people. When my wife gave birth in the States to my first set of twins in May of 1979 - just a couple months after the Peace Corps volunteer had died - she also caught gas gangrene in an American hospital in California. It was a very strange coincidence having seen a gangrene infection happen in Togo and then suddenly being faced with it again in California.

*Q: You had to leave then for medical...*

WILSON: Togo is part of that corner of West Africa that has the highest rate of twin births in the world. All my twins were conceived in Togo, as I like to remind my African friends - it is the waters of West Africa that brought me first one set in 1979 and then 21 years later a second set of twins. We didn't know we were having twins. My wife would go in to the doctor in Lomé every couple of months, and he would look at her and say, "Gee, you're awfully big. Are you about seven months pregnant?" She said, "No, I'm only four months pregnant." He said, "Well, you're awfully big." He was a German doctor, but they didn't do sonograms or anything like that in Togo in 1979. We flew her back when she was seven months pregnant. She called me up and said, "You're not going to believe this. We are having twins." So I literally did not know for the first seven months. When I heard this news, I changed my plans and went back to the States; my wife gave birth literally the day I got back. I got off the airplane in LA; we went to see a movie, and she went into labor that night. So I ended up being up for about four days in a row, traveling, across continents and oceans and then sitting through a movie and delivery. She gave birth to the twins and got very sick. She almost died. She was in the hospital for about six weeks. They thought she was going to die. They gave her about a one in 10 chance of survival. They flew her by helicopter to various hospitals. At that time they didn't have a lot of hyperbaric chambers around. Finally they got her into one in Long Beach; she survived to my great relief. As a consequence of emergency, we had to curtail our tour in Togo, which was too bad. I liked Togo, and I liked the job and the people.

### **MARILYN P. JOHNSON**

**Ambassador**

**Lomé (1978-1981)**

*Ambassador Marilyn Johnson was born in Massachusetts. Her overseas postings include Bamako, Tunis, Niger, the Soviet Union, Pakistan and as ambassador to Togo. Ambassador Johnson and her sister, Persis Johnson were interviewed by Ann Miller Morin in 1986.*

*Q: Did anybody from the Togo embassy come and call on you?*

JOHNSON: The chargé d'affaires and his wife were at the swearing-in and I went with Ron Palmer to a luncheon at the ambassador's before I went out. It must have been after the swearing-

in but before I left for Togo. I went to a luncheon at the Togolese ambassador's. They were very friendly.

*Q: He had come by then?*

JOHNSON: Yes. I think it was the wife of the ambassador and the chargé d'affaires came to the swearing-in.

*Q: Did anybody from the Togolese embassy come to see you off at the plane?*

JOHNSON: I don't think so, no.

PERSIS: Her former ambassador wanted to take her to the plane.

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right. I left early in the morning. Bob Moore [C. Robert Moore, U.S. ambassador to Mali, April 1965 to June 1968. Also, subsequently ambassador to Cameroon]. He is a wonderful person, Bob and Joanna Moore. You never knew them I guess?

*Q: No.*

JOHNSON: He wanted to drive us to the plane.

*Q: He was your ambassador where?*

JOHNSON: In Mali.

PERSIS: Everybody who was in Mali called it a golden time.

JOHNSON: He was a wonderful ambassador and it was an exceptionally fine group of people.

*Q: Let me just see where I am here. Let's jump back over to your presentation of credentials. But before we do that I would like to ask Persis what was the effect on you when you heard your sister was going to be an ambassador?*

PERSIS: I was very happy because I knew that she was under great stress in Moscow and for the first time...

*Q: Was this because of working personalities? A conflict?*

JOHNSON: Yes. Interior. It was within the embassy.

PERSIS: For the first time in her life she was finding that she didn't know whether she wanted [to stay on.] She loved her work, but I remember her saying, "If I knew anything else that I would really like to do as much as the work that I do, I would resign." I never heard her say that before.



*Q: Under too much stress.*

PERSIS: Also knowing the situation that she was in, I was concerned about her health. As I say, I felt sure she was affected by the microwaves because she was not acting as she usually did. I would try to be as normal with her as possible and not showing the anxiety. She had done so well. We never expected anything from a career. She'd never been career oriented in the sense that. "I'm going to do this."

JOHNSON: I was never going to be a career woman.

PERSIS: But I also knew that this was an unhappy time. She came home one day to me, and she said, "It's going to be all right, Persis." She didn't tell me any more, but she just said to me, "It's going to be all right." I remember Sidney was leaving at that time and he'd been living with us, this young man that we became very fond of and when he was leaving he was concerned about her too. She said to him, "It's going to be all right, Sidney." Because she knew then that she was being nominated.

JOHNSON: I knew I was being considered. They were doing the background investigation and all. The cable that comes out, "Do you know of any reasons that you should not accept the appointment?"

*Q: Oh, is that what it says?*

JOHNSON: Yes. The cable said, "You are being considered for appointment as ambassador to Togo. Are there any reasons that would prevent you from taking this on." Something to that effect. It was for me to say whether there was anything that they didn't know about.

*Q: They want to know if you have any skeletons.*

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right. I should tell the skeletons before they dig them out.

*Q: Were you surprised, Persis?*

PERSIS: Yes. Completely. Never had an inkling. When Marilyn was in Garmisch we became friendly with some of the military people. This was a wonderful experience for us too, because we have stereotypes when we don't know too much and this was a very broadening experience. One of the men, Denny, had said to you, "Is there any chance? ...Where do you go with USIA. Do you ever have a chance of becoming an ambassador?" I remember Marilyn said, "Theoretically there's a chance, but..."

*Q: It's pretty slim.*

JOHNSON: Yes.

*Q: And for a woman.*

JOHNSON: That's right.

*Q: There have only been two.*

JOHNSON: From USIA?

*Q: Yes, you and Frances Cook, and she's become an FSO now.*

JOHNSON: Yes, she changed. She was in Dick Moose's office when I was being sworn in. She'd converted to State before...

*Q: So you're the only one.*

PERSIS: Also in Garmisch they have pictures of all the people who have been there who became generals. Marilyn's is the only woman's picture.

JOHNSON: I don't even know if there is a picture. They asked me for it and I didn't have a picture.

*Q: To put up?*

JOHNSON: You asked me for this. The State Department never gave me one. They gave me some small ones when I first went in, but I never had any big official ones.

*Q: You should have had an official one.*

JOHNSON: I should have, yes. I should have asked. I never did ask for it.

*Q: Did you ever meet Carter, by the way?*

JOHNSON: No, no, that was too bad.

*Q: There was no picture taken in the Rose Garden?*

JOHNSON: No, I never went to the White House.

PERSIS: Togo was too little a country.

*Q: I think it's policy. I think Reagan has everybody.*

JOHNSON: I think Reagan does now.

*Q: And he has a picture taken. In a way it's a very good thing for an ambassador to have a picture of herself or himself with the president displayed prominently in the office or the home. I think it's a very good idea actually.*

PERSIS: As I say it was something so unexpected.

*Q: Your family was all surprised?*

PERSIS: Yes, although I think they respected Marilyn a great deal and thought she had done very well.

*Q: Unlike you, they wouldn't have known what the odds were against it, would they? Because you were in it so you would know.*

PERSIS: As I say it was just out of the blue. It was nothing ever anticipated.

JOHNSON: No, it was unanticipated from my point of view too. I was completely taken aback.

*Q: Now let's go back to when you finished talking to the president, now, and you presented your credentials.*

JOHNSON: Then I stayed with the chief of protocol. He drove me back to the residence and I asked him if he would come in and have champagne.

PERSIS: We had arranged to have a small...

JOHNSON: We had something for people from the embassy there. All of the embassy and the country team. The country team came with me, I guess, that was it. They went with me but then they must have left when I sat down with the president because I don't remember the country team being there for our chat. Brian was there, but I think that the PAO, and the Peace Corps, and the AID...

PERSIS: And then you made a speech on television.

JOHNSON: That's right. They have national television.

PERSIS: Then that night we had a dinner at Brian's because I remember we were all watching the television, the news.

JOHNSON: That's right. They taped the presentation of the credentials.

*Q: They do?*

JOHNSON: And they taped the whole thing going by the honor guard and all coming in in the car.

*Q: Who does that?*

JOHNSON: The national television, the Togolese television.

*Q: They taped the whole ceremony?*

JOHNSON: They taped the whole ceremony and showed it on that evening's news.

PERSIS: They do that for everyone.

JOHNSON: They do it for everybody.

*Q: That's nice all the same. So then you went back to the embassy and had a little party?*

JOHNSON: Then we went back to the residence. I think the chief of protocol said he couldn't come in or he just came in, didn't stay long. He came in and probably met you. Then we had the people from the embassy and the country team and everybody. All the Americans were invited to have champagne and a snack or something.

JOHNSON: Then the DCM and his wife had us for dinner with a group, probably the country team too.

PERSIS: We hadn't been to their house.

JOHNSON: We hadn't been in the country long. It was soon, very soon. About a day and a half I guess.

*Q: Fascinating. Now, did you see the president much after that?*

JOHNSON: Yes, I did. I had the opportunity to go in. Afghanistan came up. I think I went in about that. I know, in November of... was it November of '78? The hostages. Or was that '79?

*Q: That was later. It was just a year before the new election. It was one thing that defeated Carter.*

JOHNSON: That's right. That was in '79. He would call up and want to talk about something and I would go in. I went in quite frequently. I would go in alone. I'd drive up and go in. I remember one morning I was listening to the news. I like to play tennis, so I would go play tennis about three or four times a week at six o'clock in the morning. I'd play from six to quarter of seven and then come back and shower and listen to the Voice of America, the seven o'clock broadcast. One morning about quarter past seven they called from the palace and said the president wanted to see me. That there was something on the news that he didn't understand about American policy. I've forgotten what it was now. Do you remember?

PERSIS: No, I don't. I remember the night he called you and bawled you out.

JOHNSON: What?

PERSIS: Because something had come in the newspaper and he was insulted or something like that.

JOHNSON: Oh, it was in an American newspaper.

PERSIS: Yes.

JOHNSON: That's right. It was a Jack Anderson column. One of the sons of the former president, Sylvanus Olympio, is a businessman in France and London, but he also went to Princeton with Bill Bradley. There are people interested in the case and there are people who still are trying to get even and to have the old regime, the Olympio family. Togo has two areas, distinct areas, the north and the south. The southern part had been the part that was developed by the French and the Portuguese. There were many British and Portuguese trading posts there, and German, of course, because it had been German. But many of the people had Portuguese names. They went from Brazil and Portugal. So you have the Olympios, de Andrade, Madeiros, many of these names. These were the people that were fairer skinned, were educated, and had run the country, and had looked down upon the northerners who were less educated, had not been in commerce, didn't have the contact with Europe that the southerners did. Sylvanus Olympio, of course, and Grunitzky, his hand-picked successor, were in this Portuguese-type, almost mestizos. They were the light skinned, and looked down upon the north. Eyadema was from the Kabiyé tribe in the north. There was also a Ewe, E-W-E, tribe in the south that went over the border into Ghana. So you had the Portuguese-influenced ones, you had the Ewes, and you had the northern tribes, the largest of which was the Kabiyé. Eyadema had been an houseboy to an American missionary and so he went to a missionary school. He had an elementary school education, and then went into the army, was in the army under the French and was a sergeant. At the time of the coup against Olympio, he was a sergeant and was assumed to have led the coup and killed Olympio, but it's never been proven. You don't talk about that much. Except that Olympio's sons, one of whom is this businessman, they think it was he who was paying for the mercenary attempted coup against Eyadema, and periodic attacks upon him. They talked to Jack Anderson and there was a Jack Anderson column. I guess the president called me up one night and said what is this writing in the newspaper?

PERSIS: There was something else that came up just at that time. You thought he was trying to [express] one thing and he was going on and going on; he wanted to see you first thing in the morning. So you got all your papers together and went in there and it was entirely different.

JOHNSON: Entirely different, yes. I thought it was another article. It was the Jack Anderson column.

*Q: I suppose you had to then explain that we have a first amendment?*

JOHNSON: I explained it was a free press and we really can't influence it. I said what I would advise him to do would be to write or have his ambassador or somebody write a letter to rebut these things. I said that's the only way you can do it. I couldn't interfere. I told him that he had a right to write a rebuttal and take his chances to have it published.

*Q: I suppose it's very difficult for people with these forms of government to understand how anybody with the power of the US ambassador or US president can't just muzzle everybody.*

JOHNSON: That's right, because they can do it.

*Q: They can do it and you're more powerful. It must be very strange.*

JOHNSON: I know that when there was a lot going on with Chad, I frequently went to see the president because I was trying to do something, but the United States was not too interested in helping at the time. Although we had our communications. I think that maybe he went to a meeting down in Zaire and somehow we were able to send a message to our embassy for communication to the Togolese embassy there. So we were helpful in passing on messages.

*Q: Yes. I see. What was your staff? You had the staff when you were there, but you mentioned yesterday that you had another DCM.*

JOHNSON: Yes, when Brian's tour was up.

*Q: He wasn't there very long then, was he?*

JOHNSON: I guess he wasn't. It must have been only a year and a half. I didn't say anything about it. I didn't ask to have him removed.

PERSIS: You didn't ask to keep him.

JOHNSON: I didn't ask to keep him, either. He was very conscientious and was very thoughtful. He had not had that much experience in Africa, but he had been desk officer. I guess he had been in Zaire, I can't remember. He was not an outgoing personality. He was more what many people would think of as a stereotype of a State Department [officer] who thought he was better. As chargé and as DCM he thought that he could tell the director of Peace Corps and the PAO - we had established a small AID mission when I was there - that they should report to him. Of course they are independent agencies and liked to run their own programs. They resented him. I know the Peace Corps director was an outstanding man and he complained to me about it. I just tried to explain. But, as I say, I didn't ask for him to leave, but I didn't say he should stay on.

*Q: Did you have to speak to him about his [attitude]?*

JOHNSON: I think I did. I asked that he should be a little more understanding and although we wanted to have it coordinated, I wanted to have everybody working together. Having been PAO before and a member of the country team, I knew how you feel as somebody outside. But I always felt that we should work closely with State Department and when I was in USIA I always wanted to have very good relations. I don't like to have antagonistic relations with them.

From the other point of view, I recognized that they had their own programs but I wanted to know about them, and if any problems came up I wanted them to feel free to come and consult, and that I would want to know of any potential embarrassing situations.

*Q: Did you have the feeling that Brian, perhaps, felt that he, being an old-line FSO, should have had your job? Do you think he resented you?*

JOHNSON: I don't think that. He was young. He wasn't that old. I don't think he resented [me]. I think he thought that he knew more about Togo because he had been desk officer, but I think he recognized that I knew Africa too, and I spoke French a lot better than he did. He spoke some French. But my French, when I joined the agency I had to take the FSI test and I got a 4+4+. Even though I had been in the Soviet Union I was able to pick it up when I came back. I had no problem with French. So I knew African culture better and I knew the French language better than Brian. But I think he was quite sure of his knowledge.

*Q: Was he helpful to you in actual circumstances?*

JOHNSON: He was very helpful in getting me going. His wife was a fine person. We got along well. I wrote an honest OER. You're supposed to say where there can be improvement. I think I probably did say this [about] his personality in his dealings with other people. Then for his replacement they sent out some names. Then I learned that Irving Hicks was available. They sent his name out and there was no question that I knew him. I knew he was good with people. I knew he was excellent on administration and I knew that we would get along well together. We both shared the same viewpoint.

*Q: And you had known him?*

JOHNSON: I had known him in Bamako. He had been GSO [general services officer (administrative section)] and then he was budget and fiscal officer in Bamako.

*Q: A helpful man to have as a DCM.*

JOHNSON: Very helpful. He knew all the administrative details. He also had been an administrative officer in Berlin, so he knew how things should be done.

*Q: He was regular State Department Foreign Service.*

JOHNSON: State Department Foreign Service officer.

PERSIS: We had a wonderful relationship.

JOHNSON: It was great.

PERSIS: But going back to where you were having everybody working on a team. One of the things I remember Marilyn saying [when] we were flying down to Togo. You arrive in the middle of the night. It's a strange experience to be coming in as an ambassador. She said, "If there's one thing I want to accomplish it's something that everybody speaks about but I've seldom seen, and that is to have every agency, every department work together and work with each other." She accomplished it.

JOHNSON: We had a very good team. Outstanding people. Very fine.

*Q: If that's what you were after, I can see how Brian's mannerism might jar things.*

JOHNSON: It did. There was an antagonism and they would come to me, as I say. And that's not right.

*Q: You had country team meetings once a week?*

JOHNSON: Yes, we did. Everybody came over to [the embassy.] We had them in my office.

*Q: You held them on collegial lines?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. We all sat around in a circle and I don't think I had any one seat, but when people came, we would gather together. I would tell them anything that had come in on cables that they might not have seen and then asked them what was going on in their departments. If we had any reports to write, would ask for their input so that we would reflect everybody's viewpoint and not just mine and the DCMs.

*Q: I suppose from the intimations that you let drop about Russia, having seen how negative it can be, the competition and so forth, that that was high on your list of things to eradicate.*

JOHNSON: I suppose it was.

*Q: Because this would be your next post.*

JOHNSON: Yes.

*Q: It can be very destructive.*

JOHNSON: Oh, it could be. There is such a thing as creative tension, but I don't think you need sniping at one another. Each person, each member of the country team had his or her own agency or unit to work with. Each person respected that. We worked with USIS, helped Peace Corps, and I worked very closely with Peace Corps.

PERSIS: I remember the PAO there. We've remained friends, again. He said when he heard that a USIA person was coming to be ambassador, he was very apprehensive. He felt that she could possibly be taking over [his agency.]. She would know how it should be run and she might be very autocratic about it. But he has since more than once told us it was the high point of his career. Because he saw how an embassy should work. How they all can help each other, each area.

JOHNSON: He is an outstanding PAO. We were fortunate in having very good people. He is really a topnotch one. I was interested and would ask him about the programs, but they were his programs.



PERSIS: He's a great humanitarian. He said that Marilyn demonstrated to him that you could be a decent person and still be successful. Which I felt was an outstanding compliment.

*Q: Absolutely.*

JOHNSON: He wrote recently. Somebody wrote a slanderous letter accusing him of plotting against the government. I got a call from the foreign minister about this. I said he and I will come over. So we went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and talked to the foreign minister and found out what it was. I just stood up for him. I said he has done everything to improve relations between Togo and the United States and he has been working assiduously at that and this allegation is completely out of line.

*Q: You backed your people.*

JOHNSON: I backed him up. He wrote in a letter this past year, "I remember a certain ambassador who saved a certain PAO's neck."

*Q: That's wonderful. It's the way it should be.*

PERSIS: He could have been run out of the country.

*Q: Certainly he could have. It's happened before.*

PERSIS: But he did do an awful lot. Everybody said what a difference there was in the programs.

*Q: Of course that would be sort of a soft spot in your heart, wouldn't it?*

JOHNSON: Yes. But also Peace Corps was a soft spot in my heart. I went to dedications of schools. Got extra money, the ambassador's self-help fund. We got extra money each year for them to build, have projects.

*Q: Where did you get the extra money?*

JOHNSON: At the end of year funds in State. We always had projects written up and defended, justified, in order to take any money that was available and then we could carry them out.

*Q: What about leader grants?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, we had a lot of leader grants. When it was a minister I asked to be able to talk with the minister. I met all of the leader grantees, anybody on the exchange program. I asked to meet them before they left, to receive them in the office, and then to see them when they came for the debriefing.

PERSIS: Very often you had a dinner for them.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, we had dinners for them.

*Q: Now who runs that in an embassy?*

JOHNSON: USIA.

*Q: That's what I thought. USIA runs it.*

JOHNSON: But the ambassador signs the letters of invitation. USIA does all of the work. There's a mission committee, an IV [important visitors] committee and usually it's chaired by the DCM. But it's the cultural affairs office, if you have one, and a large enough one, who runs the IV program and calls meetings. You have a couple of meetings a year with representatives from every agency and every unit within the embassy, the political, the economic. You remind them about what the goals are and the type of person that you want to have. There are qualifications and the type of programs which are offered. Now we have group projects. They found it's more economical and sometimes professionally more effective to have a group project there. They can be regional or multi-regional projects. These are on themes that usually are repeated each year. For a while there were Women in Development. That was one of the themes. Usually there are projects for journalists. There are projects for press and television. And there are projects for legal experts, like supreme court. Well, they would be individual.

*Q: So you bring over, say, legal experts of a country or of a set of countries?*

JOHNSON: You have people or school administrators that fall within a certain category from different countries come to the United States to participate in a group project in the United States. As I say, they can be regional or multi-regional. These come under different rubrics. Usually it's something that we're interested in. We had some for human rights at that time.

PERSIS: I also remember the justice department, the judges and also parliamentary people.

JOHNSON: You have a parliamentary delegation. But that usually would be a one person. Then there are always programs in the making of American foreign policy showing the domestic, and projects for editors. Economics, we have projects in economics.

PERSIS: Ann, you must get this from each one... you must know all this?

*Q: I do, but I don't ask everybody the same thing.*

JOHNSON: No, because I'm USIA.

*Q: Exactly. She's the only one I've had in USIA, you see. Other people, for example if somebody has been an economic officer, then I home in on that. If it's a political officer I home in on that. But I've been very anxious to meet you because you're the only USIA person I have, and that would be your emphasis.*

JOHNSON: And I know these leader grants. We used to call them leader grants. It's called the International Visitor Program now and the leader grants. We do try to identify young people or mid-career people who have the potential for rising to policy-making positions in the government. If you can identify them when they're young and let them come to the United States to see the American system, then when they rise, you've made your contact. Your successor - usually it's not you who reaps the benefit, but a successor later on that does.

*Q: It may be ten years down the road. The trick, though, is to pick out the comers.*

PERSIS: Marilyn was very successful at that.

JOHNSON: You think so?

PERSIS: Yes, because I know in looking and seeing who rises to the top in countries, you'd say we saw him, we got him. It's been very interesting to see the percentage.

*Q: Yes, indeed it is. How many would come from one country say, if you were?*

JOHNSON: Each country has an allocation, an IV allocation within USIA. They will give you \$100,000 from one country. Usually the average is about \$5,000 for one, or \$6,000 for an individual, paying everything. The international transportation and the fees, the domestic [costs.]. From Togo we probably had only about four or five a year. From Pakistan we had seventeen or eighteen. In China they have a hundred. In Japan they have about eighty or so. So it depends upon the importance of the country.

*Q: If you have any money left over then you can perhaps get hold of some of it?*

JOHNSON: At the end of the year also. In fact, when I was in Pakistan they called me up in the middle of the night. They called me up one time saying they had some money and do we have any projects? I scurried around and got a couple of very good ones.

PERSIS: Marilyn always has the programs written up and the justification for them in case there's any money left.

*Q: Yes, because you have to spend that money before the end of the fiscal year.*

JOHNSON: This year they're saying, "Don't spend it, turn it back. The government needs the money." Now we supplemented these through other programs. The agency gives money to say, Operations Crossroads Africa. This is mainly USIA that does this. I just met the people when they came. When people representing different groups would come to Togo, I would want to meet them.

*Q: Now what's that program?*

JOHNSON: Operations Crossroads. That takes young African leaders. Again it has a special summer program for young people that work mainly in youth and sports or they had some for

working with fish culture, different programs, journalism, among the younger [people]. They wouldn't be perhaps up for the IV grant, but the younger youth groups.

*Q: And you send them to the US for the summer?*

JOHNSON: Yes they come under a program which is arranged by Operations Crossroads Africa. In other places you have the American Field Service, AFS, and we work with them.

*Q: That's private.*

JOHNSON: That's a private one, right. But it also probably receives some government money.

*Q: Does it?*

*Were you able to participate in sports at your post?*

JOHNSON: Yes, I played a lot of tennis.

*Q: Which tennis courts did you use?*

JOHNSON: There was a club, Cercle Sportif; it was the tennis club. Togolese tennis club. I played with the Togolese people. It turned out that the assistant librarian in our USIS library, the cultural center library, also was a tennis pro. He knew a lot of people in the sports world. We got to know a lot of the ministers who were interested in sports through him. I played with him. I took a lesson, what they call a "moniteur." You play every morning and try to improve your game.

I would play tennis from 6 to 6:45, come back and take a shower and listen to the VOA news at 7 while I was having breakfast. And would be in the office before 8 in the morning. The first thing you do is read the traffic, if any cables have come in earlier. You meet with the DCM very informally, you know, our offices are across the way, and talk about anything that is, any reports that are due. There's a human rights report. They have a CERP reporting program [Comprehensive Economic Reporting program] for different times of the year. You have to send in economic reports, and reports on communist activities, the political reporting anyway.

I would meet with certain key people in the embassy about what they were doing, their programs. Then there might be an American businessman who was coming, or a group of women leaders that was working with African women coming that I would want to meet with. Occasionally there were calls. When you first come in you make your calls on other ambassadors in the country and on the ministers in the government. Usually rather than a routine courtesy call, I would prefer to have some piece of business to talk about with a minister. So I would try to, before I called on the minister, so as not to waste his time and my time, I would have something to discuss that would be of bilateral interest. You have these calls to make occasionally. Or for instance, if there were going to be a meeting of the World Health Organization and they wanted to know who the Togolese delegates were, then I would talk to the minister of health, go over and chat with him and try to find this information.

A typical day would be perhaps a call on a minister about something, labor, we were working with ILO at the time and trying to have them see our point of view. If the Americans are supporting a certain candidate for a position, we would try to express the advantages of our candidate to the person who was going to be representing Togo at the international meeting. There might be another ambassador when you'd have a farewell call. Or, as I said, the British high commissioner in Ghana might be coming to pay calls on ministers in Togo. He would usually come to see me first to know what was going on and I would brief him on the political situation in Togo at the time. In a case like that I would invite him and his wife to lunch, and perhaps another colleague from our embassy and somebody from the business community. There wasn't a large American business community there.

*Q: You had a lot of luncheons, did you? Did you find that was a good working tool?*

JOHNSON: Yes, it's a good working tool.

*Q: How long would your luncheon period last?*

JOHNSON: Usually we would have lunch from one, about an hour and a half. Then you'd get back to the office at 2:30 or 3 in the afternoon. Then again in the afternoon there might be the Peace Corps, planning a dedication of a school that they had built and they'd want me to go. Or I had an idea of a project. I was very interested trying to get them into solar energy, passive solar, because there was so much sun there and they needed hot water for their maternités. I worked very closely with a professor of physics at the University, l'Université du Benin, in Togo. He might come in to talk about a project or some materials that were needed on one of these solar... We got a grant for him from some energy community to build with local materials, to build water heating units for the dispensaries where maternités, where women give birth to children.

PERSIS: Also the vaccines to have refrigeration.

JOHNSON: That's right. We were working on that, but that was people from the Center for Disease Control, CDC, in Atlanta, Georgia. There would be visiting Americans, you know.

PERSIS: Sometimes the Togolese would come in. Remember Sister Catherine and Sister Rosalie?

JOHNSON: They were two nuns that were building a chapel. They didn't have a dispensary up there, did they?

*Q: Yes. Missionary type?*

JOHNSON: Yes. And American missionaries. I tried to get out and visit all of the American missionaries in the country.

PERSIS: And the Peace Corps.

JOHNSON: Of course Peace Corps. Then usually there would be cables to send during the day. Usually I was in the office until about 6 or 7 at night catching up on all the paperwork. Because I preferred to talk to people during the day when they're available, rather than spending my time reading and writing. I preferred meeting people, discussing projects with them.

*Q: So you were very active out in the field. Catching up on paperwork and then a seven o'clock dinner?*

JOHNSON: Then seven o'clock we'd go home. Usually if I were having dinner we would invite people at 7:30. Sometimes I came in with a guest. We would have something.

*Q: Most of your evenings were taken up with representational stuff?*

JOHNSON: I would say maybe four out of seven were representational.

PERSIS: Plus dinners that she had to go to.

*Q: Yes.*

JOHNSON: No, I don't think four out of seven representational, but they would be either at my place or at another ambassador's residence. When the PAO had things I would go. Whenever Peace Corps or AID or USIA had an event and invited me, then I would go to those.

*Q: Now as far as running the house goes, did...*

JOHNSON: Persis ran the household.

*Q: Isn't that wonderful?*

JOHNSON: She was marvelous.

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*Q: This fourth interview with Ambassador Johnson took place at her home in Washington, DC, on Sunday, December 7, 1986. Also present was her sister, Persis.*

*We were discussing events in Togo while you were there.*

[During the discussion newspaper clippings are referred to.]

JOHNSON: Yes, in 1978. These cabinet changes occurred soon after I had arrived there, so I did not know any of the earlier ones, but I worked very closely with the minister of finance, Tibi Benisan, and I knew Anani Gassov in commerce and industry. But the fact of the cabinet changes was not important to us. Of course, we were aware of the security and exchange commission accusing Grumman of paying for the sale of some of the Gulfstream planes and we just tried to handle it as part of our democratic government. The government of Togo was upset

about it. They didn't like to have it come out in the newspapers, but we told them that that was part of our democratic system and a free press, and we could not influence them at all. They often wanted us to cut stories. We said we couldn't do anything. This Moussa Baki Bari, appointed minister of mines and energy, I worked closely with him, trying to help with solar energy. You know they have no oil. The president kept thinking there was oil offshore. Some American company had found some at the height of the oil shortage and the OPEC rise in prices. He had a bottle of crude oil that he showed me [that] proved that it was down there. We kept trying to get American companies to develop it because they needed oil and with the British they had built a refinery there, but they had to import oil from Nigeria for the refinery. So I was working with Moussa Baki Bari on energy projects. We had invited him to come as an International Visitor to the United States; I think he could not come. We worked very closely with Mr. Ahmed Denyato, minister of information, with him with all of our Peace Corps projects and with our USIS projects. I knew him well. With the arrest of the alleged plotters, there, I think, I did have something to do. I haven't read through the whole thing, but before I went to Togo... First of all, going back to Nancy Rawls' time, a secretary at the embassy had known a Togolese military officer, and he was then accused of plotting against the government and poor Nancy had a hard time because she was accused of supporting the plotters. There were not good relations between Togo and the United States because of this. What they believed was the United States...

*Q: It was her secretary, was it?*

JOHNSON: I don't know that it was her secretary, but it was a secretary in the embassy. Then the next ambassador who preceded me...

*Q: Ron Palmer?*

JOHNSON: Yes. What was the first name?

*Q: Ronald.*

JOHNSON: That's right, Palmer, was at a time when there was a dramatic change because this plot, that had been hatched partly in Great Britain and people training in Ghana to come and overthrow the government, took place when he was there. The British got word of the plot. They had no ambassador in Togo. The high commissioner in Ghana was also accredited to Togo. They asked if the American ambassador could let the president know about this plot that they had uncovered and that there might be a coup against him. So he was very grateful to the ambassador of the United States for warning him and they were able to thwart the attempted coup. Many of these people, the military and other people who were implicated in it were in prison and they had some trials and everybody was afraid that they were going to murder them as they had previously, some military people. Of course, President Carter's policy was for human rights. I spoke to President Eyadema and some of the others, saying that the American government was very interested in human rights and they thought that there should be a free trial and that justice should be carried out, but it would be done with the thought of human rights. They were condemned to death in absentia, many of them. Nobody was executed. I know that when I went to an inauguration of something, the president was going to be speaking in a town outside of

Lomé, I went and several people from the lawyers... and I've forgotten now what it was called, it was like a council... a couple of the women came up and embraced me and thanked me. They thought that the United States' intervention had helped so that there were no killings.

*Q: These were their relatives, I suppose.*

JOHNSON: Yes, but just the thought that justice went through a court and there were more or less legitimate judicial proceedings. They allowed a lawyer from France to come and defend some of them.

PERSIS: Also it was an open trial, wasn't it?

JOHNSON: That's right. We were saying that it should be. We sent somebody to observe it.

*Q: See the impact the United States has on the rest of the world?*

JOHNSON: Oh, it certainly does. That's right. You can see it today. Togo protested a Ghanaian execution. We didn't have much to do with that. Later on there was one in Liberia, I think they protested that, too. [Pointing to a clipping] This was the trial. Condemned to death, but they were commuted. Then the election, we didn't have much to do with that. A new constitution, we worked with the ministry of justice. It was a woman who was the minister of justice, then she was later appointed as a representative to the United Nations. We worked on closely with her.

*Q: On the new constitution?*

JOHNSON: Yes, we tried to. We didn't have much influence, but we did try to use the American constitution as a model.

*Q: I see. Were there any other events, that you can recall now from this distance of time, that stick in your mind, that you worked on?*

JOHNSON: There was one. At the time of Chad we were trying to work with the Togolese in bringing about a reconciliation between Hissén Habré [Chadian Minister of Defense] and Goukouni Oueddei [President of Chad], the principal rivals in the Chadian revolution]. The president of Togo was on a commission that met in Nigeria, and he would call me frequently to tell me what had happened. We were not a direct player in it, but an intermediary. Of course we were urging that the two get together and it be settled peacefully and that the Libyans be out. At that time we were showing Libyan implication in the invasion in the north and that the Libyans were very active. Their role had not been known at the time. I remember going in to see the president about that and showing him that there was active Libyan support of Goukouni Oueddei. We got him to speak out against the Libyan intervention there [A reconciliation accord was signed on August 21, 1979 calling for a transitional government and elections in 18 months, but fighting broke out again; and with the intervention of the Libyans the Habré forces were defeated].



The North Koreans were very influential, mainly in giving a lot... They were building a party headquarters and they had commissioned a lot of statues. It was about [three] generation[s], Stalin and then to Mao and then to North Korea. They had done many statues of the president all over Togo.

Here's the peace conference held at Togo. As I say we were trying to bring about a reconciliation between the two Chadian factions and had to keep the Libyans out of it. And May '81, a cabinet reshuffle. We just reported those, we had nothing to do with it.

*Q: No part.*

JOHNSON: The economy was catastrophic. That was after I left, no, no I was there in '81. No, I left in July and it was catastrophic. I can't think of... We were trying, as I say, to help with American investments. There was a time when there was a question of building a super phosphates plant there. There was an American company from Florida, and we were trying to get them to deal with reputable people, perhaps to have an American firm. They had a lot of intermediaries from other governments in the circle of the president. A lot of the ten- or fifteen-percenters that were trying to influence him. Unfortunately, they were active throughout Africa. And that is why you have a lot of steel mills and oil refineries and other industrial adventures that...

*Q: That will never pay off. It just bleeds the country.*

JOHNSON: Bleeding as in Ghana. We were just trying to say, "Deal with a reputable American company and don't pay any fees because if it's a good company you won't have to pay a fee to anybody to get to do business with them."

*Q: Well, the thrust of your work, was it to help them economically, or was it perhaps to be a friend to them so that they would side with us at the UN?*

JOHNSON: It's more that. We were not trying to help. We were trying to have regional security from our political and security point of view. We wanted them to be active in regional security, and also regional security depends upon economic strength. We were encouraging them. There was what they call ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States. The headquarters of the ECOWAS bank was in Togo, and then the political one was in Lagos. We were supporting their participation in these regional organizations and trying to have some type of a... They were hoping that they could have a military component to the ECOWAS group so that they could act against, I guess, adventurous people taking over other governments in the area. We were working in the economic field to have them try to build up their agriculture. The main thing was in the marketing. AID didn't do much at that time on the market roads, but we were building something on water, so that they could have water in the northern areas. The Peace Corps was doing a lot on roads in the cocoa region. A girl that we met when we went up to the inauguration of a road that she had done in the cocoa region was visiting us at the time of the 25<sup>th</sup> reunion of the Peace Corps. It was really Peace Corps that was helping.

*Q: You mean she led the people to...*

JOHNSON: Yes, she did. She got them organized along with an engineer from the government. But she mobilized. It was the human resources that she was mobilizing, people to go and dig the gravel and pan it and clear the road.

*Q: Really!*

JOHNSON: That's right. Then when the heavy equipment was available they would have the manpower. Now she's working training the volunteers for the fish pond project.

*Q: Still in Ghana?*

JOHNSON: She's here in Oklahoma where they have many of the projects for Peace Corps. We were trying to help them help themselves, basically in agriculture, and to adopt a reasonable pricing policy based on market prices. At the beginning the African governments had adopted more or less of a socialistic system where they would buy, they would set the price, and if the price was low the farmers just wouldn't bother to cultivate the crop. We were telling them to let the market determine the prices and then the farmers would grow what they knew best to grow. We were in that way trying to help them economically.

PERSIS: What was the project that the former priest, the water project...

JOHNSON: That was a small one. We were working with small water projects.

*Q: What sort of things? Do you mean wells or...*

JOHNSON: No, for clean water for the villages. To capture the water and bring it down into an area where they could get it without passing through a lot of...

*Q: Did they pipe it down?*

JOHNSON: Yes, it was piping it from a clean spring down to a place where there would be a public fountain. Those were the natural ones that the Peace Corps were working with. The AID one was a million dollar project for digging deep wells, like artesian wells in the rocky strata. We worked with, as I say, mostly the Peace Corps, in building dispensaries and schools.

*Q: Oh, dispensaries and schools, too?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

*Q: Now where were the people trained to work in the dispensaries?*

JOHNSON: They had their own ministry of health and they trained the people.

*Q: They have a medical school?*

JOHNSON: Yes. They have a medical school at the university. They have a hospital. The French had established those. Ours were to make sure that Togo stayed pretty much in the western camp, that the Soviets and the North Koreans didn't gain any more influence, and also Qadhafi, as I say, at that time was an adventurer in Africa. As you had mentioned, that it vote with us in the United Nations. Many of our demarches were about upcoming votes in the United Nations, and electing people. When I left, Togo became a member of the security council, one of the temporary movable seats, and so then they voted with us a lot. Jeane Kirkpatrick went out to visit Togo. They appreciated the good relations that we had.

*Q: When you make a demarche like that, are you always instructed by the department before each one of them?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. That's right. They let us know what vote is coming up and then we talk with the foreign minister or somebody in the foreign ministry and at times with the president if it's important enough.

*Q: Did you feel you had appropriate backstopping in the department?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. The department was very good. We always had very good desk officers. The office of West African affairs, they're very good people. Tom Smith was in there at the beginning, and then Parker Borg.

*Q: What about the constitution you mentioned before? Did they in fact finish the constitution, and if so, how did it turn out?*

JOHNSON: No, they put in a new constitution but actually... I'm beginning to mix it up with Pakistan because we were working on Pakistan with a constitution and they wanted the older one of 1971. They did put in a constitution. We were encouraging them to have open elections. Of course it's a one party system and we were saying there should be some opposition voices allowed and freedom of the press, but there wasn't too much freedom of the press. They controlled the newspaper and of course radio and television were government owned.

PERSIS: They were starting to have more than one candidate, Marilyn.

JOHNSON: They did, not for the presidency, but they had more candidates for the... They started a new house of delegates - I've forgotten now what it was - but they had a sort of bicameral legislature, but it was an advisory capacity rather than an action organization. But they were bringing people in and I knew some of the delegates from the north, and the women, of course. There were some women that came in. We invited some of them to come on international visitor grants. We were trying to have more representation from the people and open elections.

*Q: Of course that takes a great deal of time.*

PERSIS: That's right. But there seemed to be movement.

JOHNSON: There was some movement.

PERSIS: The words were there.

*Q: That's good.*

PERSIS: There was more than one candidate I remember that seemed to be quite a step.

JOHNSON: That was a breakthrough when they would have more than one candidate.

PERSIS: Although it wasn't from a different party, but nevertheless...

*Q: Never mind, it was two people. It wasn't all cut and dried. I know what you mean. What other diplomatic colleagues did you see a great deal of?*

JOHNSON: I saw a lot of the French. The French ambassador was, of course, the most influential because France was still controlling the commerce and just about everything else. Every year they had a meeting of their African ex-colonies and France was the most influential. I saw the French ambassador quite frequently. And the West German ambassador. We were all very good friends. And the Tunisian, since I had been in Tunisia before and had known it. We worked closely with the Tunisian ambassador. The Nigerian... they had no ambassador at the time, but a chargé d'affaires. They were always going to name an ambassador but they hadn't at the moment. And the Zairean, the dean of the diplomatic corps when I arrived was the ambassador from Zaire, so socially we saw him. We would talk about UN matters.

It was interesting because I arrived in November of '78 and at that time the Chinese was the dean of the diplomatic corps. I decided that I would like to pay a call on him as the dean. We didn't have relations and I wouldn't have visited because of that, but I thought things were beginning to change and it would be a good idea to call on him and see if we could work together. So I did. He was a little bit nonplused when I wanted to see him because we didn't have the relations. I explained that I was calling on him as dean of the diplomatic corps. He was very friendly, in a way protocol-wise took it in. We had the tea and all. It was interesting to see it, to get inside the compound in the first place and see how they ran. Then I was having a dinner in, it must have been January of '79, for the Tunisian ambassador who had just arrived. I sent an invitation to the Chinese and I didn't get any response, but when diplomatic relations were established between China and the United States on the first of January, they knew about it a little bit earlier, we all did. As I say, at first I had no answer to the invitation and then when we knew they were going to be established, immediately I had a call that yes, the ambassador was coming, and his wife and they would bring an interpreter.

PERSIS: They called the day before after no reply.

*Q: And you rearranged your table, I suppose?*

JOHNSON: It was always flexible. So they came and were very friendly and then they came and wanted to borrow films. Told them about USIS and they went to the library and they borrowed a lot of films. I invited them to see some films at the residence when we had the showings for

diplomats. Then they started to show films at their embassy and just took over from us. They were very friendly, and they invited us to their embassy.

*Q: What about the Russians? Did you have anything to do with them?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I did, because I spoke Russian. I had been in the Soviet Union, and there was a new ambassador who came just after I did so that we sat next to one another at the diplomatic functions. It was odd the North Korean was on one side and the Russian was on the other. The North Korean would not even smile, you know. We weren't supposed to talk with them. The Russian didn't speak much French so when he was there without an interpreter - he didn't speak any French - I would do the interpreting for him. He was an older Russian, diplomat. We got along fine and we exchanged visits and spoke Russian.

PERSIS: His wife was very friendly.

JOHNSON: His wife was very friendly. They were the old school. They had some very bright young ones there.

*Q: Training them, I suppose.*

JOHNSON: I think so. They had been in France, you see. They were well-dressed and spoke French. We had good relations with the local embassy there.

*Q: You did, didn't you?*

JOHNSON: And there were times when we had to work together on some things. There were some issues in the United Nations that the Soviets and the Americans were together on, the nuclear energy.

PERSIS: I think also it was very basic to Marilyn is to be friendly and human to all people.

*Q: Exactly. Yes. It's coming through.*

PERSIS: To try to make bridges.

JOHNSON: I feel that you have to talk with them in order to have any influence.

PERSIS: But I can remember with the North Korean, he wouldn't even look at Marilyn. They went to some church function, the president...

JOHNSON: Yes, he has something every year as an interdenominational thing, held in the party headquarters auditorium. Each one speaks, the Catholic, the Protestant, the Muslim.

*Q: Is there a rabbi?*

JOHNSON: No. There was no rabbi there. At the end the Catholics join hands and say everybody join hands and pray for peace or something. I offered my hand to him and he looked behind to the interpreter to see if he should take it or not. He didn't of course. You crossed hands.

*Q: And he didn't take it?*

JOHNSON: No. [Laughter]

*Q: So there you were with your hand out clutching nothing. You mentioned the time [the Chinese] was coming with their interpreter. Are these formal seated dinners you're talking about?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

*Q: What do you do with the interpreter?*

JOHNSON: You seat him. He has to sit next to the...

*Q: At the table?*

JOHNSON: I sat him at the table.

*Q: Because sometimes they sit them behind.*

JOHNSON: Yes, they sit them behind.

*Q: And then they don't eat. Poor souls.*

JOHNSON: We would put him at the table, yes.

PERSIS: He would always sit behind the ambassador. The ambassador was an older man, and his wife, they were very grandfatherly and grandmotherly.

*Q: What about your relationships with the other members of the government? You had spoken of your good relations with Eyadema.*

JOHNSON: I worked closely somehow with the minister of commerce and industry. We were working perhaps in our AID project and he just seemed like a very good honest one that was trying to do things with small industry. He wasn't in on any of these deals for the steel mill and the refinery. He was trying to build up the grass roots industries, and I think there was something. Yes, there was a project. He was a councilor from Lomé II, an area just outside of Lomé. They built a chapel. I think Ron Palmer had something to do with building a chapel and he wanted it to be named for him or something. I went to talk with him about that. Then we were talking about the small projects the Peace Corps could help in.

Also there was, I remember now, too, an American businessman who seemed to me had an offer that would be good for this American businessman and for Togo because somebody had sold them an Italian cashew nut processing factory that was built and they didn't even have any cashew nuts industry. They grew cashews in Benin and they were planting them. [A factory that] this man, small businessman, said was very advanced, one of the most advanced factories for cracking and processing and roasting the cashew nuts. He had a lot of cashew holdings in Belize. They had some of the best cashews in the world. They didn't have the factories there for processing them. He thought that he could make money by getting barges and towing barges of raw cashew nuts across the Atlantic, have them processed inexpensively in Togo and packaged, and then re-exported for sale. It sounded to me like a very good deal. I didn't see how it could be so profitable for him, but that he could advise them on developing their own cashew production. I worked very closely as I say, the minister was honest but there were people underneath that always wanted a payoff, and we were saying "No. This is something good for you." I kept trying to work with the minister. He would say yes and then there would be some snag that came up. I don't think it ever came through. But I got to know him on that because it would have been - I was always looking for something that was mutually beneficial - this would have been beneficial to them.

*Q: You mentioned the chapel they were building?*

JOHNSON: It was a school or a chapel or something. It just never got done. It had been started before. I followed through on it and they wanted the inaugural thing with the name on it.

*Q: For Palmer?*

JOHNSON: For Palmer, yes, but I think it was a Peace Corps project and he wanted his name on it. It never was done when I was there and Ron came out and I arranged for him to go out to the place and meet with all of the people and try to push it through. Again, things go very slowly in Africa.

*Q: Yes, a lot of things are aborted, I suppose. Just the weight of the bureaucracy, the red tape?*

JOHNSON: I think it is, that's right, and then, of course, some of it is unless it's important to the person financially or for some power play, they're not interested in doing it. They'd rather do something else where they get a little bit of a payoff.

*Q: Yes. Did you have many consular problems?*

JOHNSON: We had a few. I think we had a sailor one time. We had very good relations with the police and the intelligence there.

*Q: I suppose you didn't have a very active visa section?*

JOHNSON: No, but we did work out something while we were there. We were trying to encourage businessmen to go in both directions. We worked out a protocol, a reciprocal visa thing for them, so that American businessmen and Togolese going back and forth did not need

visas for stays of up to three months, I think. Businessmen would complain they couldn't get a visa in time. So we did work out this and we had a consular agreement so that tourists... They were also very interested in building up their tourism. They looked upon that as a money earner for them. So we said tourists and businessmen for up to three months didn't need a visa to enter Togo. Now everybody has to have a visa for the United States but we had something whereby it was routinely done.

*Q: A routine thing. I see.*

JOHNSON: Then we'd give them multiple entry visas.

*Q: Did you have a two-man consular [office]?*

JOHNSON: No, we had one consular [officer].

*Q: What about treatment by the press, the local press, which of course it was government owned?*

JOHNSON: We got excellent treatment. The United States was very important to them and any place I went, my picture would be in the paper. They'd report every time I went to see the president. We had identified a bright young man who had just come back from Paris. Actually it was the PAO, USIS, who had met him and said he seemed bright, and I met him, and he certainly did seem like a man who was on his way up. So we invited him for an international visitor grant. He went back and was later named minister of information. He was very friendly to us.

PERSIS: ...and it facilitated her ability to meet people and work well with them.

JOHNSON: I remember the first time I went in to see the president. He said to the interpreter, "We don't need you." Often if I were talking with him about something bi-national, then it was just he and I together.

*Q: Which is of course very important.*

JOHNSON: With the press they were very good, very pro-American. I never had to protest. They were anti-Soviet, too.

*Q: Were they?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. At that time Zbigniew Brzezinski [National Security Advisor to President Carter] was in and he had talked about the triangle from the Horn of Africa and all. The president picked that up right away, the president of Togo, Eyadema. He was conscious of the Soviet threat in Africa. I know the Soviets were joshing me all the time about the good coverage I got and the bad coverage they got.

*Q: You mentioned visitors before. Did you have very many visitors?*



JOHNSON: Not too many. When I was there the only big one from our government that came through was Dick Moose, who was the assistant secretary for Africa. Afterwards, as I say, when the UN was there and Madame Keke had gotten to know Jeane Kirkpatrick...

*Q: That was after your time?*

JOHNSON: After my time, yes.

*Q: How long did Dick stay?*

JOHNSON: Dick stayed only overnight and a couple of days, that's right.

*Q: Was he on an inspection tour?*

JOHNSON: He was going down to Lagos, I think. He came to Togo first. I accompanied him to Benin and then he went down to...

*Q: You didn't have CODELs?*

JOHNSON: No, we had one. Sensenbrenner came. He had had a Peace Corps volunteer as a roommate in college. He wanted to come out to see Togo. There are a very loyal alumni group of Peace Corps volunteers who had served in Togo and they like to go back and Sensenbrenner came with his wife early on when I was there. We met him and had a dinner for him, then he traveled up country. Togo is not that important to the congress and we didn't have any CODELs as such.

PERSIS: I remember President Eyadema wanted to come to the States and he would never get invited. When Marilyn left he thanked her and said he knew that she had worked hard to try to get him invited.

JOHNSON: But they have so many people that want to and he wasn't important at that time.

PERSIS: When they got on the right committee in the UN, then he came.

*Q: Then he came, yes.*

PERSIS: Which was nice.

*Q: Exactly. Most of your entertaining was official entertaining. Mostly with the local people, was it?*

JOHNSON: Yes, mostly, but also with the diplomats who were there. I tried to do it. We always had Thanksgiving and Fourth of July with everybody who was in the country, Peace Corps, and missionaries. I tried to go out and meet the missionaries, to know where they were throughout the country. Whenever somebody, a Peace Corps official, would come through, or AID official,

or--there weren't that many from State, but we had people to come out on different subjects. Then we would have locals, but also the people from the embassy and Peace Corps.

PERSIS: Marilyn has always done a lot of entertaining. But with a purpose. If an eminent doctor friend of ours came out then she would invite medical people from around the area. There was always a point to her entertaining.

JOHNSON: There was a focus to it.

*Q: A focus, so the guests were chosen.*

PERSIS: That's right. And a lot of people came out, not officials, so that there was always a reason to be having a dinner.

*Q: Tell me about the Fourth of July. What did you do on the Fourth of July?*

JOHNSON: The Fourth of July was a big [affair]. I remember one time we were having hot dogs. I grew up in Wollaston where Howard Johnson had his first ice cream stand, so I wrote to Howard Johnson's and asked if we could have the napkins and the holders for the hot dogs, whatever they had that would give an American touch. They said...

PERSIS: Oh, that was a fair.

JOHNSON: That's right. That was a charity fair, that's right, where we had hot dogs. But for the Fourth of July we would order them specially. We'd have hamburgers and hot dogs. We would have it on the grounds of the residence and they would be decorated of course, very nicely done. I would make a small speech.

*Q: This was for all Americans?*

PERSIS: There were two.

JOHNSON: There were two. That's right. We had one official one for the diplomatic corps and the government, where you invite just about everybody in the local government and the diplomats. That's right. That was when my speech was.

*Q: Was that at noontime?*

PERSIS: In the evening.

JOHNSON: It was in the evening because it was cooler.

*Q: That was sort of a reception?*

JOHNSON: A reception. An evening reception with food.

*Q: Really?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, lots of good food. They always thought they got very good food.

*Q: Is that right?*

PERSIS: By the time we left, they said that we had the best food in the [diplomatic community].

JOHNSON: Then we would have the same thing, hamburgers and hot dogs for the American community. People would bring things, too. They would bring casseroles.

*Q: Pot luck?*

JOHNSON: Pot luck, but we would supply the basics, the salad, the hamburgers and hot dogs, and rolls, and drinks.

PERSIS: This was for the American community.

*Q: This was for the American community. I gathered then you paid for that because if there were Americans you couldn't use official funds?*

JOHNSON: Oh, no, we paid for it.

*Q: You paid for that yourselves.*

PERSIS: The community helped a lot.

JOHNSON: But everybody chipped in.

PERSIS: But with the big reception, mostly the residents provided. We had a few good American wives who would help.

JOHNSON: But no, we did it. That was representational, too.

*Q: Then at Christmastime you had members of the staff?*

JOHNSON: At Christmastime we were mostly in Austria. We had friends there. We would have a party before we went but we weren't there at Christmastime.

*Q: But you mentioned Thanksgiving.*

JOHNSON: Thanksgiving we had a big one for all Americans at Thanksgiving.

*Q: I see.*

JOHNSON: And then we had something at Easter. Easter egg roll for the families. They would come and hide eggs around the residence garden. That's for the American community and the children.

*Q: It makes a big difference, a big difference if you have this kind of attention from the ambassador. Tremendous for morale.*

PERSIS: That's right. I can tell you that everybody said the morale was high. She won't tell you that.

*Q: I know it was.*

JOHNSON: They had a good group. They had a very nice group.

*Q: I've heard that from other sources. The last time we left off I had asked you about running the house and you said Persis ran it.*

JOHNSON: Persis ran it, right.

*Q: So I'm going to ask Persis. Tell me about that. What would you do, make out lists for the food and plan for the week? Or how did you run the house?*

PERSIS: Just as you would run your house. You know that you're going to have a dinner and you make out your menu and cross-reference it so that you don't have the same food for the same people. You just have to be very flexible with menus because things wouldn't be in the market.

I think one of the driving forces for Marilyn is to be helpful. She tries to bring people together with mutual aims and to be helpful. And also in Togo, because it was a small country, she saw the waste of these huge steel mills. And that would be Americans who came over and try to sell them things. What do you do? You also know that some of these people are absolutely no good.

*Q: I know.*

PERSIS: You cannot come right out and say it. She worked very hard to get small grass roots things like clean water for the villages. To get small projects by AID. AID isn't very happy with the small projects. They spend millions.

*Q: I know. They're great empire builders, too.*

PERSIS: That's right. This was a continual battle. The only battle she had in the embassy was with the AID section.

*Q: How much household staff did you have to help you?*

PERSIS: We had two very good men in the house who had been there before. We had a cook who was no good.

JOHNSON: Nancy Rawls had tried to fire him.

PERSIS: He had threatened the embassy and nobody else had the courage to fire him. Marilyn finally fired him, very shortly, not too long. Then we had our own man who'd been with Marilyn for 18 years.

*Q: Yes, he was with you.*

PERSIS: We tried to keep him in a low... not a low place, but...

*Q: Low profile.*

PERSIS: They wouldn't think he was taking over or anything. But when she had to fire the cook, at the time that he went, Emile could step right in. But we also hired another Togolese man to be in the kitchen, to help with things, so there was no loss of work.

JOHNSON: For the Togolese. I still paid our man out of my own personal income.

PERSIS: Then we had gardeners to take care of the place. You know the good people working for various Americans who can come in to help you when you need extra help.

*Q: Yes, of course. Chauffeurs, that sort of thing?*

JOHNSON: Bartenders, waiters, extra waiters and bartenders.

*Q: Did Emile do the shopping at the markets for you?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

PERSIS: Yes. He was very...

JOHNSON: He had a bicycle and he'd go off and shop.

PERSIS: When it was important [unintelligible]

JOHNSON: We had a small commissary there. I would do it. And then I would shop on weekends, you know.

*Q: What about sending away? Did you send away for food to Denmark?*

JOHNSON: Not too much, because you could get just about everything there. The French take care of their own people. I like to use American meals for entertaining, but I like to live off the economy myself for my own. We got frozen turkeys for the holidays. They came from America. Then we ordered the hamburger and the hot dogs for the Fourth of July from the States directly. There's a Puritan Meat Company, I think it is, that the embassies overseas order from.

*Q: I see.*

JOHNSON: There are several, but Puritan or Pilgrim, one of those sticks in my mind.

*Q: And they're flown in obviously?*

JOHNSON: No.

*Q: Refrigerator ships?*

JOHNSON: We'd order them in advance so that they could come in in refrigerator ships.

*Q: You have to think so far ahead, don't you find?*

JOHNSON: That's right.

PERSIS: But the embassy is very good. It has a memory sometimes and it would help you and say, "This is the time to order the turkeys." A notice would come out. I tried to work out schedules for when there were big affairs, when you have two or three hundred people or maybe more coming, to work out a schedule for the embassy, for the GSO to follow. A week beforehand you do certain things, and then each day what should be accomplished in order to have the thing run smoothly. I'm a firm believer that nobody is well dressed unless there's a lot of time and thought put into it. No affair goes well unless there's been a lot of time and thought put into it beforehand.

*Q: Right.*

PERSIS: And I would get very upset if things didn't go right, too.

JOHNSON: Ordering from abroad, the commissary did put in some special orders to Peter Justesen in Denmark occasionally for things.

PERSIS: But we really didn't do very much.

*Q: But your liquor obviously came from...*

JOHNSON: Yes, the commissary got that from... Previously there had been our own, what we called ECOWAS, but that was a large warehouse in Lagos that furnished all of the inland countries and along the coast. They had a big supply. They were closing out and so they were selling lots of wines and things. I stocked up a lot at the beginning. Bought cases of French wines. We did have some American but the French was so much better and I got some very good buys.

*Q: You had not been directed from Washington to use American wine?*

JOHNSON: No, well they were trying to and we had them in the commissary, but they didn't have such good ones. They had the Paul Masson there at the time. Now we have some excellent American wines. When we could get a good one we would serve it. But they were usually inferior, the ones that we had in the commissary. It was from the American one in ECOWAS that I bought the B & G. It's a very good French concern.

PERSIS: The thing was that these people, the Togolese as well as the diplomatic community, you don't serve them inferior things if you can find good ones.

JOHNSON: When I went to the presidency they had Dom Perignon champagne. I think I served Paul Masson champagne. No, I guess I got Heidseck. And Chivas Regal whenever you would go to a thing there. The scotch would be Chivas Regal, and Dom Perignon [for the champagne].

Actually I think the liquor I bought locally. There was a department store and we could buy it tax free. We had a card and were allotted a certain amount. Each person in the embassy had it. So I bought the liquor in the local store.

*Q: Did you go to the homes of your staff very often?*

JOHNSON: Yes. I'd be invited as a guest; Persis and I. But also when they had things I often went to the PAO's house, the consul's house, and we would go as friends to the admin officer's, and the GSO, and Peace Corps people. We'd set up a regional Peace Corps office when I was there. He would have us over there. And the secretary, Bill's secretary's home, the English teaching officer. Close community.

PERSIS: Marilyn always had people, she's always had people from her office to dinner and luncheons and various things.

*Q: You made certain that you included everybody at some point?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yes.

PERSIS: A new person came, he would be invited to dinner with the rest of the staff, and a personal dinner.

Q: Really?

PERSIS: Always. So that we'd have a chance to get to know the person.

*Q: And welcome.*

JOHNSON: Make them feel part of the family.

PERSIS: Marilyn's secretary, in fact, said something about the door of the residence, when Marilyn was there, it was open door, which is typical.

*Q: It makes a big difference. It makes a big difference to the staff whether or not they can feel close with their ambassador. Amazing the way people turn toward the office of the ambassador.*

JOHNSON: They can set the tone, you know, one way or the other.

*Q: They can set the tone.*

JOHNSON: I see that now in my work as inspector. Also the PAO in a large office, you see how the PAO can influence the morale so greatly.

*Q: How about the inspectors, did you have inspectors while you were there?*

JOHNSON: No, it came for the USIS inspection. That was all. We didn't have an inspection... We were getting ready for it at the end, because we were starting to do some of the paperwork. I think there was an inspection planned for the following year.

*Q: I suppose you were very interested in the USIS operation, weren't you?*

JOHNSON: Yes, but we had a very good man there and I didn't put my nose into his business. But I was very interested, of course, in the program. Everybody said at the beginning they worried about a USIS person coming to be ambassador. There had been other experiences that they tried to run it, and they treated USIS as theirs. But I tried to respect him and the IV program, he ran it. It was a missionwide effort. We all would propose people but I tried and I think succeeded because I had very good relations. We had an excellent person, as I say. He let me know that it was his agency. I looked at the cables and sometimes I would suggest something, but they were his cables that went out.

PERSIS: In fact he has very often said, we have remained friends with him, very often said that it was the high point of his career. He saw how an embassy could work with the ambassador bringing all this to bear. I think she had a very good relationship. He said he worried about it

JOHNSON: He was very worried.

*Q: You never know what you're getting.*

JOHNSON: But also, as I say, I was very close to the Peace Corps program. I met the man who was Peace Corps director when I was there came to Pakistan and we saw him again, and then I just saw him in South Africa. We had very good relations with Peace Corps. I think their program was so good in just people to people and in getting things done. I didn't have such good relations with the AID director because I wanted them to get going and do something. But it takes so long.

*Q: An awful lot of bureaucracy there.*



JOHNSON: And so many trips back and forth, people consultants. We had a self-help fund, you know. We always got extra money for it because we had very good programs for it. You can see, and the people can see, what America is doing for them so much more readily.

*Q: What about the school? Was there a local school?*

JOHNSON: Yes, there was a local school. I was an honorary something on the board. There were problems with the principal of the school and some of the people on the school committee, and I would have to mediate sometimes, but I never directly got into it. I would go to their graduation and speak if it was necessary. I would go to visit them and visit the classes. They'd invite me out. So I went and visited the classes and spoke with the students. Then I would go when they would have a fair or a game or something. I wasn't directly involved in the running of it, but I was aware of what was going on. We had some good people on the board and they made the change that I was worried about. But they wanted to do something. I guess they must have done it when we were on home leave or something. There were repercussions later on, but they were good people. I guess the principal came to me and was complaining about something. I would just try to mediate.

*Q: Was the principal one of the wives?*

JOHNSON: No, she was an American who had married a Togolese and was over there and had taught in the States and had a degree.

*Q: It's been my experience that the two points of the greatest problems at any post are the school and the commissary.*

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right.

*Q: How did you make out with the commissary? Did that run itself pretty well?*

JOHNSON: We had a very small one. It grew while I was there, and it ran. The GSO was in charge of it. We had a CLO, we had a family liaison officer and they hired somebody to run the commissary. We didn't have any major problems. We didn't have any scandals, luckily, and no strikes because it was so small. It's when you get bigger and they want a certain brand instead of another one. I guess our markup wasn't that big. Most of us were able to shop on the economy. Just when you wanted American foods, and as I say you wanted those for entertaining. Children like American food.

*Q: Did you have any problems with intra-mission rivalries at your post?*

JOHNSON: No, luckily everybody got along. There was some problem when I first went in. The first DCM I had was a younger officer who was trying to tell the older officers, heads of AID, USIS, and Peace Corps, what they should do and this and that. But they came to me, and you know, I got him to back off a little bit.

*Q: And you were able to keep the trouble down.*

JOHNSON: No, I think we worked very well together. AID was a little bit the odd one out because he was alone there without his family and was an individualistic person. But everybody worked together and with the other AID people that came in subsequently, we all got along well. There were no rivalries, not that I was aware of.

*Q: Good. That's fine.*

JOHNSON: There was unhappiness about the DCM trying to tell them what to do but that was before I came and we straightened that out.

*Q: Did you travel very much?*

JOHNSON: I traveled whenever I got a chance for a Peace Corps project, or something when there was a festival like a yam festival that I would be invited to. I went to many of the dedications of the schools, and the dispensaries, and the road one, and the festivals, and went up when the president was in northern - his home was in Lama-Kara, northern Togo. Every year they have... Their national sport is wrestling. The president had been a former champion of wrestlers. He would go up and the whole entourage like the court, would go up there, and so I went to that.

PERSIS: She did a lot of traveling.

JOHNSON: I traveled around because I like to see the country. I wanted to see the missionaries, the Americans who were there. There were a few businessmen in town and I knew them in Lomé. Then I visited the missionaries throughout the country.

*Q: Was there much cultural activity in the country?*

JOHNSON: Not much. The singing and dancing, that was the main thing. The traditional dances.

*Q: What about handicrafts and artwork?*

JOHNSON: They had a handicraft shop in Palimé that had been established, I think [by] the Germans originally. We had the Peace Corps working with them where they did carving and pottery and batik. There was an excellent artist, Paul Ahyi, but he was an individual and a sculptor and I knew him well.

*Q: Western?*

JOHNSON: Western, no, African themes, but he had been trained in Paris. He had mastered all of the techniques, but he had his own shows and they had a show at the school of architecture where he taught art and architecture. There was art in that sense. A very good individual. Senegal really has outstanding artists. This was a very nice art center in Palimé but we were trying to encourage it and it needed a lot more encouragement. Peace Corps, as I say, started it.

PERSIS: What was the show we went to up in the circle there, all the artists displayed. Was it all Togolese?

JOHNSON: In what circle, right close to where we were? Where Paul Ahyi's sculpture was?

PERSIS: Yes, it was in one of the big buildings there.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, there must have been an opening of some African grouping. It wasn't when the IMF was there, was it? Maybe. There was an IMF meeting in Togo when I was there. We worked with the Togolese on that. We had some American delegates and I had a reception for them.

It was interesting. There were some South Koreans that were in the IMF, bankers that were coming. The North Koreans were very upset because they felt that Togo shouldn't let... Togo hadn't recognized South Korea. At the time I was working with the government, too, saying that they should recognize South Korea as well as North Korea. The president knew that I was urging recognition of South Korea. He told me that he was having a terrible problem because the North Koreans were after him to not let the South Koreans come to the International Monetary Fund. But he said, no, it's an international meeting and they'll come. The protocol people at the ministry of finance, seeing a Korean name, put the Koreans on the same floor where there were some North Koreans. No, Korea can't be a part of IMF. Anyway they had some there. The North Koreans were incensed about it and they sent their people to be like bodyguards at the elevators, they were watching them all the time. There was an American Kim who was with Chase Manhattan Bank that came out and she was put on the floor with the South Koreans and all around them were the Americans. So they just went by name.

*Q: If the name is Kim, the chances are you are [Korean]. What did you do for recreation?*

JOHNSON: I played tennis. I would get up early in the morning. I told you about somebody who was a moniteur who would play with me, and then I played golf on the weekends.

*Q: I remember your talking about the golf. So you were able to keep yourself in shape.*

JOHNSON: That's what I miss here.

*Q: You have mentioned before the illnesses you had abroad, but were any of them specifically in Togo?*

JOHNSON: I had something that everybody gets there. It's a parasite.

PERSIS: Giardia.

JOHNSON: Giardia. I did have giardia there.

*Q: How do you spell that?*

JOHNSON: G-I-A-R-D-I-A. It's a waterborne infection. While traveling: the regional military defense attaché had a plane and he would come each year and we would get authorization to fly up. We visited the paratroopers' school and military. We would visit the military missions in the country. I went twice with the defense attaché. It's good for our mapping, to get to know the military, and also we started the IMET program, the International Military Education and Training Program. There was no military aid or security aid to Togo, but we did have a small military education and training program so that people would go to a command and staff college. We would invite outstanding ones. Then others would go to artillery school or something. We would have an opportunity to talk with the military afterwards.

*Q: Did you have a military attaché?*

JOHNSON: No, he was based in Monrovia, but he would come down. Then from Lagos one would come up. One was an air attaché. One time the military attaché was a naval man so he had a navy plane. The other time it was an air attaché, so we traveled. Then when I came back we were at Atakpamé, I think, and the governor had a reception and a lunch for us, and I foolishly drank a glass of water at the luncheon. They assured me that that water was very pure and all. You get a lot of good food with some spices in it and you need to drink something. After that I came down with giardia. I know where I got it. But normally I would drink beer or a soft drink rather than take the water when I was traveling.

*Q: I suppose you had to see that all the water was boiled and the ice cubes...*

PERSIS: They were well trained in the kitchen.

*Q: What about lettuce? Were you able to use lettuce? Did you use permanganate?*

JOHNSON: We did [use it.] We just washed it very thoroughly.

PERSIS: You had to wash it carefully. We had our own garden. Didn't we have a garden?

JOHNSON: I guess Prosper did start something. It was very good, the local produce. We'd go to the local market and get good vegetables.

PERSIS: We took precautions but were not...

JOHNSON: We didn't put it in permanganate. We just washed it.

*Q: In parts of the middle east they wash it in the sewers, you see, before they bring it to market and you have to use something otherwise you would be very, very sick.*

PERSIS: We were very fortunate that way.

JOHNSON: Then we had a ship come in while I was there. They wanted permission. The United States is always looking for places to have practice training sessions. We were able to get the Togolese to agree to have a landing session. We wanted a joint one. Because they have a military

agreement with France, as came out recently when there was another attempted coup - the French sent in their paratroopers and military people - they have an annual joint session with the French, because they have French military training for them in the army and air force. And the navy, too. I knew all of the French attaches for army, navy, and air force. But we were able to get permission because we had good relations with the French. They sometimes decide whether you can do something or not. They let us have the ship come in and it had landing craft on it. It was a marine and amphibious assault. We had an exercise where they rolled out of the ship and went in amphibious vehicles and then up on the beach and took a strategic site.

*Q: Did the Togolese take part in it?*

JOHNSON: The Togolese agreed to it, but they were watching it. Because they have the French, the joint maneuvers with the French, we couldn't get that, but we were lucky to get them to have this. It was on some land that the military had secured near the port. They were watching it and we asked them to go along with them and then we invited them on the ship at the time that the amphibious vehicles were leaving the ship. Then we went around to be there when they landed. That was a very successful ship visit. When this happens the families take sailors into their homes. They had the Handclasp where they give things. It's Operation Handclasp. I think Handclasp sounds AID but I think it's where they bring materials from the United States. It can be food, it can be whatever people donate, buttons, some of them were a lot of buttons. The crews of the ship volunteer to help the Togolese community. They would go to an orphanage and paint, or they would send the Seabees out to do something. So we'd find activities for that. Then we arranged soccer matches and basketball between the crew and local sports organizations. We were able to bring in the Navy band at the same time the ship came. We arranged a big concert at the party headquarters auditorium, the largest and best hall in Togo. Then I had a reception that night for the upper ones. It was very successful. It filled every seat in the house.

*Q: I can imagine.*

JOHNSON: We got a lot of good will for the American Navy.

*Q: What about the educators of the country? I suppose you got to know them?*

JOHNSON: Yes, I knew the minister of education first, because we had a lot of Peace Corps with them. We had a lot of programs. We sent him on an IV grant to the United States, too. The rector of the university, I knew him very well. He was in an international group of college presidents and we worked with them through USIS to establish a linkage between the University of Benin, which was in Togo, and the University of South Carolina's education department. They signed a linkage. Then we arranged for some Americans to come over and study in Togo and Togolese to study in the United States.

Then I worked very closely with a young professor of physics on a passive solar project where using local materials and some American photoelectric cells they could heat water for the maternités, the dispensaries where women had their children because it's essential to have a lot of hot water at the time. We got a small AID grant for him to oversee this project. Also we were

trying to get the compost pile to generate electricity to turn compost into energy and good clean fertilizer. We worked with him on that.

PERSIS: One of the big problems with the small dispensaries was the lack of electricity to keep their supplies refrigerated.

JOHNSON: For vaccines, actually. To use solar energy to run a refrigerator to keep the vaccines cold.

*Q: Was there pasteurized milk in the country?*

JOHNSON: There was pasteurized milk at a farm. The Germans had a dairy farm where there was some excellent milk. But generally people used powdered milk or they bought the French or German, and the Swedes put up a milk rehydration...

PERSIS: Reconstitution.

JOHNSON: Reconstituted milk plant while we were there. That was clean. But generally people used powdered milk or bought the French or the German milk that has been treated. It's not only pasteurized but treated to keep for a long time.

*Q: Maybe sterilized.*

JOHNSON: Sterilized, I guess. There was a German, started out as a butcher shop and ended up as selling just about everything. You could get good milk there, too.

*Q: Did the local people understand the necessity for refrigeration?*

JOHNSON: They don't have the means, most of them, and that's why they shop everyday. You don't keep meat, you cook it right away when you get it, and the fish. There was a big fish market. You cook that right away. So that usually they would consume everything. They would shop every day and then consume it that day. There was usually a big enough family that eats up whatever is left. They don't have leftovers to put in the refrigerator.

*Q: I gather from the way you've been describing your life there that you never had any problems with chief-of-mission loneliness?*

JOHNSON: Oh, I don't think so, no.

*Q: That can be quite a problem to a single woman but of course you had Persis.*

JOHNSON: I had Persis as a family, and then I was active socially.

PERSIS: Marilyn is very friendly and outgoing and meets people in the community very well. Even if I weren't with her, and I wasn't with her for a good many years, she never had any

problems. I think one of the things was she had such a wide variety and depth of interests. This opens up many contacts.

*Q: But I understand that there is a particular problem when one is chief of mission because one doesn't, in a sense, have any peers within the embassy. You can't discuss everything with the DCM, I'm sure.*

JOHNSON: Well, I think you can, just about. Maybe there were one or two things I didn't discuss with him, but I was fortunate. The second DCM, who came after I'd been there less than a year, was somebody I had known before in Mali. We had the same outlook on American policy and how to operate in Africa. There was no loneliness, we were talking all the time and I respected his advice. He gave excellent counsel and we worked well together. Then everybody else, each person was a good professional in his field, the Peace Corps, the AID, the USIS, and the other agencies.

*Q: This second DCM that is somebody you selected yourself?*

JOHNSON: I had a choice and I selected him out of the choice that was offered to me.

*Q: The first one was there when you came there?*

JOHNSON: The first one was there. He had been the desk officer and he was selected. They asked me if it would be all right for him and he knew more about Togo than I did. He came with high credentials from the office of West African affairs, so I said yes. There was no reason to say no. He was there before I arrived. Then when his tour was over I selected the second.

*Q: Who was with you until you left?*

JOHNSON: Yes, and then after.

PERSIS: As Marilyn would say she felt very free in leaving Togo because she knew any decision that Irving made would be one that she would make. It was a very good relationship.

JOHNSON: No, I had no sense of isolation or loneliness. I had good friends among the other ambassadors, the German ambassador, and the French, and the Tunisian. I played golf with the German ambassador and played tennis with the Tunisian and was with the French in many social things.

*Q: And of course when you got home, if it had been a terrible day you could always take it out on Persis. [Laughter]*

JOHNSON: That's right. I suppose.

*Q: When you left the post did you feel you had accomplished what you had wanted to accomplish there?*

JOHNSON: The only thing that I wanted to accomplish was maintain good, friendly relations with the country, and, as somebody who came from another agency, I wanted to have an integrated mission where we all worked together and we all had the same mission goals, each person trying to achieve them through his own programs, and I think I did. At least we had very good relations with the government when I left. And as I said they went on to become elected to the security council for one of the changing seats. I think that everybody was working very well together as a mission.

*Q: You say that within the mission your DCM eventually became an ambassador himself?*

JOHNSON: Yes, he did. Everybody else has gone up well. The Peace Corps went on to be an assistant director for a whole area. The PAO is now PAO in Senegal. He will move up to a major post I'm sure.

*Q: When you left the post, then, you didn't feel you were leaving any loose ends?*

JOHNSON: No, I don't think so. We had everything that was ongoing was up to date and there wasn't any unaccomplished project.

*Q: Good.*

JOHNSON: We had done our goals and set up everything for next year

**HOWARD K. WALKER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1982-1984)**

*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: Could you explain Togo's place on the African map and how it was at the time you went out there and then our interests in it?*

WALKER: Geographically where it is?

*Q: I mean the type of government and so on.*



WALKER: Togo had a dictatorship run by a guy who came to power by killing his predecessor in the parking lot of the American embassy while he was trying to escape and seek refuge there. Ruthless, dictatorial-

*Q: Who was this?*

WALKER: Eyadema. The country is very low in terms of U.S. interests. It's small. It has no important geostrategic location. It has no resources that are important to us. It's only importance at that time was that it was about to go on the Security Council, which meant it had a vote on the Security Council. It was about to have its moment in the sun. It promised for me professionally little greater important than trying to win that vote for the U.S. on the Security Council.

*Q: Who are the neighbors of Togo?*

WALKER: There is Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta at that time), Niger... It has those boundaries because of its curious colonial history. It was once a part of the German Empire along with what was part of British Togoland which now is part of Ghana. Half of the German colony of Togo was taken over by the British and half by the French after World War I as League of Nations mandated territories. The big issue was whether or not they would come to independence jointly. A vote was held and the British part went with as part of Ghana, and because French Togoland at the time was not given an independence option by France.

*Q: Had you been briefed by our delegation to the UN? This would have been under Jeane Kirkpatrick. Were you going out with a UN agenda?*

WALKER: Not a UN agenda, but an agenda of U.S. position on a number of issues that might come up at the UN. I did not have a meeting with Jeane Kirkpatrick before I went out. I met with her when she came out to Togo with a delegation, which is another very interesting story we'll get into later. But my instructions when I went to Togo as ambassador were, first of all, to try to explain as best I could the U.S. position on issues at the UN, some of which came up later while I was there. We had a big Peace Corps program there, and AID. I got briefings by those people in the administration of it. I developed from my reading of the files and talking to other people some ideas of my own of what might be done there a little bit better in both of those operations. The standard briefings from USIA, Commerce, DoD, and others. But mainly it was how to continue to pursue limited U.S. interests in this tyrannical country in a way consistent with human rights objectives, which were not all that high on the order of priority as they were given to me when I went out.

*Q: When you got out there and presented your credentials, how did your relationship develop?*

WALKER: The relationship when I presented credentials from the beginning was very good with President Eyadema. He began by telling me... This was at a time when the war in the Falklands was trying to be resolved.

*Q: Between the United Kingdom and Argentina.*

WALKER: That's right. He began by giving me a very long talk about the role of the blue helmets, the UN people out there, and the importance of the Falklands to Britain and a number of other matters. I was struck immediately - one by how well briefed this former military sergeant was, and by how much he wanted to get across to the new American ambassador and through him to the United States that he was a friend, he would be a friend on the Security Council. Just as one of my key objectives was to win Togo's support for our position on the Security Council, I'm sure one of his positions if he had been briefed by his foreign minister but he would know instinctively himself that, look, for two years, here is a card he can play with the Americans. He was playing that card from the very beginning of our meeting there. But I must say, I was also struck by how well he spoke extemporaneously on these matters. If I can jump ahead a bit, throughout my whole time there, this was a guy who was well informed about issues and spoke well about them. This view of him was capped when he and I were sitting in the Oval Office talking to President Reagan. One of the things I arranged was an official visit - not a state visit, but a lower ranked official visit. I think I brought this off because I had the great support of Ambassador Kirkpatrick at the UN and others in the Department because we were able to get... Togo's support of us in the UN for a number of things. I remember sitting in the Oval Office with Ronald Reagan and with Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam. Chet Crocker was there, as were some of the White House senior staff people. President Reagan welcomed him and took out several 3x5 cards and literally read from them. I sat there. I said, "Oh, my goodness. What sort of impression is this? The man can't speak off the top of his head. At least they're my suggested speaking points. I recognize them." Reagan literally did not glance at them and then summarize them extemporaneously. He read and put them down. Then Eyadema spoke from the top of his head on a tour d'horizon of things. I said to myself, "Here is this guy who never got beyond a sergeant, never got beyond grade school." He was a sergeant in the military. Okay, a sergeant who assassinated his predecessor, but a sergeant, who had this articulateness and this grasp of the things he wanted to present. He was a guy that I could talk to, but at the same time, he was a man who, as all successful politicians do, understood power. He understood how he got there and was going to make sure that he wasn't going to leave by the same route. So, a lot of what I had to do in winning his support for us at the UN as well as winning his support for some other things we wanted to do in AID and Peace Corps that I thought were good for Togo and the U.S. was based, as it is on these things, on a personal rapport. So, I saw him on a number of occasions. One of the things I did for him which won us some of these things was, he was very concerned about a plot from some Togo dissidents in Ghana to invade and overthrow him. He was convinced that he had evidence on this. There were some skirmishes - before I got there, while I was there, and after I left. But one of them concerned a person who he said was plotting against him. I asked him, "Do you have any intelligence on this that he could share?" One piece of intelligence was very useful. It concerned the person he suspected of plotting in Accra - and on a particular date. We knew from our intelligence that that person wasn't even in Ghana at that time. I was at an official dinner and I said to his Minister of Interior that I had something to mention. So, we went off to the side and I told him this. He went up to the head table, to the president, and told him. The president looked up and looked at me and gave a smile and was very reassured. He was very grateful for that intelligence not only because this guy wasn't there plotting against him, but also because it would allow him to evaluate better the accuracy of some of his own intelligence sources.

*Q: What were the population of Togo? Was it a tribal situation or was it mixed with a middle class developing?*

WALKER: It's very tribal like every other African country. Not only tribal, it had regional differences, north and south in this case, some east and west (those who were closer to the Akan people of Ghana and those who were closer to the Yoruba people of Benin and going into Nigeria). But the major difference was north and south, as it is in so many of those places in West Africa, because that tribal difference was reinforced by different stages of Westernization - that is to say, different stages of what benefits there were of colonialism in terms of economic development but also of acquiring the skills of a modern economy, western skills which allows one to move ahead. These came for a number of historical reasons more to people in the south, and there was resentment by people in the north. This is true in a number of places in West Africa and was certainly true in Togo. Eyadema is from one of those groups in the north who felt in a disadvantaged position from the colonial experience. These people generally went into the military because that was something that was more open to them. Like any good politician, when he got to power, he directed resources primarily up there.

*Q: What sort of embassy did you have?*

WALKER: A small embassy. We had a DCM; a political-economic officer who was very good, Scott Bellard (I'm happy to see he's gone on to good things after there), another political-economic officer whose career has not been as rewarding as Scott's but who's nonetheless gone on to do solid things. We had one of the largest Peace Corps contingents in Africa and one of the oldest ones. They were doing good work. We had a good AID program. We had a USIA office that did what it could, particularly among the western intelligencia, if I can call it that, in the southern part of the country. And we had not a Defense attaché posted there but accredited to us and posted in either Ghana or the Ivory Coast. One of the big decisions I had to make shortly after I got there was whether I would invite the Defense attaché in with his airplane from a neighboring country to fly me up north on some of my initial calls, and whether or not I would include in those calls a military base where the equivalent of Togo's special forces were trained. I decided to take the plane because we did not have a big military program there and it could by no stretch of the imagination be thought to be propping up a dictatorial regime because we didn't have that kind of military assistance program there. I decided to call on the military base, one because I thought it would flatter the president and though it would offend some of his opposition, they would be critical of the U.S. relationship in any event, and the points I would build up with the president to win his support in New York on some matters more than offset that in my view. And I would learn something more about his power base within the military. It was one of the decisions I had to make. One of the things you have to consider in winning the vote of the Togolese on things at the UN is, why did you have to win it? Wouldn't they have voted that way anyhow? Why did you have to pay so much for it? I never thought we paid that much. But you never know. One of the things I remember about that White House visit was, that was the day after the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. A couple of days before was Grenada. One of the things Eyadema said to Reagan was, "I want you to know that I've ordered all flags in Togo to fly at half mast today in honor of the Americans killed in Beirut." Then he said, "We are a small country and we look to you, the United States, to protect us. I have threats from some of my neighbors (He was talking about his dissidents in Ghana that sometimes, he felt, had the

support of the government of Ghana). We look to the United States to protect its small friends.” Then Reagan just perked up right away because he knew what was coming in Grenada. He said, “We will do that.” We were able to get from Togo a greater enthusiasm and support and speaking out in New York than would have occurred if we did not have a diplomacy of seeking that support.

*Q: How was our Peace Corps working there?*

WALKER: Very well. It was one of the first Peace Corps establishments. It was running very well and doing useful things in agriculture, teaching English as a foreign language, other kinds of instruction around the country. It’s one of the things I most delighted in doing when I was there aside from opening up self-help projects around, visiting our Peace Corps volunteers and seeing what they were doing.

*Q: Were any other countries interested in Togo?*

WALKER: The French. The Brits weren’t there. The French were interested, the Germans - both for their past colonial connection and some. The Italians had an honorary person there but they had some contracts there. The Egyptians were there. The Soviets were there. The North Koreans were there. But it was not a critical place of great interest, as it wasn’t to us before Security Council membership.

*Q: Were the French... Sometimes the French get a little bit unhappy with us in West Africa. Did you have any problems with the French there?*

WALKER: I had no problem with the French ambassador, both of them - one left soon after I got there. I enjoyed excellent terms with them, as you usually do in small diplomatic communities like that. When they learned of the invitation to visit the White House, the antenna started wiggling and the French ambassador came over to see me. One of the first things I did, without instructions, was to make it clear to him that we had no special agenda and that we had nothing in particular to ask of Togo other than continued help to us at the U.N., and that there were some things that would be requested of us by the Togolese that we couldn’t do, particularly in terms of increase levels of economic assistance. But, the French were there in a relatively big way. I remember when French President Mitterrand came on a state visit. Togo is a remarkable country. Can you imagine it had 65 restaurants in Lomé. My diplomatic colleagues from all over that part of West Africa used to come there to eat. The best croissant I’ve ever had was at the Hotel de Fevrier in Lomé. They put on this grand state dinner for Mitterrand’s state visit - 1,000 guests, an eight course dinner, every course served with its own separate warm plate... The food was superb. At the end, there was ex-sergeant Eyadema up at the top table with Mitterrand and their entourage, singing French oldies but goodies and having a great time. The French do that very well with their former colonies.

I remember when Mitterrand left, we were at the airport, as chiefs of mission are expected to do to see off heads of state. One of my diplomatic colleagues - I think it was the German - turned to me and said, “Well, what will you be reporting on this visit?” I said, “Well, whatever it is, I will keep in mind that the former American ambassador next door in Benin (which then was

Dahomey) reported once a coup d'état by airgram (the correspondence that goes by ships and takes months to get back) instead of by telegram, for which he received a letter of commendation from Under Secretary for Political Affairs Alexis Johnson, whose inscription read, 'You appreciate that God cares for each little sparrow that falls, but we cannot play in that league.'" The French are not so humble.

*Q: You mentioned a visit by Jeane Kirkpatrick.*

WALKER: Yes. Jeane Kirkpatrick came out with a delegation early on in my tour. I remember it was early on because we gave them a lunch on the terrace, which was not yet air conditioned and the gelatin course that my wife prepared, melted.

Kirkpatrick came out with a delegation that included Libby Dole and the wife of one of these senior guys on Reagan's staff - Meese - and some others. Mrs. Dole was absolutely charming, very friendly. Jeane Kirkpatrick was a first-rate mind. I took her in Togo to meetings from the President to members of those at the University who were opposed to Eyadema. She was very good with them at the university. I'll never forget when: we were at dinner over at the Hotel Deux Fevrier and I got this call to come to my immediately for a call for Ambassador Kirkpatrick. They wanted her to be the first to know that Secretary of State Al Haig had resigned. This great cheer went up in this delegation led by Jeane Kirkpatrick that maybe now some things could be done that they wanted.

*Q: Were Americans coming there and getting into problems?*

WALKER: No, Togo was not a place where we had a lot of American visitors other than other official Americans nearby who used to come there to eat. We had ship visits by naval ships who would go to all the West African ports just to do their useful "show the flag" things. There was some American interest in a phosphate operation, but that wasn't very big. We didn't have a single trade delegation while I was there.

**OWEN W. ROBERTS**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1984-1986)**

*Ambassador Owen W. Roberts was born in Oklahoma in 1924. He received his A.B. from Princeton University and his M.I.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army. Ambassador Roberts entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Egypt, the Congo, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Ethiopia, Gambia, Seychelles, Chad, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: You were in Togo from '84 to '86.*

ROBERTS: It was a three-year assignment. I spent two years, felt that I had done as much as I could, and then asked to be reassigned. An important element was that I found it very difficult to sit on my hands. The fundamental thing about being at a small post is managerial restraint. You cannot contribute much locally or regionally because the U.S. hasn't got the interest for real involvement. In most cases you do not advance new programs, even the best ones, because although beneficial locally, you should not be spending more U.S. dollars. What you really do is make the best possible contacts with the foreign minister and the president. Then when the State Department does need you, the contacts and access are ready and you can make a quick, high level demarche, and hopefully get a positive result. That's your function. You are not at a small post to comment on U.S. policy for the rest of the world, or to try to change significantly what is happening even within this small country. You are there to fulfill the occasional U.S. interest. It means you have to sit very firmly on your hands. You should not be trying to expand the activities of your post. You should not be encouraging AID, USIA, and a military attaché program to increase what they are doing. This was my well-intentioned plan. But it is a difficult one to follow, particularly if you have been operationally involved elsewhere, or been at a high U.S. interest post.

My major achievement in Togo was not a local action but formulating "the small embassy program." Secretary Shultz had sent all Chiefs of Mission a cable asking urgently for suggestions on an up-to-50-percent reduction in post costs and staff. I responded for Togo. But I also proposed that such savings could be made more broadly by creating a class of limited interest small posts with limited requirements. I suggested that only a few U.S. staff are needed at such places, but that in practice they could not be run in a reduced way if the Department was always going to task them with exactly the same requirements as for a big post. Small post ambassadors, as long as they were being heavily tasked, were correct in trying to expand operations to fulfill those requirements. Of course, such ambassadors could always try to fight each requirement. This is very difficult because each tasking has some reason and interest group in Washington. Also, you get a bad name for not being responsive. Washington usually could hunt around in house and answer an AID query as to whether eucalyptus will grow in Togo, or a DOD/Commerce Department question on possible sales of military equipment. But it is much easier just to ask the embassies. There are also worldwide, required reports, about 175 of them, even for small embassies. I suggested to Shultz that perhaps 40 posts, most with eight to twelve State staff, could be reduced to special purpose small posts with only five State people. As each U.S. overseas employee then cost about \$250,000, this meant real savings. But the posts' requirements had also to be reduced. Let them be out there as diplomatic access posts, with some limited capacity for reporting, consular services, and help to businessmen coming through. Nothing more. This could be done with an ambassador, secretary, consular/reporting officer, administrative officer, and a communicator. Broad supervision of other agency activities would still be feasible through the Ambassador. Local feelings would not be hurt; small countries want an Ambassador. They do not care how much staff he has.

This was greeted at very senior levels in the State Department as being a terribly good idea. It even got White House endorsement. But it ran counter to the fact that there are a great many agencies and a great many offices in the Department and other Washington Bureaus that have particular substantive or administrative interests. Each of these wants to ask the overseas posts about those interests. They feel much more comfortable if they can ask every single diplomatic

post whether eucalyptus grows there, or the extent of female circumcision, or whether the square foot limitation on housing is being respected, and will you please report according to this 15-page instruction. You remember the consular forms?

Q: *Oh, yes, yes.*

ROBERTS: I argued that small posts did not need to do a consular report. It was designed to determine staffing needs and had, I think, 186 questions covering every large and small aspect of consular work. A small post would figure out all the hours per year spent on such activities and report that they needed one-third of a consular officer's time. As they already had a dual purpose officer, they did not need more staff -- as everyone already knew.

Q: *The so-called consular package.*

ROBERTS: Yes. I suggested, for example, cutting the consular package for small posts to 10 or 15 questions. It also took considerable time to read and understand the 27-page instruction. Ultimately, after the Department approved the small post concept, the Bureau of Consular Affairs agreed. But it was one of the few offices willing the streamline or cut its procedures.

I found it difficult indeed to follow my own advice to keep quiet until called on by Washington. So I worked hard on the effectiveness of AID programs, Peace Corps activities, USIA projects to ensure that they were the most helpful possible, and that the three of them were consistent with each other. After I had contributed changes there, without infringing overly on my colleagues' management of their affairs, I either had to be relatively idle or go into local history, anthropology, or languages. As I am more an operative, manager type than a researcher, I opted after two years for another alternative and that was reassignment. Washington needs ambassadorial slots, and my own AF Bureau was annoyed by my small embassy proposal, so it was quickly agreed.

Q: *What was the political situation in Togo, and how did you deal with it?*

ROBERTS: Well, that's an example of where the best practice and policy was not to do too much. Togo was run by President Eyadema, who had personally assassinated President Olympio back in 1963 and had assumed power. Eyadema had been a staff sergeant and leader of a northern ethnic group that decided to resolve some staff problems. They went to the President's house, which was next to our chancery and completely unguarded--in those days an African president in his own country did not yet have security worries. They roused him out of bed and tried to get him to agree to pay hikes and more officerships. He probably refused, thinking them just temporarily aroused as enlisted men. They manhandled him, he escaped, but was recaptured about 6:00 AM and shot just outside the chancery walls. In a few months, Eyadema won leadership in the largely northern staffed military and made himself President.

He managed Togo wholly authoritarily but, with experience, in an increasingly effective way. By the time I got there he had the sense to leave commercial affairs open and to encourage maximum French, World Bank, and other outside assistance. He helped such activities with broad support and did not interfere in their program management.

If you didn't say anything about Eyadema or politics, you could live quite freely in Togo. On the other hand, anybody who even mentioned the President's name had to clap twice to show support. Togolese who returned from Paris were often assumed to have talked with dissidents there--so their baggage and home would be searched. If you were up on a platform for some event, and you didn't clap when the President's name was mentioned, you would be summoned to his office.

The President also took direct, personal action on a wide range of very local matters. For example, an American business man told me that one day two of Eyadema's private police showed up at his workplace and asked to see the secretary. They picked her up by both arms and carried her out of the building. The American objected, but the policemen said, "Our business," and put her in a car and took her away to Eyadema's palace. A northerner had sent word to the President that this woman had done him wrong. The president decided to hear both of them and sent out his police for them. Well, in Togo, the police go out and grab whomever. That's how it is. The President heard them personally, decided that the secretary was right, that the northerner was wrong, and that ended the case. There were a good number of people, however, who spent years in jail, or were sent off into the far parts of the country in isolation. No due process or appeals.

As a diplomat, it was easy to conduct business with him. Eyadema gave big country ambassadors immediate, private access. He made decisions on the spot. Ideal. I had his home phone number. Whenever I got any instruction which would require his approval I'd call him direct. He would reply, "Fine, Protocol will notify you of the time." Usually I called him about six AM. He was at a military camp; he lived there for safety. And then about seven, I'd get a call from Protocol saying, "The president wants to see you at once." I would put on my dark wool suit, discuss the issue, and get an answer -- all in about two hours from the first phone call. Considering how hard it is to reach the top anybody these days, and get a definitive decision, this was efficiency plus. And we usually had his support.

We had an AID program, a minor amount of military attaché activity, some cultural exchanges, and sixty Peace Corps volunteers. It was enough so that we had an ongoing relationship with Togo. Eyadema had some personal reason to see me: he wanted to be invited as a presidential visitor to Washington. This wasn't favored at first, but he helped us with several regionally important matters and ultimately received the invitation. There needs to be a sufficient level of representation and of inter-state activities to make such senior level working relations possible.

On the other hand, given the way he ruled, you did not want to be identified as supporting him. There were a lot of Togolese who were suffering under this man. It meant not being too visible, not appearing to be a friend of his administration. At state occasions, on a podium, I clapped, but I was never the first, nor the last to stop. I attended his functions, but tried hard in behavior and conversations not to appear a supporter.

Togo was a place where the United States did not need to increase its AID program, or its USIA activities, or increase its influence. What we had was enough, and our concern was mostly to be doing it well. While my small embassy proposal was well received at senior levels in



Washington, it was not immediately implemented because Shultz did much better than he expected in getting funds for the Department from Congress. I did not cut the embassy because the AF Bureau opposed reductions. They disliked my small embassy proposal because, if implemented, most of the small embassy reductions would be in AF. My idea was considered "disloyal." This was expressed in my efficiency report as "lacking appreciation for the larger regional ramifications" of African affairs. While being Ambassador in Togo was to be a bigish frog in a small pond, unlike the frog you were all too aware of how small the pond really was.

*Q: How well did you think our AID program was doing, and what were we doing?*

ROBERTS: We had a small health component and some educational support. But two-thirds of our overall program was agricultural, which was proper for an almost wholly agricultural economy. The difficulty was that we were trying for fairly large-scale developmental improvement. One such project was to introduce use of animal traction in local farming. About 98 percent of agriculture in Togo was done with a hand hoe; there were hardly ten functioning tractors in the whole country. If production were to be increased to match population growth and provide some exports, it seemed reasonable to advance the next step beyond the hoe to animal drawn implements.

Previous AID people, Togolese Agricultural Ministry staff, and local World Bank representatives had earlier seen the same need and tried to introduce small tractors. This involved special loan arrangements, as even the smallest tractor was too costly for most farmers, and creating fuel supplies, spare parts networks, and repair facilities. This was too difficult a technology to introduce on a wide basis in a country as undeveloped as Togo. A hoe technology worked because it was low cost and in every village there was a blacksmith. If the blade broke, it could be fixed locally. There was nobody locally who could fix a carburetor on a tractor, except in one of the three major towns. Even the biggest farmers, really businessmen, who could pay for a tractor and hire a mechanic, couldn't find or develop a reliable support system. So there were ten functioning tractors in Togo.

Between the hoe and the tractor, it seemed reasonable to promote animal plowing. Our project was to train average farmers in the use of bullocks (there being no horses due to tsetse fly). There were lots of bullocks as northern Togo is part of the Sahel, which is a grazing area with even too many animals. Some of the farming Togolese in the north-central area also kept cattle or hired herdsmen, so a few were already familiar with the animals.

But it was difficult for a farmer, used only to a hoe, to train and use a big bullock. The animals, at several hundred dollars each, were expensive compared to the farmers' income. There was no veterinary support system. The simplest iron plows and disks were still more difficult to repair than local blacksmiths could handle. We found that in fact we too were trying to introduce a whole new technology. But it seemed feasible. We built training stations. We used Peace Corps volunteers as farmers' assistants. We promoted local government help. We were making a little bit of progress when I left, but it was far from a self-sustaining activity even after four years. It only worked as long as we provided staff and financial support.

When I first visited Togo, way back in 1967, the Peace Corps was promoting fishponds as a further food source. When I arrived as ambassador in 1984, the Peace Corps was still making fishponds, but there wasn't a single one of the earlier ponds functioning. After 20 years of effort, no pond was operational unless a Peace Corps volunteer was there. This was a sufficient anomaly that an ambassador could promote change in another Agency's internal operations.

I concluded that fishponds failed because the Peace Corps method of organizing them was counter to local working practice. African agriculture at the village level is quite individualistic or family based. The Peace Corps, however, preferred to emphasize cooperatives and putting people together in groups--community efforts to do things. It does have some individual enterprise projects, but in the case of fishponds it was insisting on organizing them as cooperatives.

Fishponds should work. They are practical and relatively simple -- a suitable PCV activity. The fish are tilapia. They are very hardy and do not need to be fed protein, they thrive on weeds and silage. While a fishpond does take some care, the work is not onerous and there is a profit. But there's not enough profit so that you can expect 15-20 people to divide up the profit on the fish and have very much left. There isn't enough incentive for a co-op.

I suggested to the Peace Corps director that he interpret the terms "cooperatives" and "community projects" in his instructions as including an extended African family. Instead of creating an artificial community or a cooperative, to manage a fishpond, we would use an existing village family unit. He ultimately agreed and Peace Corps Washington didn't object. I left about then, so I can't say if that made pond projects more workable.

Animal traction and fishponds don't seem much like matters for diplomatic concern. But they were the stuff of life in Togo. And challenging! I can't think of anything more difficult than trying to raise the standard of living of a traditional African village. We had two further AID agricultural projects, both of which seemed promising but which had latent flaws. One of these was to create, on a very minor basis, a model land-grant college adapted to African conditions. It was organized under a contract with the Reverend King of Philadelphia, who had started out training blacks in U.S. cities in practical activities: building construction, TV repair, plumbing, electrical installation. He set up training clinics turning feckless street teenagers into successful technicians. He had already done this in some African cities but wanted to work with the biggest problem group, the rural under-unemployed. Under his Togo contract, he had set up a one-year training college for young Africans who had dropped out of, or failed in, the classical Europeanized school system. He offered such young people a more promising future in the countryside than the traditional hoe economy. There were a lot of such youngsters, most of whom drifted off to the cities.

When I arrived the project was a going concern. Buildings had been set up, staff hired, and enough land acquired so that each student got his own acre or so to practice on. Each student also was given a pig, chickens, a calf and rabbits. They learned how to raise all of these, were allowed to keep them, and were encouraged to specialize upon graduation. They were also taught animal traction and the best ways of farming locally. This was a one-year program, after which the "college" tried to find a place for these people to start working.

Conceptually this was all very good. The participants were motivated and benefited. But upon graduation, some did well while many could not get started. There was no available land. As an underclass group, they had no money to buy any. Those that raised chickens needed minimum space, so they succeeded. The others either had to go back to family agriculture or be hired labor. This was largely a waste of training.

As a remedy, Reverend King got AID to amend the project and allow buying land for the graduates. When I arrived, this had expanded into help with clearing land and the farming of it. The project was now "successful." But when I asked about cost effectiveness (for there were only a modest number of participants) it turned out to be prohibitively expensive in local terms, about \$7,000 or \$8,000 per student. There were about 60 of them and maybe 250,000 potential candidates in the country. At that rate, we were hardly going to make a dent in the problem. And the cost per student was much too high for Togo to try to duplicate. It was a "model" program but not a cost-effective one in African terms. I advised that we close it down, but Reverend King was a political figure and AID hoped the costs would be lowered.

I found AID to be a big, slow-moving organization, but its people were very committed and they often found truly excellent field staff and contract extension technicians. Their projects usually appeared eminently appropriate, as animal traction or a one-year land grant college, but all too often they only worked while U.S. money and personnel were being provided. I came to feel very strongly that we should not start any project, from a Peace Corps fishpond to a multi-million AID program, unless it was reasonably sure to be self-sustaining after two to three years.

We did, in fact, develop one such program. But it was the only one, out of about 21 AID projects I'd been involved with, that was self-sustaining.

*Q: Which program was that?*

ROBERTS: It was called Partners for Productivity. It loaned money to small entrepreneurs or farmers, and followed up with simultaneous supervision/training on the job. Its loans were small--from \$500 to maybe a maximum of \$1,500--to people who wanted to start a bicycle repair shop, a rural bakery, a corn/sorghum grinding mill, or use new seeds or fertilizer for the first time.

Providing small loans to small entrepreneurs/farmers was hardly a new idea, but combining it with hands-on help during the loan was new. The French and the World Bank in Togo had realized that small farmers need small loans, so they had set up a rural bank system. There were maybe 200 small, two-room banks scattered around Togo, in which there were one or two loan staff. They sat behind a window and took loan applications from farmers or little businessmen. But these staff were strictly "white collar." They never got out to the fields and never visited applicants' work places. Many applicants wanted money but only a few had really productive uses in mind. Consequently, only about 25 percent of these loans were ever repaid. It was a losing proposition and everybody said that making small loans to small users was not feasible.

Partners for Productivity, however, believed the problem was not with what the French were trying to do but how they were doing it. The French simply were not reaching viable applicants.

And they were not helping them use the loan effectively. The need for helpful extension services was also widely appreciated and many such agencies were established in both French and British ex-colonial areas. But these services were totally separate from any small loan systems. The great innovation of Partners for Productivity was to combine them.

They set up a couple of very small headquarters in the countryside and trained Togolese to be both extension and loan agents. They then traveled about the countryside on motorbikes looking for people who wanted to do something, or who had something and wanted to make it more productive. These people sat down with such people and developed their entrepreneurial ideas into practical plans. They visited sites and got others' views on the general reputation and means of the potential loan applicant. Then they developed and wrote out a work-plan contract. The loan was the last step. After it was made, the extension/loan agent would return every ten days or so and review progress and problems.

Partners for Productivity charged enough interest to be self-sustaining -- about 14 percent. High by U.S. standards but far below rural African loan sharks. And they got a high rate of loan repayments, about 85-90 percent. There were some unexpected problems. Many recipients wanted the extension agent to hold much of the money, because if they had any cash their fellow villagers would expect them to use it for local needs or festivities. It was better, from their point of view, if they could say, "Well, the loan agent has the money. I haven't got it." Also, a village entrepreneur couldn't succeed too much or it would create jealousies and sometimes retribution.

The major problem, as with the Reverend King's small land-grant college, was that this loan/supervision process was fairly labor intensive. One of the agents could only handle about 40 business people or farmers over a six-month cycle. Then about half of those would have to be visited further in the next six month cycle. So the agent ended up with only 20 new people each six months, or 40 a year. Not too efficient, but very effective. In fact, it was so good that it failed. What happened was that Partners for Productivity took on too many contracts in Africa, overextended itself, and collapsed in Washington. But what they did in the field was outstandingly practical.

**DAVID A. KORN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1986-1988)**

*Ambassador David A. Korn was born and raised in Missouri. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included positions in France, Lebanon, Mauritania, Israel, and India, and ambassadorships to Ethiopia and Togo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

KORN: Well, Togo was what there was left after a certain number of other things went by the way. It was of no political or substantive interest. There was nothing of particular interest going on there.

*Q: Was the dominant presence in Togo still the French?*

KORN: Yes. They were pouring an enormous amount of money into the country. We had a small AID program as well. Then President Eyadema felt it was a good thing to hedge his bets on the French by having some Americans around. I always had plenty of access to him and he was always very friendly. There is nothing going on in Togo basically.

*Q: How about United Nations vote?*

KORN: ...at all small posts, as you well know, the main value of the host government is to get them to vote the right way at the United Nations.

*Q: I interviewed somebody who was in Mali, I guess, and was saying that he had to go in and try to get support for a "save the whale" vote in the United Nations and had to start out by explaining what a whale was since it was a land locked country. He was assured that if a whale ever appeared up the Niger River they wouldn't kill it.*

*In a way things were going well and there were no particular problem?*

KORN: Right.

*Q: Were there any American business concerns?*

KORN: We had an American who leased the government steel mill when it went broke and got it back into operation.

*Q: Well, how did you spend your time?*

KORN: (Inaudible). I decided to retire while there.

*Q: Because at some of these posts "challenge" wasn't even a term.*

KORN: Well, because of the nature of the regime people were not free to talk. You would have Togolese over and ask them the most harmless questions and they were afraid to talk.

*Q: What type of regime was there?*

KORN: It was a dictatorship. In many ways a benign dictatorship--it wasn't a bloody one. Eyadema didn't kill anybody unless he felt threatened. This never happened while I was there. People could be thrown in jail if on the wrong side of him and they could suffer materially. So not many people wanted to speak out. During the time I was there my wife was very active in promoting a local human rights organization. Eyadema got on this band wagon and the organization was actually set up and has been functioning since then. If I have to look back and think of a contribution that was made there that would probably be it.

**TIBOR PETER NAGY, JR.**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Lomé (1987-1990)**

*Ambassador Nagy was born in Hungary and came to the United States as Political Refugee in 1957, settling in the Washington, D.C. area. After graduating from Texas Tech University, he entered the Foreign Service in 1978. During his career he served in Lusaka, Victoria (Seychelles), Addis Ababa, Lomé, Yaoundé and Lagos, as well as in the State Department in Washington.. From 1996 to 1999 he served as US Ambassador to Guinea-Conakry and to Ethiopia from 1999 to 2002. Ambassador Nagy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

*Q: But then -- so you came back and took the econ course. How'd you find that?*

NAGY: Very difficult. I had not had any econ in college, not the -- not the nitty gritty econ. And as DCM in Lomé I would be responsible for managing all the substantive areas. I was signed up for the econ course and then I had not had French since high school. I had to take French. Econ course, wonderful course director, Lisa Fox. She has been there forever. And it was the equivalent of a bachelor's degree of economics in six months.

*Q: Oh boy.*

NAGY: It was fantastic.

*Q: Well, how did you and your wife work out the twins, the --*

NAGY: Triplets.

*Q: -- the States, and the econ course.*

NAGY: Triplets.

*Q: Triplets, I'm sorry.*

NAGY: Yeah. Well, she, you know, I mean that was the deal. She, she worked fulltime taking care of the family and I worked outside of the house, she worked inside the house. She worked a lot harder but the pay was lousy.

*Q: Yeah. Well, then so you're off to Lomé.*

NAGY: I'm off to Lomé. That would have been 1987.

*Q: And you were there for how long?*

NAGY: I was there for three years, from '87 to 1990. I had two ambassadors. David Korn first and very -- he retired after about a year. It was funny. He -- I think he became disgusted with the ridiculousness of the department's administrative regulation regarding things like representation, where they switched because they had to account for every grain of salt, you know, we sprinkled for a representation event. And I think he had enough and he wanted to write his books and, you know, get on with, with that side of his life. So he retired. And then Rush Taylor came in as ambassador. So I was with David for about a year and then with Rush for about two years. Rush Taylor recently died, I'm --

*Q: Yeah, luckily I -- I mean he seemed full -- hell, I interviewed him.*

NAGY: Great guy. Rush was a wonderful guy. But David was a wonderful guy too. We got along really, really well with both of them. I -- for me it was a privilege serving both of them as deputies.

*Q: All right, well let's talk about Lomé -- the state is --*

NAGY: The state is Togo.

*Q: -- Togo.*

NAGY: President Gnassingbe Eyadema - Proletarian president who was very close to the United States. He considered himself a major supporter of Ronald Reagan. He had two very bad neighbors: Jerry Rawlings on one side in Ghana -- who was a populous African, slash, socialist and a devout Marxist -- and Benin on the other side, General Kérékou. On the north in Burkina Faso he had first a populists African -- Thomas Sankara - who was killed and the government taken over by Compaore who kind of also followed the socialist model. President Eyadéma used to joke that his best neighbor was the sea.

*Q: Yeah.*

NAGY: He considered himself a strong support of the United States. In turn, he expected us to support him. He was a consistent human rights violator, but in those days we overlooked that. And he was one of our strongest allies in Africa. This, you know, this was pre -- this was while the Soviet Union was still in existence, so we overlooked his -- his -- his phony elections and we overlooked his human rights violations. Of course he was not as bad as some of our, quote unquote, "friends," like Mobutu, but he was surely not a democrat.

*Q: Well, what are we talking about, human rights? I mean what were the violations?*

NAGY: Oh, you know people did disappear, people were no doubt tortured. It was a very small country so the joke was -- back then there was that commercial about E.F. Hutton. You know, someone goes into a bar and mentions E.F. Hutton and everyone gets quiet. Well, it was the same in Lomé and with Eyadéma. If anyone mentioned his name everything would go quiet. He had a very extensive intelligence apparatus, which kept him well informed as to what was going on in the country. He was an insomniac, and the word was that his ministers slept in their clothes

because he would call a minister at any time, day or night. And they would have to jump in their car and go to the presidential palace. Every decision was made by Eyadéma, every single decision. The Americans had wonderful access. The French had wonderful access.

*Q: Who ran the intelligence service? I mean who set it up? Was it the French or?*

NAGY: He had a number of "seconded" French officials attached directly to the presidency who I think ran the Togolese Intelligence Service. He had a French officer, who ran the Togolese Air Force, another French officer ran the Togolese Navy, and another French officer who ran the finance -- the finances.

*Q: Well, did you find that -- did the French consider us competitors or by this time had that, you know, early on --*

NAGY: As competitors. They saw us as messing around their turf. As a result, both of my ambassadors had horrible relations with their French counterparts.

*Q: How about sort of at the DCM level? Sometimes -- there's been a pattern where the DCMs get along pretty well but the ambassadors don't.*

NAGY: I got along really well with my French counterparts, very, very well. And we would exchange information and you know, exchange pleasantries while our bosses, you know, threw knives at each other. And our bosses knew that we were talking together. Even on their security side, we -- we supported the Surete (police), the French supported the Gendarmerie (special police) The French very strongly supported the Togolese Armed Forces, but our military attaché that came out of Dakar also did some programs with the Togolese.

*Q: Good morning. Today is November 5, 2010. We had left you in Togo and you said if you thought of anything more you'd talk about it, but then we'll move on.*

NAGY: OK, so we finished in Togo, I guess.

*Q: Yeah. So what was the timing and what did you do?*

NAGY: Finished in Togo in 1990. So what happened was it was right on -- you know, the Soviet Union had basically -- it was collapsing or collapsed, and just -- the interesting thing is just as I was leaving Togo we were starting to have a discussion among the senior people in the Africa Bureau about democracy in Africa. It had been, you know, during the, the Cold War days the Soviets had their African dictators and we had our African dictators, and human rights were not that -- were not that major of an issue. The, the, the major priority was blocking the Soviet Union. So I was in the country of Togo and Eyadéma had been president there since he took power in the first coup in Africa and was elected head of state in Africa, and that really didn't give us much heartburn, you know, that -- and he would have these sham elections and be reelected by 99% of the votes cast, and we never took much objection to that. But all of a sudden, you know, I'm leaving Togo and now all of a sudden for the United States Government democratization, human rights, good governance are starting to emerge as genuine issues over,



you know, who are the Soviet-inclined states and who are the Western-inclined states. I did a direct transfer from Lomé to Cameroon. We got on the plane at Lomé one night I think shortly after the, the July 4th festivities, stayed around to help that. And I remember Pickering was on the plane with us because he was also transiting, and we got off the plane in Douala and so -- I guess I started Friday in Lomé and finished the Friday at my new posting in Cameroon.

**HARMON E. KIRBY**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1990-1994)**

*Ambassador Harmon E. Kirby was born in Ohio on January 27, 1934. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in international relations and served in the U.S. Army overseas for two years. His Foreign Service career included positions in Geneva, Madras, New Delhi, Brussels, Khartoum, Rabat, Lomé, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Kirby retired on September 29, 1995. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 31, 1995.*

*Q: Before you went out to Togo, obviously you were doing your homework and getting briefed, what were American interests in Togo at that point...and did you go out with the equivalent of a list of things that should be done?*

KIRBY: Yes, I think so. U.S. interests were political stability, economic development but political change...and above all political change in the direction of pluralism and the opening up of the political culture and the movement towards democracy. I was encouraged to believe that one of my jobs would be to try to move them towards a greater measure of democracy, pluralism, a greater respect for human rights. Also, Togo had been pretty solidly friendly to the United States up to that point, and we wanted to keep them very much in our corner, supportive in the UN and elsewhere on things that mattered to us. When I got to Togo the Gulf War was looming. We didn't know what votes might be necessary along the way, but we were anticipating some in the UN and elsewhere, and we wanted to be sure we had the support...as much international support as we could in the likely political-military undertaking to come. So that was the range of issues that I was set to address when I arrived.

*Q: You got there at the end of 1990 approximately?*

KIRBY: November, 1990.

*Q: What was the situation in Togo when you arrived?*

KIRBY: The situation was unusual, because Togo, which had been ruled by an authoritarian regime for 25 years, where political dissent was not particularly tolerated, was at the very beginning of a period of turbulence. Dissidence towards the regime and people wanting a greater measure of democracy were at that time inaugurating a movement to change the political culture. I might say by way of background that it was an extraordinarily interesting and fascinating time

to be in Africa. It seems to me that intellectually, emotionally, politically, and diplomatically there have been two great periods in Africa in the recent, modern period, i.e., in the period of our time on active duty in the Foreign Service. One, obviously was the period 1956-1960, particularly the year 1960, when so many countries in Africa became independent, and the immediate years right after 1960 when the Congo (now Zaire) and a host of other countries were trying to sort out their political arrangements for the future. But then for so many of those countries, in fairly short order, the long dark night descended. The authoritarian curtain came down, tough military regimes ensued, and in so many countries, political grid-lock lasted for a very long time. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, I can't remember the exact number, but in about 25 countries throughout Africa, predominately in the West and Central Africa, you suddenly had populations trying to get rid of the old authoritarian regimes. I think it is quite clear that a couple of important things had set this in motion. One was what they referred to in West Africa as the "Wind from the East". The authoritarian regimes--a different kind of regime perhaps--but the authoritarian regimes that had broken down in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's, brought the end of the old order in that region. And not surprisingly, you suddenly had Africans asking, "Well, if democracy is good enough for the rest of the world, then why not for us...are we different? Should we not experience it and benefit from the joys...and manage our own affairs as well?" So events in Eastern Europe had had a powerful impact. The Africa downfall of the Marxist regimes had a powerful impact in Africa, particularly since so many of these African regimes (although not Togo) had looked for sustenance and support to an East European Marxist order that no longer existed. And so that caused the democratic forces in Africa to say that this was now the time for them to go for a new order. Along with that, the United States, Germany, and the European Community, which had always been in favor of democracy in Africa, began talking the concept up even more conspicuously. And, somewhat surprisingly...at least it was surprising to me...at that period the French began talking democracy up too. I guess it was the summer of 1990 when President Mitterrand, to everyone's surprise, at either a Francophone Summit or an African Summit at La Baule in France, read a speech in which he called for greater democracy in Africa. While he backed away from that a bit a couple of years later, suddenly you had in Africa both the "Wind from the East" and increased open Western pressure for democracy. The United States, Germany, and the European Community said that thereafter economic aid and development assistance were going to be channeled primarily to those countries which were freeing up markets and doing the right thing economically, but also were showing respect for human rights and opening up their systems towards pluralism and democracy. More guardedly, even the French seemed to be saying the same thing. The African populations found all this very appealing. So there was an extraordinary amount of effervescence throughout Africa, but especially West and Central Africa, starting in 1989 and extending through 1993-94.

My wife and I arrived in Togo just as all that was happening. I mentioned that we arrived on the 30th of November, 1990. On the 6th and 7th of October--about 6 weeks before we arrived--Togo had seen the first political riots that it had experienced in 25 years, with rampaging youth and others, burning government installations and what have you. So that happened in mid-October, and, then, the last week of November, a couple of days before we arrived, there was a second wave of fairly destructive demonstrations, although not as destructive as the first wave. But, again, people were in the streets, with taxi drivers joining the demonstrators this time and bringing transportation to a standstill. So clearly something new was in train. There was then a

pause in the turbulence in December/January and February, and while I can't prove it, I myself, have always attributed the pause in Togo to the Gulf War. It was even more fun to watch the Gulf War on CNN or local French-fed television, to read about it in the newspapers, or talk about it with your friends, then to be out demonstrating because of local politics.

*Q: It engaged people's attention...*

KIRBY: It diverted people's attention from their local politics. And as soon as the Gulf War was over though, real politics broke out in Togo again with very destructive local demonstrations occurring less than two weeks after the war's conclusion. All of 1990 and 1991, and much of 1992 and early 1993, were truly tumultuous years. This turbulence was something that modern Togo, since gaining independence in 1960, had not known. At the Embassy we were appropriately, responsibly, centrally involved in the effort to help the Togolese create a new democratic political culture.

*Q: Well now, who was the President when you arrived?*

KIRBY: The President when I arrived had been the President for a very long time and is still the President. His last name is Eyadema, Gnassingbe Eyadema. He is the President of the country.

*Q: When you arrived did you present your credentials rather quickly?*

KIRBY: Very quickly. I arrived at 9:00 on Friday evening and presented my credentials at 8:00 a.m. Monday morning.

*Q: Did Eyadema have any interest in the American Ambassador, and were you able to engage...I mean, how did you relate with him?*

KIRBY: He had enormous respect for the United States and was very much interested in having good relations with the United States and in being fully engaged with the American Ambassador. While there had been ups and downs in U.S.-Togo relations, Eyadema wanted the friendship of the people and government of the United States, just as people of Togo, for perhaps somewhat different reasons, wanted the friendship of the United States. We were then giving significant economic assistance to the country but that was by no means the most important thing. This may sound corny but it's the simple truth. The United States then enjoyed, and perhaps still does--I certainly hope so--enormous moral authority in Togo. We used that moral coinage very, very effectively, I think, and even increased it. Unlike the French and the Germans, we had had no colonial experience in Togo and not much elsewhere in Africa. We had not been an occupier. The Togolese tended to believe that we called the shots the way we saw them. They (i.e., the Togolese Government) might not like the political prescriptions and the medicines we prescribed sometimes, but they believed that we believed our own analysis and that we meant what we said. And, they didn't sense that we had ulterior motives. We had a modest but reasonably good trade relationship with Togo at the turn of the 1990's, but it was not on a scale with what the French or Germans enjoyed, and certainly we didn't have any investments there to speak of, as the French and Germans did. So, the Togolese tended to see us as fairly disinterested and dispassionate, and our moral authority was very important. It didn't move mountains, it didn't produce miracles, but

as the early 1990's unfolded, it did in the end, save some lives and help curb army violence against the population in periods of crisis. It also helped to move Togo toward democratic parliamentary elections, which the democratic opposition to the President won. (The Presidential elections, which Eyadema won, were another matter).

*Q: Treat this both chronologically but with the President, how did you deal with the President, what was the routine?*

KIRBY: I saw President Eyadema quite frequently, particularly in my first two or three years, even thereafter I saw him frequently, and we also spoke on the telephone very often. He would often call me in, particularly in the period 1991-92, when he was trying to gain points with us and respectability with us as he was being attacked by his opponents. He would call me, or sometimes I would have something from Washington that I needed to take up with him that would cause me to initiate the contact, but often I would just ask for an appointment in order to chat him up. And certainly throughout my time there, I think throughout the 44 months, but certainly the first three years, I saw him more frequently than any other foreign representative did, including during times of real crisis.

*Q: Were these frank talks?*

KIRBY: As such things go, I think they were very, very frank. I don't mean to sound self-serving, but I always said very bluntly what was on my mind, particularly as we moved closer to palpable crisis. I would begin a sentence by saying, "Mr. President", and I would use forms of address that are within the acceptable diplomatic range. But in terms of giving my analysis of where I thought Togo was going, and of what I thought his responsibility was for some pretty egregious actions--because he and his military officers were responsible for some pretty egregious incidents--I was candid to the point of being very, very blunt. And he claimed he appreciated that. On certain things, he was frank with me. There were other times when I knew he was speaking for the record, and it was as if he had turned on a gramophone record. In that latter mode he repeated endlessly that he had invented democracy in Togo, had never wanted to be President anyway, didn't know why he had the job, etc., etc. Well, this was ho-hum stuff. This wasn't serious. But there were times when he would let his hair down. If he had any of his close associates in the meeting, I was likely to get the "speaking for the record" routine. When we were "tete-a-tete," however, which was about two-thirds of the time, he was fairly frank, I thought.

*Q: Could you describe the political developments in Togo, various crises, I mean, sort of work it chronologically and what you were doing?*

KIRBY: 1991, as I've already said, was a very turbulent year. After the pause for the Gulf War that I referred to earlier, in mid-March there was a further series of destructive riots which effectively (though not in name) put the prevailing Eyadema government out of business. There was no effective government for a very long time thereafter. There was a nominal government, but there wasn't any attempt at real governance. The demand of the opposition to the President, copying from the experience of Benin and some of their other neighbors, was for a national conference in which the opposing sides would sit down and chart out a new political future for Togo. The President and his people resisted that on the grounds that they couldn't give equal

status to the opposition. But in the end, after the riots in March I mentioned, some further trouble in April and then a general strike with a few people killed (not many) in the first part of June, the government decided to negotiate a formula for convening a meeting with the opposition. The opposition continued to want a National Conference because of the implication that a National Conference might perhaps declare itself sovereign and chart a completely new political future. The Eyadema people continued to resist that, talking instead about convening a "National Forum", where all sides could express their views. The idea was, "come, let us gather together, and talk." So, anyway, the National Conference, as it came to be known, convened about the second week of July, 1991. What the Conference did, predictably, was immediately to declare itself "sovereign," and the Eyadema delegates, including his government's cabinet ministers walked out and said they wouldn't participate. And then the French, American and German Ambassadors worked together and devised a formula to get Eyadema and government people to rejoin the conference. A tumultuous six-week conference then ensued.

*Q: Well, tell me, here you're going through turbulence in a country and then the French, the American, and the German Ambassadors are sitting down and participating in mediation. How did this occur?*

KIRBY: I will try to answer that question. Let me first say that I think the mere fact of such close American, French and German cooperation in a Francophone country like Togo was almost unparalleled. During that period the three of us, were in almost constant contact day and night. It had a lot to do with our personal chemistry, and with the way our governments, and we too as individuals saw the world and saw the movement toward democracy in Africa. We felt that Togo should move toward a modern political culture and our governments thought so, too. I think all three government headquarters were, nonetheless, bemused and maybe nonplused by the degree of cooperation, often of an ad hoc nature, which we developed on the spot. The German Ambassador once told me that his Division Director back in Bonn's Foreign Ministry had said to him when he was on leave, "This is unparalleled, things usually don't work that way, but it seems to be working, so you should keep it up." It was that sort of thing. We did it ourselves, consistent, of course with our government's overall policies and general instructions to us. We liked each other, and liked working together. We saw a shared interest. We also estimated that in this period things were going to get worse before they got better politically, and in terms of the breakdown of public order, etc. We three thought that both in policy terms, and with regard to protecting our respective communities, our embassies and our personnel, it was terribly important that the Togolese government understand privately and the Togolese people understand publicly that we presented a united front. We were always on television making our points. I would frequently do things separately from the other two Ambassadors, but we were also regularly doing things together. And so that there wouldn't be any sense of "outsiders", i.e., foreigners, trying to manipulate the political process, we agreed that we should be as dispassionate as we could, and do our professional best to assist bitter Togolese opponents to find a framework for dialogue during the country's period of travail.

So much for background. How did we get involved incrementally? The Togolese needed help on certain things. It was a very fast moving situation. It would change sometimes by the quarter hour. Occasionally developments would have physical security implications. As on the day toward the end of the conference when Eyadema, without warning, shut it down, ringed the hall

with soldiers and said that they were going to do various sobering things if the delegates didn't vacate the hall. The delegates definitely said they wouldn't vacate, and it looked as if things were going to spill over into the streets, where there was already a lot of edginess and strife. When things move that quickly, you don't have a lot of time to seek instructions from headquarters. What you do is what we did that afternoon, agreeing quickly, using your best judgment.

I'm now leaping ahead to the end of August, 1991, at the end of the conference when Eyadema was trying to shut it down and the French and German Ambassadors and I were afraid that a lot of blood was going to flow in the streets. It was unusual, I admit, but we didn't even take time to make a telephone call across the way to the President's quarters to ask for an appointment. We simply saddled up and quite deliberately got into one car (mine as it turned out) and appeared at his gates and said, "We must see the President." He admitted us and we, in a long session, elaborated something on the spot. As we talked, a formula for persuading the President to withdraw the troops and permit the conference to conclude its work peacefully came to my mind. I whispered it to my colleagues and they asked me to try it on him. So I tried it on him..."Would you agree to withdraw the troops and let this conference finish smoothly if the President of the conference (a determined opponent of President Eyadema) does the following?" (which I specified). He didn't like it at first but after further discussion, said, "Yes", he guessed he would do that. We then saddled up and went over and imposed our presence on the President of the conference who said, "No way" would he make the gesture we were asking of him. And I said, "We will sit here forever, if necessary, until you agree." The chairman of the conference's executive bureau, and one or two of his allies in the bureau were also in this meeting. They thought that the Ambassadors had developed a sensible formula to avoid strife. They said they agreed with the Ambassadors and told the conference President on the spot that he should accept our formula, which he did, eventually. I go into that kind of detail, because your question was a good one. How did we repeatedly get involved in mediation? Each of us was operating on the general instructions from our governments. On certain points, if I had any doubts, I would check back here. But often, in fast moving situations, I thought, and the other Ambassadors thought, that we had sufficient latitude to do whatever seemed to be the right thing to do. So at various times along the way during the conference...we didn't intervene "willy-nilly," but as we saw real threats of bloodshed or if things were getting off the rails, we would offer advice, and people frequently would turn to us for advice.

*Q: What was the thrust of the conference? More legislative assembly...?*

KIRBY: How the old Eyadema government let this happen, I don't know, but it's fair to say both that the government made a number of tactical blunders during the conference and that the majority of the Togolese population was opposed to the government. It quickly turned out that probably there was a majority in the hall that was in favor of overturning the Eyadema government and doing things differently. In fact, what happened was the old government was turned out by the conference. Eyadema was retained as a figurehead President, and the National Conference then installed an interim government with a Prime Minister chosen by the Conference and an interim legislature chosen by the Conference. There then ensued a period of uncertain and really non-government, which lasted a very long time, until political forces changed a bit and Eyadema was able to reassert himself. Eyadema began reasserting himself in autumn, 1992. That continued until the Presidential election in August 1993 where his mandate

was renewed in an uncontested non-election. Eyadema and his people were busy re-installing themselves incrementally. But the period from the end of the National Conference in late August, 1991 to say about January, February, March of 1993, you had very unstable government--almost no government, in fact. You had a nominal government but nothing was happening. One of the problems was (there were many problems) that the only thing that the opposition to Eyadema could agree on was that they wanted him out. But Togolese politics, like much of African politics, tends to be a "zero-sum-game". Each of the leaders of the opposition to Eyadema wanted to be President himself. They were all afraid that if they did not checkmate the Prime Minister whom the National Conference had chosen as head of the interim government, he would eventually become the replacement for Eyadema as President. So they fought the Prime Minister they had installed as vigorously as they had battled Eyadema. It was a prescription for instability and non-government, really, and for economic deterioration, as well.

*Q: How was the economy during this period? In the first place, what was the economy of Togo at least during the time we're talking about and how did it function?*

KIRBY: Up until the events of late 1990-91, in relative terms, in West African terms, the Togolese economy was doing fairly well, though not brilliantly. There had been a marked slowdown in the late 1980's, but compared with most of its neighbors, it was doing all right. The salad days had been in the 1970's--the second half of the 1970's and early 1980's. In the 1970's Togo had nationalized its biggest foreign exchange earner, which was phosphates. They have substantial phosphate deposits. And they had then over-extended, as so many countries did at that time. Togo has a lot of assets. It had a pretty good infrastructure, with a good port, a good airport, and a good banking system. Up to about 1989, most of Togo's neighbors had been flat on their backs both politically and economically. So, at the end of the 1980's--all through the 1980's in fact--anybody who was doing banking in the region, preferred to do it in then stable Togo, not in next-door Ghana, where the economy was deteriorating, and Jerry Rawlings was an uncertain quantity, and certainly not in impoverished Marxist Benin next door, or even in Nigeria, to the east. But Togo was where people liked to bank if they could, where they liked to go for conferences...there were a lot of big hotels. For many on the West Coast of Africa it was a favorite R&R center because, a) it was stable, and b) it had the facilities and it looked relatively better than its neighbors. Now what began to happen in the 1990's was that many of these neighbors had made economic and political reforms and were beginning to look better, and thus Togo's old comparative advantage had slipped a little bit. Ghana began doing well economically. Benin is not a great case economically but its period of democratization has gone well, it's now more stable and has gotten rid of its Marxist apparatus and what have you. Moreover, in Togo, which had earlier been looking good, political and social deterioration from March of 1991 to about the middle of 1994, brought a three-year period during which Togo's economy slipped disastrously. During the political turbulence, there were rolling general strikes of varied durations. At one stage there was a nine-month general strike which brought a precipitous decline in economic activity. That's from mid-November, 1992 until about the Presidential elections in August, 1993. And so, there was no new outside investment, things weren't coming into the country, the hotels were absolutely empty, agriculture was in disarray, and there was nothing much moving on the economic front. People at the World Bank tell me that while the current picture isn't brilliant, the economy has started to move back up.

*Q: Were there any American economic interests?*

KIRBY: There were no major economic interests. At one time, until he left toward the end of 1991, there was an American who was the major owner and the managing director of a small steel mill there in Lomé. Up to about 1990 two-way U.S.-Togolese trade had been around 25 million dollars annually. We sell a lot of used clothes in Togo. Africa is a major market for Western used clothes and traditionally, historically, Lomé was an entrepot for those clothes. And so we had a number, quite a number of people in New York and other used clothing centers who did business over there.

*Q: What were your relations with those who were opposed to Eyadema?*

KIRBY: Those who wanted change? Open, but very close. The U.S. was really considered to be the apostle of change, responsible political change. We, and actually the French and Germans too clearly favored an evolution toward democracy in Togo--the French for a couple of years, but later that changed when the French backed off in Togo and elsewhere in Africa. But the U.S. was considered to be in the forefront of those calling for responsible change, for the creation of a new political culture featuring pluralism, freedom of the press, respect for human rights, and democratic elections. As a consequence, all the political leaders came to my residence very often and to my office very often. On three famous occasions, after prolonged tension all the political faction leaders, including the President's people, met for the first time after extended estrangement at social gatherings at our residence. I've mentioned some of my own efforts to advance the political dialogue among Togolese. We had the efforts of some other Americans involved...I asked Assistant Secretary Cohen to come out at a period of some tension and crisis, which he did in June of 1992 for two or three days of good talks. Former President Carter and Mrs. Carter came three different times. The first time, in September of 1992, they came for 48 hours, and stayed at the residence with us. And there were various other visitors from time to time, but those are the two visits that stand out. I want to emphasize that while I had good relations with politicians opposed to President Eyadema, I also maintained good, productive relations with those of Eyadema's close associates who were sensible and moderate. My goal, and constant effort, was to try to promote responsible dialogue between the two sides--an extremely difficult task.

*Q: Would the Assistant Secretary basically follow through on the suggestions that you were making?*

KIRBY: Generally, yes. And reinforce the message I was regularly bearing to the Togolese President about the need for political liberalization and the need to show restraint in using instruments of state against the public. Then, with the democrats (the ones opposed to Eyadema) he again would reinforce points that we always made and which they would always accept verbally but never follow: i.e., the need to cooperate with each other and behave responsibly, by adopting a common policy which they could use as the basis for a dialogue with Eyadema, etc. Those were the major points. When somebody like the Assistant Secretary came to Togo, or a former American President, they would do what I always did when given the opportunity on leaving President Eyadema's office, or anywhere else, when the television camera would suddenly be in your face. That's an opportunity to tell the Togolese people whatever you think



should be said at the time. And these were the common themes that we emphasized: the need for pluralism and the need for cooperation, restraint and dialogue, and for not seeing politics as a zero-sum-game, respect for human rights, freedom of the press.

*Q: Well former President Carter has been making a career out of mediation of dispute settlement. How did he operate and how effective was he?*

KIRBY: I think he reinforced some of the points that we had been making. I don't think his visits had any discernable long-term effect. That's not because the ex-President was lax or limited in any way. It was just that grid-lock was inherent in the situation, and dialogue, I took him over for meetings with President Eyadema, and then we had dinner with Eyadema. President Carter met the Prime Minister, who at the time was opposed to Eyadema, both at the Prime Minister's office and at my residence. He also met the other leaders of the democratic opposition, and then he had an opportunity on television to say the things he needed to say. His advice and his counsel about going forward toward elections was right on the mark and what we wanted to have said at the time. It was usefully done. In his private conversations, with me before and after seeing Eyadema, President Carter was, not surprisingly, shrewd in his judgments. He didn't miss much. He understood the lay of the Togolese political landscape. I think he knew when his interlocutor was being candid and when he was simply speaking for the record. He was nice enough to try those judgments out on me to see whether I read things the same way.

*Q: Well, how did this thing play out?*

KIRBY: Well, I won't try to decide today whether, in the end, Togolese efforts toward democracy during that period took "two steps back and one step forward" or exactly where things came out. There was, in a way, both good news and bad news. First of all, I deliberately use the word turmoil--Togo underwent prolonged turmoil during that period. Without spelling it out, I earlier mentioned the Presidential group's use of the instruments of repression against the population. There were people killed along the way. On at least two occasions, and perhaps more, I was able to intervene, stop the guns, and save the lives of some people, I think. On other occasions, alas, there were people who lost their lives. One of several egregious episodes was the army's forceful attack on the Prime Minister's residence in December, 1991. The army blew holes in the walls and attacked the Prime Minister's establishment; some good people died that day. On the other hand, we were able to save some that day, we and the International Red Cross working together.

*Q: How did you do that?*

KIRBY: Two ways. One of which I'll mention here and one maybe I'll just let go in terms of details. One was intervention with the President to get the guns stopped. Secondly, there were some people who, if they had stayed around, would probably have been eliminated. So a way was found...

*Q: To move them on?*

KIRBY: Yes. There was another important occasion about 8 or 9 months later when the Togolese army ringed the hall where the interim legislature was meeting and began to beat up on some of the Deputies and humiliate them. During the 24 hour period that the army held the legislature hostage, I spoke with the President by telephone five times, even getting him in the middle of the night. I also met with some of his close associates. At first, he protested that none of this was really happening. Then I simply reminded him that the venue of the interim parliament was right outside my residence, and that I was speaking not from second-hand knowledge but with the evidence of my own eyes and ears and reports that had been telephoned to me and so on. I don't know how all that would have gone without our intervention. The legislators being humiliated inside think that my intervention may have saved some of their lives. I myself wouldn't go that far on that. I think that the intention had been to humiliate and abuse, I don't think it had been to kill legislators on that particular occasion. However, the current Prime Minister and others think we may have saved lives in that episode. And certainly, when I threatened to walk into the legislature's precincts regardless of presence of soldiers and guns, i.e., when I told the President that enough was more than enough and that at 11:00 a.m. (on the second day) I would be doing my level best to force my way into the compound, suddenly the army disappeared and people were let go, and they were all out of there by the time I arrived. These were features of the times. Other significant events featured dissidents coming in from Ghana attacking Lomé's main military camp, and very nearly getting the President. There were two different attacks of that sort, which led to a lot of conflict around the city. I think we were clearly helpful on one of those occasions. The second time...working with the two governments in Lomé and Accra, we were able to wind that down but only after a couple of days of very uneasy times, with a lot of gunfire, and many people killed.

*Q: Towards the end of your time there, this whole thing, we're talking about 1991 into 1992 before it sort of settled down?*

KIRBY: It really began to settle down only after the Presidential election in August, 1993. There was a very bad dust-up between elements of the army and the population in January, 1993, when many people were killed. As a result of that incident, four to five hundred thousand people left the country, taking refuge in Benin and Ghana. Some of the armed attackers on the Togolese military camps in March, 1993 and January, 1994 came from some of these military and civilian elements which had fled Togo in the January-February, 1993 diaspora and earlier. But you had almost constant political turmoil with guns fired in anger and so on throughout 1991-1992, and well into 1993. 1993 was a very unsettled year, politically and economically, right up until the Presidential elections in August of 1993, when Eyadema was reelected, as I said. And there then ensued a period of new uneasiness on the part of the population from August of 1993 until the Parliamentary elections in February of 1994. This was exacerbated by the dissident attack from Ghana in January, 1994, which I mentioned earlier. There was a little bit of rough stuff at the time of the Parliamentary elections in two voting districts, but not a lot. It was after that...after the Parliamentary election that there was installed a government led by an opposition Prime Minister in June, 1994. About half his Council of Ministers came from the opposition to Eyadema, and about half consisted of Eyadema loyalists. The President of the National Assembly was also an Eyadema loyalist. You asked how it all came out. It all came out in the end (at least as of today) with Eyadema and his people still firmly in power; he is still the arbiter of political developments, and he still controls the levers of the state and what have you. But, he

did have to go through a real Parliamentary election and the opposition actually won that election for the first time. Internal opposition rivalries, the rivalries I referred to earlier, kept them from putting together as cohesive a government as they might otherwise have done. So, in the end, Eyadema was able to dominate the government because of the rivalries among the two major opposition party chiefs and because he still controlled the army and the gendarmerie. But at least they had established a kind of uneasy sharing of power, or, at least, of government positions. Now Eyadema and his people were again in charge but still there were other prominent political actors in the limelight as well. We'll never know what would have happened if Eyadema had had the wisdom and perspicacity to take a slightly different path in early 1990. But the odd and interesting thing is that, I believed in early 1990, and I seem to recall that the French and German Ambassadors did as well, that if President Eyadema would at that time broaden his government by nominating a Prime Minister from what was then the still fairly tame opposition--and the man who is now Prime Minister was a possibility--if he had done that in 1990, major political trouble, and turbulence, could be avoided. I will never know, of course, how that might have worked out. In any case, my strong advice to him at the time had been to do just that. I did say to him very clearly in early 1990 that if he didn't broaden his government, I thought there was much turmoil to come. We referred to that in our final interview in mid-1994 when he suggested that I had pretty accurately predicted, if not all the details, then at least the broad outlines, of what was going to happen in Togo.

*Q: How did he keep control of the army? Because so often with something like this you find a Lieutenant Colonel or Major or somebody taking on and saying, "the hell with all this" and nominating themselves to be President.*

KIRBY: Well, his style...he's always been a very active chief of the military. Back in the old days, before real politics broke out at the end of 1990, Eyadema's style was to go to the Presidential palace in the morning and govern, and then go to the military camp in the afternoon and run military affairs. When there were riots in the streets and it became difficult for him to move around Lomé, that changed to a certain extent, but he's always maintained a tight, close, and highly directive type of relationship with the nominal army chief, as well as with the heads of the presidential guard and of military intelligence. He has always appeared to know how to create his own systems of checks, balances, and surveillance within the military. He himself actually runs the military, of course.

*Q: Was he a military man to begin with?*

KIRBY: Yes, he was a non-commissioned officer in the French colonial army, with service in both Vietnam and Algeria, I think.

*Q: How did you find the staff at the Embassy?*

KIRBY: I found it an able staff on the whole. Given Togo's turbulent political circumstances, they had a lot to contend with. Sometimes daily survival and keeping one's spirits up were real challenges, although when difficult things are happening, people tend to respond very well, and I thought our staff did so. We had a fully integrated Embassy/Mission, with a USAID component and a small USIS staff. We also had a large Peace Corps presence in Togo, which meant we had

an American citizen Peace Corps Director, with one or two Deputy Directors who were Americans, and one who was Togolese. Yes, I thought the staff did a good job in very difficult circumstances. They were more than adequate to the task and performed very well.

*Q: What was your impression of the Peace Corps?*

KIRBY: I've always been pro-Peace Corps since I was first introduced to it when it was establishing itself in India, thirty some years ago. I was particularly fond of the program in Togo. It was one of our oldest, unbroken programs. The very first Peace Corps program was established in Ghana in 1961-62. But one of the very earliest ones after that was in Togo, and unlike the Ghana case, where we were phased out at one point, our program had never been phased out in Togo. At every level throughout the U.S. Government and other U.S. institutions, one finds graduates of the Peace Corps program in Togo. Senator Nancy Kassebaum, who had a lot to do with Africa in the Foreign Relations Committee told me that her daughter had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo and met there her husband-to-be who was also a Peace Corps volunteer. I think they even got married in Togo. So, I was by instinct and commitment very, very supportive of and protective of the Peace Corps. I always made a point of swearing in the new volunteer groups myself, and presided at some of their ceremonies, and visited volunteers as I got around the country. I think they did good work, although particularly during Togo's time of turmoil, the volunteers major challenge was to keep their heads down and stay healthy. During much of that time, in many parts of Togo, they couldn't be as productive as they wanted to be because their Togolese counterparts were wholly caught up in political events. I continued to think that--what I'm going to say now may or may not be country specific, or a general rule that applies everywhere, and, in any case, I mean it positively and not negatively. I think the Peace Corps was originally sold to prospective volunteers and to the American people, as a framework within which volunteers would be continually and directly involved in the economic and cultural development of the countries to which they were assigned. In many countries they have made major such contributions. I think they have made real contributions in Togo. It has struck me though, in recent years, that Peace Corps volunteers get at least as much as they give...in terms of their own individual maturation and development, and that perhaps the experience of living in another society may be doing even more for their personal development than for the development of the host country. What you can quantifiably state is that their contribution to a country's development is positive, but it differs from country to country. In Togo, particularly during the time of turbulence that I have been talking about, understandably the volunteers couldn't pursue the developmental programs they initially were assigned to. However, those volunteers who were willing to take on so-called "secondary projects" as an adjunct to their main assignment--e.g., those who were willing to supervise the drilling of a well, or the building of a public latrine, or the addition of a school room to a village school where they were assigned--seemed to be the happiest and most fulfilled, because they had something they could visibly show you they had done. I was a strong user of the so-called "Ambassador's Self Help Funds." These funds came from USAID. The Ambassador designates small projects in the countryside to benefit the local people. Peace Corps volunteers who had the time and interest to take on supervision of those projects did a very good job on the whole, and seemed to derive real satisfaction from their accomplishments.

*Q: Is there anything else we should cover? You've covered rather well this really remarkable time dealing with essentially mediation together with your French and German colleagues. Anything else we should cover on Togo?*

KIRBY: It was a fascinating time. Could I add one thing...you reminded me of it in the way you put your question. There was one mediation mechanism which the German and French Ambassadors and I developed on the spot because all Togolese political actors, but particularly the opposition, wanted us to do it. We then sold to our respective governments, which originally weren't quite sure, but then decided to go along with it. For both elections, the Presidential election in 1993 and the Parliamentary election in February of 1994, we developed something that was sui generis, our version of what was called an International Monitoring Commission. Although it had no particular juridical status, it was specifically called for in the agreements between Eyadema and his opposition establishing the elections. We set up shop, and we regularly met with the state instrumentalities running the elections, with President Eyadema, and with opposition leaders. As we saw discrepancies we would look into them, and we would tell one side or the other, "You shouldn't do this," or "You really must do this." And up to a point it worked. We had frequent meetings with President Eyadema, for example, when we thought his government, his Minister of the Interior, or someone was not handling the electoral lists in a responsible way to try to correct the situation. We were able to do some things that helped ensure that elections would in fact come about and in as reasonable circumstances as possible, given Togo's ongoing problems.

I wouldn't presume so much myself, but I confess that I was enormously pleased when, the night before we left Togo, the Prime Minister, at a dinner he gave for my wife and me with some of his political intimates and his wife, said quietly but very forcefully at the end of the meal: "It's quite simple...but for the efforts of these people (my wife and my staff), some of us would probably not be alive today, and it's certain that we would not have had the elections and the installation of the government over which I preside." I'm not sure about the first point, but maybe he's right. On the second point he was absolutely right. With regard to the elections, it is a fact that the opposition tried to pull out many, many times. They were always looking for excuses to pull out. They thought they couldn't win; understandably, they were afraid for their personal security and in many, many meetings--I'm sure other Ambassadors, the French and German, did so, too. I was absolutely insistent that they had to "stay the course". This particular man claimed that for him at least and his party, and he thought this was true of the other major opposition parties as well, that it was our particular efforts keeping their feet to the fire, that kept them in the electoral game. He frankly admitted that they had been looking for legitimate reasons not to go through with the elections. So, we had made a major effort, I think, that produced momentum toward a more open system in Togo. I told my staff the very first time I met with them on December 2 or 3, 1990: "The pace of events and political change are going to be very, very rapid in the period ahead. I can't predict which way things are going to go, but change will almost certainly be more rapid and more cataclysmic than any one of us thinks here today. But, the outcome is uncertain because even if everybody, every Togolese, were to agree on the direction of change--which they don't--there is no way that a country can 'spin on a dime' and change its political culture overnight--it is a long-term thing." So as I left Togo, my advice to the Department of State was to continue to do what we could to strengthen Togo's political institutions. We are putting in limited resources now, very limited resources. I recommended that we continue efforts to

encourage respect for human rights, to strengthen the elaboration of a truly independent judiciary and independent legislative assembly, to work for freedom of the press, and to provide support for future elections. I said that over the long haul, as Togo and other similarly placed countries try to move toward a more modern political culture, that this was the way we could help them best.

**THEODORE A. BOYD**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Lomé, Togo (1992-1996)**

*Theodore A. Boyd was born on October 9, 1941 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He served in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1964. Throughout his career he has held positions in countries including the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Iran, Nigeria, Ecuador, Togo, and Cameroon. Mr. Boyd was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 2005.*

*Q: Togo. You were there from when to when?*

BOYD: I was there from '92-'96. That was during the period when we had the dead cities and a lot of unrest but President Eyadema stayed in power throughout. There were occasional incursions from Ghana, some skirmishes and it was sometimes not a good place to be but we made it through.

*Q: Well Togo is sort of a, it looks like it is squeezed in there...*

BOYD: It's squeezed in between Benin and Ghana. It is not very wide, you can drive east to west in about two and a half hours and Lomé, the capital, is on the border with Ghana. We could walk from our house to the Ghanaian border. The political situation was unsettling. President Eyadema was almost deposed, but the opposition party leaders were fragmented and politically unsophisticated. They couldn't mount a good offensive so Eyadema was able to stay in power plus the fact that there were a lot of killings.

*Q: Was it sort of gratuitous killing?*

BOYD: Yes, because at the height of the unrest they were pulling bodies out of the river. Togo was the first sub-Saharan African country where the elected president was killed, Sylvanus Olympio.

*Q: He was killed right on the doorstep of the...*

BOYD: American Embassy, yes. The Embassy is still right there. It has been described as probably the only American Embassy that's in the center of an African market.

*Q: Who is our ambassador, or ambassadors while you were there?*

BOYD: When I got there it was Harmon Kirby, and then Johnny Young.

*Q: How did you, how were our relations with Togo and what was in it for us?*

BOYD: They don't have much. Their major commodity is phosphates.

*Q: By the time 1996 the Soviets were out of the game weren't they?*

BOYD: The Soviets were out of the game and the Chinese were in. The Chinese built big theatres, one in Lomé and one in President Eyadema's hometown. The Chinese were trying to get a foothold throughout Africa.

*Q: What were you doing then?*

BOYD: I was the Public Affairs Officer, so I was in charge of the cultural programming. We had a English teaching program, cultural exchanges and a few Fulbrighters. We were getting up into cyberspace so we were able to pass information material around in the local newspapers and radio and TV.

*Q: How would you describe the media in Togo?*

BOYD: The broadcast media is government controlled, there is a government controlled press and the independent press is oppressed, not suppressed. if they were to publish articles the government felt were uncomplimentary, the paper would be mysteriously trashed by person or persons unknown or closed down on trumped up charges.

*Q: Was there the feeling that President Eyadema government was going to be over thrown?*

BOYD: It had almost been overthrown but they were able to remain in power because he had control of the army. When he died his son was thrust into it the presidency, similar to what happened in the Congo.

*Q: There is quite a dispute over that.*

BOYD: Yeah, let's see, usually but nothing has much happened again.

*Q: How is life there?*

BOYD: It was great. Yes it was but then again most Foreign Service posts life is pretty good because we were walking distance to the border, our house was walking distance to the Atlantic Ocean, so a nice beach, all modern conveniences and many comforts, great restaurants.

*Q: What were the Togolese like?*

BOYD: They were very friendly, very warm, they are not belligerent people, most of them weren't because that's Eyadema's way of staying in power because the people would rather negotiate than fight. Again, for me it was quite good because definitely they thought I was, if not Togolese then maybe Ghanaian.

*Q: Were the Ghanaians...*

BOYD: Let's see, no we have to understand...we'll go ahead with your question.

*Q: Were the Ghanaians a menacing presence in...?*

BOYD: No, no the Ghanaians were not a menace to the Togolese because many of the Ghanaians and Togolese were cousins. We have to remember that they were all in the same area before the colonizers (Britain, France, Germany) came to the continent. When my colleagues wondered how the nominally French-speaking Togolese were able to communicate with their nominally English-speaking Ghanaian neighbors, I reminded them that the *lingua franca* was usually Ewe (Ebwé).

*Q: Yeah, did you find French essential?*

BOYD: Yes. Not as essential as it could have been because most of the people I dealt with spoke English spoke English. Let me backtrack and say, yeah I needed the French to get along. My wife joined the Foreign Service in 1992 and we were a tandem couple. In 1996 I was reassigned to Washington and she was assigned to Accra.

**JOHNNY YOUNG**  
**Ambassador**  
**Togo (1994-1997)**

*Ambassador Young was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. He was educated at Temple University and entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Before being named Ambassador, Mr. Young served in a number of embassies in the administrative field, including Madagascar, Guinea, Kenya, Qatar, Barbados, Jordan and the Netherlands. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1992. He subsequently served as US Ambassador to Togo (1994-1997), Bahrain (1997-2001) and Slovenia (2001-2004). Ambassador Young was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: Okay, tell me at the time what was happening in Togo and how were the relations with the United States?*

YOUNG: Relations with the United States were fair. They were not that great. We were not too pleased with Togo because since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, we had



a whole new paradigm for our relationship with countries in Africa and in the rest of the world as well. Democracy was the name of the new game. We wanted Togo to move in a more democratic way. We wanted it to reform its economy. It wasn't doing any of these things. The ruler at that time was Gnassingbe Eyadema who had come to power in a coup in 1967. Other than Joseph Mobutu of the Congo who was still around then he was the second longest serving head of state in Africa. That meant that by sheer tenure or longevity he enjoyed a considerable amount of respect from his fellow African leaders despite the fact that some of them were changing and reforming and moving in the right direction. He was not. My mandate when I went to Togo was to try and get the country to change, to reform, both politically and economically.

*Q: What was Eyadema doing in Togo? I mean with his people and with the economy?*

YOUNG: One word. Nothing. Absolutely nothing and the people were very frustrated as a result of that. Togo was a model of development and stability at one time during the late '60s, rather I would say during the '70s and '80s. It was a vacation spot; French and other nationalities would fly in from all over to enjoy the beaches and the resorts. The hotels were first class. It was famous for being a nice little place of stability. At the height of Togo's fame was when a lot of other countries in Africa were moving towards the left and moving towards socialism and communism and things like that. Togo remained stable and it was very pro-Democratic, very loyal to France, very loyal to the United States. Eyadema came to the U.S. and was welcomed by our President and was welcomed at famous universities who had given honorary doctorates and things like that because he was considered a good soldier in the war with the communists. That worked too well for him at that time.

Then when he began to lose favor and the aid and support wasn't there anymore. The country began to decline and it continued its downward slope. The European Union had begun to make its financial assistance or economic assistance conditional on reform so they had reduced the amount they were giving. The French had reduced the amount they were giving although they were still the principal country contributing. The Germans were basically doing the same as we were doing and the Italians and all of the others. Of course there was nothing forthcoming in terms of any kind of development assistance from other African countries. They were there basically as part of this solidarity with the other African countries. He wasn't doing anything. We arrived. It was clear to us when we took a glance around that this country was fading. It had had a glorious past and now it was into a dowdy, seedy future. The buildings were all shabby and hadn't been painted. Mildew and moss were growing on them. The number one hotel in town had great prospects. You could tell it was a grand hotel at one time. It was the largest skyscraper in town. I think about 15 or 20 floors. They had about six or seven upper floors that were not even constructed and had never been finished. The elevator didn't work. The water didn't work. Just all kinds of problems, yet Togo continued to reach out and present itself as a place that was perfect for international conferences and gatherings and meetings of that type. The other hotel in town the other big one had a similar situation. You could see it had a glorious past at one time and was struggling just to keep its head above water.

Shortly after I arrived I presented my credentials to President Eyadema. He allowed me to bring along my deputy which was very nice although the deputy sat in an outer room. We had our tête-à-tête after the presentation of credentials. I looked at him and I said to myself, you know, you

look just like you have been described in various narratives -- as a snake. I mean he looked like a snake. He had these slanted eyes and the whites were not white, but sort of orangey looking and penetrating black centers to them. Very well groomed and coifed, but just something about him that was slippery and it came through. A very clever man.

Over the course of my time there I was invited to many functions. It used to break my heart to go to these things, but I had no choice. I was the representative of the U.S. and I was expected to be there. I used every opportunity possible to make known what we would like to see in that country. We would go to these dinners. He loved hosting various leaders who would come to Africa. Because of his longevity they came and paid respects. They paid deference to him and he was a good intermediary from time to time.

I'll tell you at one point where he was particularly helpful to us. The French loved him. They loved him and they knew that they could use him for political reasons as an intermediary with other African leaders.

I remember when we were pushing so hard for reform the German ambassador and the European Union and the Americans were all on the same script, but we couldn't get the French to buy in. I remember talking to the French ambassador and he says, "Johnny, I can't help you. This man is important to us and we don't want to upset him. I'm sorry I can't join your cause."

*Q: How was he important do you think?*

YOUNG: As I said, as someone they could use as an entrée to get to other African leaders because of the virtue of his position. This was at a time also when Mobutu was fading because his health was failing and he was just not as useful, so Eyadema was the number one man. If you were to look at TV clips of Francophone meetings during that period you will find seated next to the French president, to his right, Eyadema because that was the number one place of honor. Eyadema lived like a king. He lived very high, no question about it. His office was beautifully done up. I mean you would look at his office building from the outside and say oh, that's not bad, but some seedy touches here and there. But when you walked inside it had the finest furniture from France and the finest curtains and on and on, very nice. This was equally true for his residences as well. I say residences as well because he had many. There had been several attempted efforts on his life. They all failed and as a result the word was that he never slept in the same place two nights in a row. That he had always had a different place to sleep. I found that was probably true because I remember on one occasion when I was in a desperate state to contact him at night, I really got a runaround before I finally got him.

He would have these lavish functions where he would host visiting African leaders and he would invite the entire diplomatic corps. We would go to these functions and we would begin with the finest caviar. We'd have all of these lovely things to begin the meal and the finest Dom Pérignon champagne and the finest French white and red wines. Then we would have the best filet mignon. You just name it. It was unbelievable. These were not small gatherings for two or three people, but these were gatherings for hundreds. He spent a fortune doing these kinds of functions, yet the teachers could not be paid, hospital workers couldn't be paid, government workers couldn't be paid. People were starving. In a country where corruption was already high,

people in their desperation resorted to very corrupt measures to get additional cash in order to take care of themselves and their families. For example the teachers would only impart let's say 60% of what they were supposed to cover. It used to sell some phosphates to the U.S. until we banned it for environmental reasons, but they had other purchasers who were still interested in purchasing it for agricultural purposes.

*Q: It's the sort of thing that passes on tremendous wealth.*

YOUNG: Well, when you can get your cut of that, it's not bad. If they sell \$150 million, I'm just using that as an example and you can get a nice 10% or so you could live quite nicely off of that I would say. The president always got his cut, you can rest assured. In addition to phosphates, they had cocoa and they had coffee and those were the principle exports. Some marine items like shrimp and crabs, but that was basically local, no big production for export.

*Q: Did we have any particular stake in the country?*

YOUNG: Economic stake?

*Q: Yes.*

YOUNG: None. No. Our stake was in basically regional stability and how it could contribute to that.

*Q: What was around Togo, what were the states?*

YOUNG: Oh, the states around it were Ghana, Benin. Ghana and Benin and to the north was Niger. Togo made a lot of money because it had access to the sea. Niger, Burkina Faso, those countries did not have access to the sea, so they could use the port of Lome, Togo, to get their goods in and these goods were trucked in. This is significant for another reason as well because it was also along this route that AIDS began to develop in Togo. It was with these truck drivers who would of course do a lot of things that truck drivers do and the prostitutes would seek them out or they would seek them out. Anyhow that route was a path for the spread of AIDS. We did something original that worked very well. I don't know if its still working or not, but we were able to win the support of the prostitutes in working with people in the communities and educating them about AIDS. That was a very effective initiative. We found that these prostitutes were very happy to receive the heightened community status and recognition that they got from being educators and teachers in the community in the fight against AIDS. I thought that was a very effective program. They helped. They helped to distribute condoms and things like that. That worked out very nicely.

*Q: Did you get any trouble from old church groups or members of congress?*

YOUNG: Not when I was there. Now, that may have happened later on and that's quite possible. You have to keep in mind that I was there during the Clinton administration when that was not an issue. I don't know what has transpired since that time, but this initiative was certainly applauded and recognized for its creativity when I was there.

*Q: Had AIDS made the inroads that it had in some countries, 30% of the population?*

YOUNG: No, not to that degree. It had not reached the epidemic proportions that it had for example in the Ivory Coast. The Ivory Coast was probably the worst area I can recall in West Africa in terms of AIDS. That had not reached Togo. Although I had people who worked for me in Togo who contracted AIDS and who died. We had one who worked for us right in the residence, and we tried to help him as much as we could. We did not fire him. We allowed him to continue his work with the residence. When I left and the new ambassador was coming in, we told her what the situation was and allowed her to make a decision what she wanted to do and she decided that she, too, would keep him on. We had a couple of other people that we knew of as well who worked for the mission who died of AIDS, but it had not at that point reached the numbers that it had in other places in West Africa or in Southern Africa.

I wanted to get back to Eyadema and his style. I mentioned about the dinners. Another thing that he liked to do was to go out to the airport and meet all the VIPs who were passing through Togo, particularly heads of state. If Nelson Mandela was passing through, he would make sure that he stopped in Togo and they met in the airport. He would call out the entire diplomatic corps and we would go out to the airport and wait and wait for the arrival of this person and for the departure of this person. The president would come around with the VIP while we stood in line like God knows what. We shook hands and bowed and that sort of thing. I would go out to these things. I would just tell my staff, okay, I'm going out to sweat for my government because I was going out to the airport and would have to stand in that sun. Sometimes of course you never knew, these things were rarely carried out in any kind of precise time. You'd go out and just wait and wait and wait. I remember my French colleague once said, this is terrible. You know we waste so much time here. We should each be given a Game Boy. I thought that was kind of amusing. There was a practical side to it. At least if you had Game Boy there you could sort of fiddle around with your thumbs until the time came to say hello and say goodbye. The president was from one of the minority tribes in Togo, from the north up towards the border with Burkina Faso. He had a home and palace and office up in a place called Kara, which was basically a de facto second capital city. He would sometimes summon us up to meetings there. He would send the jet down. He would get on his 707 and fly up to Kara and have a meeting up there. Again, very nicely decorated palace with all of the accouterments and furnishings from the best dealers in Europe and it was really quite up to date in that sense.

Before I went to Togo there were clear signs that there was really lots of trouble brewing under the surface. We got there I think in October of '94. I think in that September there had been an attempted coup. There had been the slaughter of a number of opposition people. Other opposition people gathered all of the bodies, put them in a truck, and drove them to the American Embassy. They dumped them all in front of the American Embassy. I'm told it was a ghastly, gruesome sight, which I'm sure it was, but they were trying to make a point. They were trying to get our attention. They were trying to get us to weigh in to get this man to rein in his boys. When I arrived there was no question that there were disappearances, people that we knew, particularly newspaper people and opposition people. They would disappear. You'd never hear from them again. Later you would find a picture in the press of their mutilated body. The press began to have some very difficult times with the government and some of those press people began to

disappear. Now, one thing we did that I thought was very successful was to keep the pressure on the government in terms of being accountable for the disappearance of people. We wouldn't let up, the Germans wouldn't let up, the European Union wouldn't let up. Some of this change came about because of a change in technology as well. Just a few years earlier you could have someone disappear in Togo. It would be written up maybe if some outside source got wind of it, but it would basically be contained internally because the technology wasn't there. The phone system didn't work. Cell phones didn't work, the fax system didn't work, computers were just getting started. But while we were there these things began to really mushroom and it made a tremendous difference. We would encourage other organizations to send faxes, to keep the pressure on so that when someone went missing suddenly the government was hit from all angles and realized that it couldn't just hush these things up. We had a big hand in making that possible and that was a big success. We got a lot of credit from the people of Togo for that. They recognized that the U.S. had a big hand in it and they gave us credit.

*Q: How did this work? Were the EU or other countries, would you get together and say okay, so and so has gone, let's do something about it?*

YOUNG: Absolutely. I can give you an example about a German diplomat. There would be these periods when security in Togo would be heightened because of information the government received that there was going to be some attempt to either invade the country or some attempt on the president's life. Things would tighten up and you could tell when they would tighten up. You would get no notice on the radio or the newspaper or anything like that, but barricades would suddenly mushroom throughout the city. You would get the word that you just had to be extremely careful at night. Well, one night during one of these periods of heightened security one of our German colleagues, I think he was a security officer at the German embassy, was returning home. He was stopped at one of these barricades. They searched his car. I think he became indignant with the fact that he was stopped and searched since he was a diplomat. He got in his car and drove off. As he drove off the police at the barricade opened fire with their machine guns and killed him, 32 bullets in the back. It was horrible. Absolutely horrible.

Well, we went through the government. I asked for a meeting with the government. We got together our colleagues from the diplomatic corps and we marched in to protest this and to demand an accounting. This was one of the occasions for example when the French Ambassador sat there after this atrocity with his mouth totally shut. He didn't say a thing. Now, here he is a fellow European and a German diplomat was gunned down savagely like that and he didn't say one word. I was the one who led the discussion. I told the government how outrageous this was and how they needed to do something about the security situation. Here we have all these inexperienced people manning these barricades. He did absolutely nothing. The government was very embarrassed by this. It was a horrible thing that happened. As horrible as it was I think some good came out of it. I think it made the government more sensitive in terms of what was going on, not only in terms of with foreigners, but even with its own people. Some transparency began to enter the process and it did make a difference. The government did apologize to the widow of this fellow. They offered her money. I don't know how much, but I think they offered her a pension and all kinds of things like that which they should have done.

*Q: Did you find that the French were sort of I won't say excluded, but sort of kept off to one side when the rest of you got together?*

YOUNG: They would always come. They always wanted to know what we were doing so they could report back home of course about what the American said and what the European Union fellow said and what the group said, but they would never join in. They would never say absolutely right. We're going to tell the president so and so and so. On a couple of occasions we were very unhappy with how the president was treating the opposition, how they were being harassed and not given an opportunity to basically put their message before the public. The government controlled the media so they didn't have access to television and things like that. We tried to help the opposition to get a fair hearing and they were very grateful for that. They were very pleased with that.

*Q: Were there any forces the equivalent of Charles Taylor the thing or anything like that going on?*

YOUNG: The president had structured the military so that it was totally loyal to him. The top people in the military were all of his ethnic group. They were not of the majority Ewe ethnic group. All of the top dogs in the military were his people. He had the military right in his pocket and then in addition to that he had a son who was a key person in the military although not the top person. That basically assured him some loyalty at the mid-level as well through his son Ernest who was quite a rascal in his own right.

*Q: How about looking at the dates '94 to '97, were the Russians, they were now the Russians by this time, were they out of the game completely or were they even there?*

YOUNG: They had left. This was not a country of interest to them any longer so they had left. They were represented either in Nigeria or through the Ivory Coast, one of those, but prior to '90 they did have a mission there, but they closed it up. The Chinese were there. You'll find the Chinese wherever you find us just about.

*Q: What were the Chinese doing?*

YOUNG: They had a few building projects. They were contributing aid to a few building projects and things like that. That's about all and of course the Togolese buy considerable merchandise from the Chinese. You go to these African markets and you find such plain simple things as matches and they're all made in China. Matches and these little mosquito coils to keep away the mosquitoes and malarial areas and what have you, all done by the Chinese. I remember visiting a factory, not a factory, a warehouse with just mosquito coils, which is a very simple thing. I could not believe it and they were all from China. It was enough to fill a football stadium. The quantity was so huge I couldn't believe it. They buy lots of products; a lot of the toys that are sold in the local markets, all made in China. Soccer balls, so the trade is quite significant, but it's basically a one-sided trading arrangement. There's very little that Togo offers to China. A little bit, maybe some phosphates because China is not as environmentally rigorous about that kind of thing as we are and maybe a little coffee and cocoa, but nothing much. It's more of a one-sided arrangement. More coming from China than going to.

*Q: Were the South Koreans or North Koreans?*

YOUNG: No, neither.

*Q: Israel?*

YOUNG: No, none, neither, no. None of them were there.

*Q: Did you have any sort of exchange program doing anything or was there much contact with the United States?*

YOUNG: We had a very active public affairs program. That's how we made great strides with the press through our public affairs program. We could go out to the provinces and do outreach programs. We could have speakers and we could have all kinds of programs of one kind or another. We had a very active and very successful English teaching program that was self-funded. We had hundreds of students and could have had even hundreds more if the State Department were willing to expand it, but it was not. I mean, again, we had a certain mindset in the State Department at that time. In other words, don't bother me with that country. I have other things to do, but yet this was a key means of influencing young minds, particularly young minds making them favorably disposed towards the United States. These English teaching programs were just the best thing we ever did. So, that worked out very nicely. We had one of the best programs I have ever seen anywhere in terms of celebration of black history month. We would bring in representatives from the schools from all over the country and have them engage in a black history quiz. It was broadcast live on radio. We held it in the USIS building and it worked out very well. I would give a speech at the beginning of the thing and then I would award the prizes for the best school. We would have plays. We would have poetry readings. I would go out to the university and do a lecture. It was just a very dynamic active program in terms of black history month.

*Q: How did you find you and your wife dealing with the Togolese? Are they open people?*

YOUNG: Lovely people, wonderful. It is a country divided along ethnic lines. We were in Lome, which is in the southern part of the country right on the coast. The predominant tribe in that area is the Ewe tribe, which is made up of an ethnic group that is predominant in Ghana and spilled over into Togo as well. If you recall, at one point Togoland was controlled by Germany. Germany was the colonial power. After World War II it was under the UN and eventually in the '50s people were given an option to either become part of Ghana or become part of Togo. The line was drawn right down the middle. This is again one of these artificial lines in Africa that literally split this ethnic group right down the middle. So you have half of the Ewe people in Ghana, the largest half in Ghana and then you have the other half in Togo. They are the predominant tribe in the Lome area. You have other tribes as well. I think Togo has something like 30 some different tribal groups. The president is from one of the minor tribes, the Kabye, from the northern part of the country. Kabye are predominantly Muslim. Ewe are predominantly Christian. You have a big split there, but we got along with all of them very well. They treated us quite nicely and we just felt sorry that such nice people couldn't have better leadership.

I wanted to cite another example of how Eyadema could be helpful at times. On a couple of occasions we got annoyed with him. We were not fully justified. There were upcoming elections in Benin. The president of Benin, Soglo, President Soglo was running. The polls were beginning to indicate that as admired and as liked as he was that perhaps he wasn't going to win, that perhaps somebody else was going to win. Word got to Washington that the Togolese were meddling in the affairs of Benin. Washington told me to speak to President Eyadema about this and I did as I was instructed. I went to him and said, Mr. President, we're concerned that there are reports so and so. He was furious. He said, that is absolutely not true, I can tell you right now, I am not meddling in the affairs of Benin. However those elections turn out it won't be because of anything that I've done here. He says, you have your satellites in the sky, beam them down on me and you can see that there's nothing happening in my country affecting Benin. I think that frankly he was right. I think that we had become so enamored of President Soglo in Benin and we were so anxious to have the Benin story continue along successful lines with President Soglo at the helm that we were prepared to believe anything. I reported that back to Washington in terms of what he said and what he did and that was the end of that. The elections took place and Soglo lost the election. A former head of state named of Kerekou won the elections, but they were free and fair and democratic and transparent and that was the important thing. It worked out very well.

On another occasion, the situation in the Congo was falling apart. We desperately needed to get Mobutu out of the Congo and get him somewhere and various places were proposed. Eyadema played a very key role in inviting Mobutu to leave the Congo and to make his way elsewhere via Togo. This occurred after a series of meetings by the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West Africa. There were entreaties from us as well for Eyadema to be encouraged in this effort to invite Mobutu to at least spend some time in Togo before moving on. In the end it did work. Mobutu came and that eased tensions in Zaire for a short period anyhow. He spent some time in Lome and then from Lome he went on to Morocco where he eventually died and that was the end of that. Eyadema was very helpful in that regard.

We were concerned about Eyadema's continuance in power and his then ascending to the role of the longest serving head of state in Africa. I would ask him in my meetings with him what were his plans for running because elections were going to take place very soon. What was he going to do? He says I've made up my mind, I'm not going to run again. I promise I'm not going to run again. The constitution says so and so, but I'm not going to do it. Well, I left Togo and the RPT Party, the president's party, controlled the legislature and they amended the constitution to allow him to run an additional year and he subsequently took advantage of that and ran an additional year and just continued on in power. Finally he died last year (2005) on February 5<sup>th</sup> I think it was while he was en route to France, had a heart attack and died. Then power was passed to his son which was totally out of line with the constitution. Once again, his party, the RPT Party stepped in and amended the constitution that allowed the son to become the president. Well, the African Union was outraged. This is a repeat of the kind of thing we had in Africa years ago and we're in a new era now, we don't do that sort of thing anymore. They put the pressure on and the president resigned and said that he would run in a legitimate election. Of course he ran and everybody knew that he would win. The RPT Party, which the father controlled and the son



basically took over, controlled everything. We knew it was going to be less than a fair election. That's where it is.

*Q: I was wondering, did Togo play any part in things like trying to bring about peace in other parts of the country? I mean I think of Liberia.*

YOUNG: Yes.

*Q: Rwanda and Sierra Leone?*

YOUNG: Yes. It played a mediating role. Eyadema hosted a number of conferences that were held, summits that were held in an effort to bring about peace in Liberia. He did play that kind of role, and unfortunately I don't think he was that successful at them. It wasn't because of him. He tried his best. The will was not there on the part of the parties to bring an end to these conflicts, but he definitely played a role there.

I had a very interesting development toward the end of my assignment. I had a young junior officer, Joel Ehrendreich, whom I liked very much. Smart, bright, the future of the Service. I really felt good about him. He did excellent work for us as a consular officer and then also reporting on political developments as well until we had a full time political officer, but he was a great consular officer. One day he came to me and he said, "I just had a group of people outside there. They wanted visas to go to the States to present some dance. You know they were people who had been cooks and bottle washers and all of these different jobs of that type." He said, how do I know you can dance? So, I took them outside in the courtyard of the embassy and said dance for me. So, they danced for him and he was satisfied that they were good dancers. Now, they had come with a note from the government saying that they were going as a troupe basically under government auspices. So, they danced for him. I said, well, that's fine. That's within your prerogative as the visa-issuing officer to satisfy yourself that peoples' bona fides are in order. If you did that fine, no problem, but he did have the presence of mind to come and tell me about it. He said, well, you might hear about this from the minister of foreign affairs, who was a moron of the highest order. I'm trying to think of his name now. He was just impossible, very pompous fellow who every step the president made you could see him dragging behind licking his boot. He was just the sycophantic type. I guess about a couple of hours later I got a call from this minister of foreign affairs. He says, can you come to the ministry right away. I said sure. He got me there and he said, you know, I got a report from our group that we sent over to get the visa that they were asked to dance before they got their visas. I said, well, that's within the prerogative of the consular officer and if he felt that that was necessary, so be it. He says, this is an outrage. We cannot have this. The dignity of the people of Togo has been insulted and on and on. I said, well, I'm sorry about that, but these are our rules. If they want to go this is what's required. That was that.

Later on that evening my wife and I went to a fashion show at the French ambassador's residence. It was a lavish event. The runway was strung across the swimming pool and these gorgeous ladies would just come floating across in the evening night with their beautiful billowing gowns. It was just a lovely event and champagne flowed and lovely hors' d'oeuvres, it was all done in the best French fashion. We had a good time, good food, good conversation. We

were out in the garden, the stars were out and the leaves in the palm trees. I mean it was just wonderful. We got home and we said, gee what a lovely evening that was. That was very nice.

Then as I entered the front door I almost stepped on this huge white envelope. I picked it up and I opened it and there was a sign on it. Urgence. So, I opened it up and there was this elaborate note from the ministry of foreign affairs advising me that the government took exception to the manner in which the dancers were required to perform in the courtyard of the embassy before they were issued their visas. We find that not proper. Beneath the dignity of the people of Togo and on and on. The officer responsible for it, Mr. Ehrendreich, is hereby declared persona non grata and must leave the country within 48 hours. Well, I was horrified and so was Mr. Ehrendreich. I called him and told him what had happened. I said, don't worry I'm behind you 100%. I'm going to do everything I can to keep you here. His tour was going to end in a couple of months in any case. I could have taken the easy way out and said, okay Joel, the government has declared you PNG and that's it. I got on the phone immediately. I tried everything. This is when I basically corroborated the rumor that Eyadema stayed in a different place every night because I had all these numbers for him and I kept calling all of these different numbers and they said no he's not here, try this number. I tried and tried. Finally I got him and I said Monsieur Presidente, I have to see you tomorrow. Even now if possible. He said, no, come tomorrow morning at 6:30. I said okay. The next day my DCM and I went to see Eyadema. I told him what I had come for. He knew, but he didn't acknowledge that he knew. This is 6:30, maybe 7:30 in the morning. Then he offered us lamb brochettes at 7:00 in the morning, lamb brochettes and then he brought out the Dom Pérignon champagne. There we are at 7:00 in the morning in the president's office eating lamb brochettes and drinking Dom Pérignon champagne while the president listens to us and regales us with stories of his past life. He stands up at one point and he says, did I ever tell you this story? I said, no Mr. President. He went around to his desk and he walked around and he said, "You know, I was up in [inaudible] and I was giving a speech and a man tried to kill me. He shot at me and fired at me. He didn't succeed. You know why?" I said, "No, Mr. President." He reached in his pocket and he pulled out a notebook. The notebook had the passage where the bullet had attempted to penetrate and he said, "Because of this. This is what saved me." You could see where it hadn't gone through and it literally did save him. I listened to the story. I looked at the DCM who was Terry McCulley who is presently our ambassador in Mali. Terry looked at me, I looked at Terry, we thought, this is weird. He said, thank you very much and that was the end of the meeting. I said, "But Mr. President, what I came to see you about." He said, "I'll talk to you later" and we left. As we were leaving the German ambassador was coming in.

That evening we were at a function where the German ambassador was present and I said, "How did your meeting with the president go?" He says, "My meeting went well. Did he tell that story about how he was." I said, "Yes, he did." He said, "Did he tell you the same story also?" I said, "Yes. I don't understand what that meant." He says, "Oh, there is a method to his madness. He was trying to tell you as God saved him on that occasion he will save you on this occasion as well." That was a little bit too thick for me to comprehend at that point so I let it go. The next day I called the president and he told me, don't worry it's okay. Mr. Ehrendreich could stay. Joel stayed and completed his assignment and went on. Those were some of our fascinating tales with President Eyadema who was quite a character.

Whenever I saw him he said, when can I get a visit to the United States? I just ducked the issue each time by saying the timing isn't right, Mr. President, we really can't do it. I found one excuse after another when I was saying in my heart, not on my watch Buster, no way. I would be laughed out of the Service if I recommended him for a visit to the U.S. and particularly with the change in circumstances in terms of our relationship with Africa in the late '90s versus what our relationship was in the late '80s. In the late '80s, mid '80s, he would have been welcomed once again, but it was a whole new world. We weren't in competition with the communists anymore, so his use to us was really not the same. He could not change. He would say, well, you invited the president of Ghana. What was his name?

*Q: I was thinking he was a flight lieutenant.*

YOUNG: That's right, Jerry Rawlings. He said, you invited Rawlings. I said, yes, but Rawlings came to power the way you did in a bloody coup, but Rawlings reformed and changed and as a result has been recognized and has been given a place of honor in the international community. When you change, the same will happen to you. He couldn't buy that at all. He said, I was your good friend, I stayed by you through thick and thin and he did, but the fact is the times had changed. He was not prepared to change with the times so he paid the price for that.

*Q: Did you feel any of the rumblings of the dispute between the president, the democratic president and the republican congress or the shutting down of the government and shutting down of offices.*

YOUNG: You mean when we closed embassies and that sort of thing? No, we didn't feel that. I felt some of that when I was in Sierra Leone when they attempted to decrease the size of the mission. I said, don't do it, this is a terrible mistake because I realized the great utility we got from that office particularly when we had the coup in Sierra Leone. I mean they provided me with very valuable information.

We had a small staff, but a great staff. A magnificent public affairs operation. George Newman was the last public affairs officer there, an older gentleman who came into the Service later, basically had two tours that he could do, maybe three before retiring mandatorily. Togo was his second tour and he did quite well. I was very proud of him and we not only became great colleagues, but good friends as well. We're friends to this day.

**CHARLES H. TWINING**  
**Chargé d'Affaires**  
**Lome (2005)**

*Charles H. Twining was born in Maryland in 1940. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1962 and an MA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1964. After entering the Foreign Service in 1964 his assignments included Tananarive, Dalat, Abidjan, Bangkok, Cotonou, Douala,*

*Ouagadougou, and Honolulu with ambassadorships to Cambodia and Cameroon.  
Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Ambassador Charles H. Twining in 2004.*

TWINING: The African Bureau asked me in 2005 to serve as Chargé d’Affaires in Lome, Togo, during most of the April-September period. With the civil conflicts that have been raging in recent years in nearby Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, no one wanted to see little Togo torn apart by ethnic or regional conflict, as well. This was a real possibility since the dictator in place for 38 years, a proud northerner, General Eyadema, had died in February, and succession was disputed. Our Ambassador in Lome left for an assignment in Iraq at the end of March, which was the reason I was asked to fill in temporarily. Very uneven Presidential elections were held on April 24, and when Eyadema’s son was announced two days later as the winner, Lome and other cities erupted in violence and bloodshed. While both pro-government and opposition elements were involved, it was primarily the former which was responsible for at least 400 deaths. We worked closely with France, Germany, the EU, and the UN in support of non-violence and reconciliation. While calm was restored, little Togo’s future path is not yet assured.

*End of reader*