

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

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INTERVIEW

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if you could give me a brief summary of your background before you entered the Department of State in 1961?

FOX: I would be happy to do that. I graduated from the University of Indiana, majoring in journalism, in 1950. Then I acquired a graduate degree in social psychology. My intentions in those days were to enter journalism, but I couldn't find many opportunities in that field. I therefore took a job with the Urban League in St. Louis. The Urban League was an organization involved in social service work in the black community, trying to develop job opportunities and providing job counseling.

I spent three years with the Urban League in St. Louis, and did the same work for another three years in St. Paul, Minnesota. After that, I took a position with the Minnesota State government in 1956. I remained there for five years, before coming to Washington in 1961.

Q: What interested you in State Department and its functions?

FOX: Somewhere along the line, I began to develop an interest in foreign affairs and international issues. But I must confess that what really brought me to Washington was an interest in the Food For Peace program. That program had been announced at the outset of the Kennedy Administration and was to be headed by a later unsuccessful Presidential candidate, George McGovern.

I came to Washington with the intention of working in that program, but I was unsuccessful in my quest. I then got in touch with Carl Rowen, a friend and had just been appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. He encouraged me to look into the Department. I began to set up appointments in the Department and eventually met Herman Pollack, who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel. We had a couple of long discussions and Herman Pollack offered me a job as his Special Assistant.

It was an interesting opportunity. I wasn't sure what I could do. I didn't know much about Foreign Service personnel operations. But he was willing to take a chance and thought I might bring a different perspective to the position. We agreed we would give it a try to see how it would work.

Interestingly enough, just after I entered on duty, the Kennedy Administration and Secretary Rusk developed a concern about minority representation, particularly blacks, in the Foreign Service. So I found myself devoting part of my time to this issue. That area of activity began to require an increasing amount of time, until I was concentrating on this problem full time.

Q: We are now discussing the 1961-63 period. I wonder if you could describe how you saw the opportunities in the Foreign Service for minorities, particularly for blacks, at that time?

FOX: To be frank, it was pretty appalling. Back in 1961, and I think my recollection of the statistics is fairly accurate, the career service totaled approximately 3,000-3,100

foreign service officers. Only 17 were black. Those officers knew each other quite well because they were all traveling a fairly closed assignment circuit. If one looked at their history, one would find that they spent most of their career overseas, either in Marseille, in the Canary Islands or in Haiti or in Liberia. There were, perhaps, in addition a couple of posts in Africa. That was pretty much the circuit for them.

The efforts to recruit blacks into the Foreign Service were just beginning and were minuscule. The results were not very good. In 1961, there were less than 30-40 blacks taking the Foreign Service entrance examination. Only a couple passed the written exam. I don't remember how many passed the oral examination. The numbers increased slightly in 1962 and 1963, but it was obvious that if one followed the standard method of recruitment as a means of increasing the number of blacks in the Foreign Service, it was going to take an awful long time to reach an adequate level of representation.

The Department decided that it wanted to do more than that. Secretary Rusk convened a meeting of black leaders in August, 1961. It was a day-long conference and this issue was the principal subject. From that conference came nine recommendations to the department, two of which I still remember because they were very important. One was that the Department should begin immediately an intensive recruitment program to raise the representation in the Foreign Service to an acceptable level by a number of different means. The other recommendation, which was also important, was that there should be no compromise with quality in the recruitment and selection of blacks. The person who pushed this recommendation hardest was Dr. Kenneth Clark, the eminent New York psychologist, who had conducted a number of studies in connection with the case of Brown vs. Kansas which led to the Supreme Court decision on desegregation in the public schools. He felt very strongly that there were an adequate number of competent blacks available in American society if the Department would only look for them.

After that August conference, my assignment was to implement the nine recommendations over the period of the succeeding 12-18 months.

Q: What were the problems in the Department that you had to deal with?

FOX: There were several. One was an attitude in the Department- not particularly overly racist. It was an attitude of unconcern. I think that by and large, the members of the career service did not give this issue much attention. It didn't seem to matter to them very much. No one had really ever called it to their attention.

Q: This attitude was probably fairly wide-spread in the ruling ranks of the government.

FOX: That is probably true. Within the senior levels of the bureaucracy, there wasn't any great concern. Keep in mind that in those days, the interest in the Foreign Service was pretty much limited to the graduates of the Eastern universities and particularly those schools in the Northeast.

Q: And pretty much limited to males.

FOX: Right. Mainly male. As a matter of fact, the Foreign Service in those days was considered to be pretty much "waspy". The Department was beginning to express some concern about the concentration of recruits from the eastern educational institutions, but not much had been done about it. The other reason for the under-representation of blacks was probably due to the fact that black people had little knowledge of the Foreign Service. Most black students at the college level had never seen a Foreign Service officer and had no idea of what the diplomatic service was all about. Therefore, at that particular juncture in their life, the Foreign Service did not appear to be an option to be considered.

Q: How did you go about working within the Department to deal with this?

FOX: We held a number of discussions with officials at the Assistant Secretary level, during which the findings and conclusions of the August, 1961 conference were discussed. The Secretary made it quite clear that he intended to take some positive steps to change the pattern of recruitment and representation within the Foreign Service.

We also initiated some activities with groups outside the Department, particularly with Presidents of black educational institutions that had strong curricula in the social sciences and in the fields of studies which were emphasized in the written examination. It was a slow and arduous process. We were trying on one hand to change the perception of the Foreign Service held by many outsiders while on the other, trying to sensitize the insiders to the need for increasing not only the numbers of minority officers in the Service, but to also make it a less male-oriented organization which represented largely the Eastern establishment.

Q: Probably at the time this problem of representation was also faced by other organizations. For example, I am sure that at the University of Nebraska not many thought of the Foreign Service as a potential career. It must have been sometimes very hard to get the word around that there was a career for others besides Eastern university graduates.

FOX: You are quite right. If you looked at a list of the ten universities that produced the largest number of successful candidates for the Foreign Service in those days, it would have included Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, and Georgetown. You didn't find the University of Texas or Alabama or Michigan or Nebraska, which are now well represented.

Q: You were trying to shake an institution which was very comfortable with the way it was going. It was working and assumed that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

FOX: That was the attitude.

Q: Did you run across any real road-blocks outside the inertia? Were there any people or bureaus who refused to go along with the analysis and the solutions, not necessarily for racist reasons, but for one reason or another.

FOX: We did run across road-blocks for reasons that were somewhat difficult to ascertain. The Foreign Service was always interested in protecting itself from invasions from the outside. Therefore, it looked upon any effort to infuse a large number of people, some above the entrance level, as a potential threat to the Service because it interfered with the promotion and assignment process.

Q: The Foreign Service had already gone through a traumatic experience four or five years earlier with the Wriston program, which amalgamated the Civil Service positions into the Foreign Service.

FOX: That's right. In 1961, the Foreign Service was still recovering from that experience and was not ready to face that problem again. I think also that there were certain geographic areas that were less inclined to be open-minded about this than others because they thought they dealt with governments that would not be receptive to the idea of blacks and other minorities serving in positions overseas.

Q: Wasn't this same view was also being applied to women?

FOX: Certainly.

Q: For example, you couldn't send a woman to an Arab country. At least that was the general perception.

FOX: That was the feeling. It went beyond the Arab countries. There weren't many women going to Latin America; they weren't going to the Far East. The only place women were assigned in those days was to Africa. There weren't even many women serving in European posts.

Q: Dick, you were involved in this effort from 1961 to 1965.

FOX: Right. I essentially began this work in 1962, after the August 1961 conference. I spent full time on this matter starting some time in 1962. The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity was created in 1963 and I became its first director. That is when we formally established a program in the Department to broaden recruitment into the career service.

We also developed several other ideas. For example, we tried to bring minorities into the Service through the Foreign Service Reserve Corps, which was an appointment authority which was available to the Secretary. We developed a third program which was called the Foreign Affairs Scholars program which was very innovative. This program was in response to our findings that while there were a number of well-trained and attractive

black students in the predominantly black institutions, they were having difficulty in preparing for the Foreign Service entrance examination because these institutions had not stressed as much as other institutions liberal arts, the humanities and particularly international affairs. Therefore, the Committee of Presidents that I mentioned earlier, with whom I was working, recommended that we find ways to broaden and deepen the offerings in the humanities and social sciences in a number of black institutions. Dr. Kenneth Clark and I were working closely together. We decided that we would put together a proposal for the Ford Foundation, in which we would seek a grant of \$ 11 million for these black institutions. These funds were to be used to strengthen the curriculum at these institutions.

We went to New York to present the proposal and received a very interesting reaction from the Ford Foundation. They indicated that they had already begun to work with the black higher educational institutions and preferred to follow their own plans which were not responsive to the needs that Clark and I outlined. But the Ford people went on to say that if our objectives were to increase the number of blacks in the Foreign Service, there should be a quicker and more effective way than the long range plan that the Ford Foundation was developing. Ford indicated that they would entertain another proposal from us.

Clark and I went back to the drawing board and drafted another proposal for a program to be called the Foreign Affairs Scholars program. This was to be a four year program in which forty students were to be identified every year at the end of their junior year. They would come to Washington for an internship during the summer between their junior and senior years to serve in one of the three foreign affairs agencies (State, AID or USIA).

We had the cooperation of the top management of all three agencies in identifying a proper organizational location of the interns. That internship period in Washington was to be supplemented by academic studies. We would have seminars on Saturdays, all day long. We were trying to provide both a work experience during the week and a view of how the foreign policy process worked on Saturdays. We had outstanding lecturers who volunteered for the Saturday seminars. At the end of the summer, the students would return to their institutions for their senior year, with the understanding that they would take the Foreign Service entrance examination. If they passed it, they would then move on to the oral interview.

We also agreed that we would finance a year of graduate study for 25 of the 40 students selected for the internships each year. Those twenty-five were expected to take the examination at least twice if not a third time. We hoped that the combination of the summer internships supplemented by the Saturday seminars and the year of graduate study would produce a number of successful candidates.

Q: How did it work out?

FOX: It didn't produce very many candidates, for understandable reasons. To most of the young people that we in effect enticed into this program, we literally said "This is something you should do". They had not made any commitment to the Foreign Service and many were already headed into other career paths. Many took the examination; not many passed it. Most went on to do other things. There were a few exceptions. George Moose, our Ambassador to Senegal, for example, came in under this program; Aurelia Brazeal, who is the Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs in Tokyo now, came into the Department under this program. There were several others: Ruth Davis, who is the Consul General in Barcelona. There were certainly some successes.

Q: The written exam is a tricky thing anyway. I speak from considerable experience have both written questions for the written and having administered the oral exam program for over a year. I am not sure what it proves. It proves that somebody has read a lot. It is a hurdle and that is all it is. The people who test high on the exam are no more likely to be more successful than those who score very low or indeed than those who don't pass at all.

FOX: As a matter of fact, the examination was analyzed by Kenneth Clark, and he found that there was very little correlation between success on the written examination and success in the Foreign Service. That was probably corroborated by a study that was done several years later which led to some change in the examination. But back to the Foreign Affairs Scholars Program--let me make one concluding remark. While it was true that not many came into the Foreign Service, most of them went on to do other things and were quite successful. We had a reunion of former Scholars a few months ago which about thirty-five or forty attended. It was surprising to see how eminently successful most of those people were. There were a half-dozen who entered the law, three are judges with one ready to accede to the highest court of Maryland. One is an outstanding conductor who was a student of Russian history at Harvard. We were attracted to him because of his interest in Russian studies but his avocation was music. When he obtained his undergraduate degree, he had to decide whether to pursue Russian studies or music. He opted for music and went to Julliard.

Q: You were doing something for the greater benefit of the US This is of course one of the great problems for programs of this kind; namely to find an absolute, specific way of getting people into the Foreign Service. You left the program in 1965. How did you feel about it? What had been accomplished by the time you left EEO?

FOX: I felt that I had perhaps done as much as I could do. I had worked hard on this master for about three years and had exhausted all the ideas that I had. I left in place the Foreign Affairs Scholars Program, which was funded by Ford at the level of 600 thousand dollars over four years. That was a substantial amount in those days. It appeared to have promise produce a number of successful candidates for the Foreign Service. I had also recruited roughly 30-35 people into the Department through the Foreign Service Reserve officer corps. While many came in at the junior or middle-grade level, they were candidates for Foreign Service officer positions. A number in fact did convert.

So I left feeling that I had put in place a number of mechanisms that would produce some results and I was very happy to turnover the reins of the program at that point to Eddie Williams, who was my successor.

Q: You then went to Madrid first as Deputy Administrative Officer and later promoted to Counselor for Administration. What did those jobs entail in the period of 1965-1970?

FOX: I had, of course, been selling the Foreign Service. I had been talking about the Foreign Service as a career for black people for three years plus. Now it was time for me to begin to move into the Foreign Service and to accept my responsibilities in this area and to prove that it was a viable career option. I went to Madrid obviously quite interested and hoping to learn a lot and to make some contributions as well, based on my earlier experiences both in and outside the Department. I found out very quickly that the administrative area is one of the most difficult ones to work in.

Q: It is certainly the most technical. You can't play it by ear as you might in the political area.

FOX: It is very much result oriented. You produce or else you have a lot of unhappy people around you. Part of it of course has to do with your responsibilities for comfortable housing, an adequately staffed Chancery which is appropriately maintained. But there are a lot of other problems too: personnel problems, the difficulties of obtaining sufficient financial resources to operate the Mission, and working with the foreign nationals which is not always an easy task.

Q: You had two quite different Ambassadors. First, you had Anger Biddle Duke who although technically was considered as a non-career ambassador but had been around for a long time. And then you had Robert Wagner. What was the difference?

FOX: They were certainly very different in personality, in style and in their approach to problems. You were right about Angie Duke. He had been around for a while. He had been Chief-of-Protocol in the Kennedy Administration before going to Madrid. I think he also had had a previous Ambassadorial appointment. He was certainly no stranger to the Foreign Service. He fitted in very well. He spoke Spanish; he had a great interest in Spanish culture and was well liked and highly regarded by the Spanish hierarchy. He did very well. I was with him for three years. He had a strong staff.

We had a number of interesting problems during this period. The US Air Force lost a nuclear weapon off the coast of Spain. All this started with an air-tanker that was refueling one of the SAC bombers. There was a crash. The SAC aircraft was carrying three or four nuclear weapons several of which landed on shore, but one of which was lost at sea. We stated that we would take every step possible to recover the bomb and did in fact recover it after some time. The concern of the Spanish government and certainly of the Spanish people was that the water at this beach, which was in the south and a great tourist attraction, had been contaminated by the nuclear device. The American

government decided we needed to convince the Spanish that this was not the case. We came up with the idea that the American Ambassador would go swimming in the waters as proof that there was no threat of any kind. So he and the Spanish Minister of Tourism, Fraga on a chilly day in April went swimming in those waters while a host of us stood off on the beach urging them on and recording the event with cameras. It was quite an event and captured considerable attention. It also proved the point very quickly that there was no problem.

Q: How was the Spanish government from an administrative point of view? Did you have many problems with them?

FOX: No, we didn't have a lot of problems with them. The Spanish government had the same kind of bureaucracy with its attendant slowness that you find in a lot of other governments. I suppose we may be guilty on the same score in the United States. I didn't have any great problems with them. They were obviously quite friendly to Americans. We had adequate consultations with them and things worked pretty well.

We had the problem of the American military presence that we had to contend with at the Torrejon airbase outside of Madrid. We also had a base at Zaragoza, and at Moron and a big submarine base at Rota.

With all that American military personnel in the country, there was concern about their activities and their comportment and what happened in the event of any problems between the American military and the Spanish civilian authorities.

Q: Did you have any particular problems working in the Embassy during the five years you were there? With the staff? Or the Ambassador?

FOX: Robert Wagner was a very interesting man and entirely different from Angie Duke. Duke was a very sophisticated, socially active man who represented the United States very well. He and his wife, Robin, were very attractive people. Robert Wagner came to Madrid after a long stint as Mayor of New York City. He probably had traveled overseas before, but certainly this role of Ambassador was something entirely new. He arrived unsure of what he was supposed to do and how he was to do it.

Wagner was a very intelligent man who listened well and he very quickly discerned that the people around him were there to help him, not to hurt him. He listened to their advice and performed very well. The Spaniards liked him because he was a politician and they loved politics. They were particularly interested in New York politics and Bob Wagner could sit and regale you for hours with stories about New York politics. He also had the advantage that as Mayor of New York he had met and greeted a number of Spanish figures upon their arrival in New York. So there was a group of people in Madrid that he had met at one time or other during their visits to the United States.

But he had a very short tenure in Madrid. He was there for only one year and was replaced in the summer of 1969 by Robert Hill, under whom I also served. You might

remember that President Johnson left the White House in early 1969 after Nixon was elected as President in 1968. Robert Hill was President Nixon's appointee to Spain.

Mr. Hill arrived in early 1969 after having served as Ambassador in Mexico and somewhere in Central America. He was an entirely different personality from his predecessors. So I had the experience of working with three Ambassadors in five years, which keeps alert.

Q: As Counselor for Administration at a major post, you must have come out well qualified after all that immersion in the cauldron.

FOX: I learned an awful lot in Madrid.

Q: In 1970, you came back to Washington in the Department first as Executive Director of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. You were in that job until 1973 when you became the Deputy Assistant Secretary in that Bureau until 1974. What did these positions involve?

FOX: I had hoped that after the years in Madrid, to be assigned to the War College. That was in the offing and I was looking forward to it very much. One day, out of the blue, while I was still in Madrid, I got a letter from Fred Irving who was in the Bureau telling me that they had requested my assignment to the Bureau and that my assignment to the War College could come later. The reason for this was that they wanted me to become the Executive Director in light of the job I had done in Madrid. I had established my bone-fides in the administrative field as a pretty good manager. The Bureau had an active program with a budget of \$37-38 million which was a line item appropriation the State Department budget and a staff of close to 300 people. It was therefore a relatively large operation. I was asked to join the Bureau and decided after getting some information about it that it was probably a pretty good job. I must say that it was one of most enjoyable assignments I had. The Assistant secretary in 1970 was John Richardson who had come from outside the Department, but was very creative and innovative. He had a very clear idea of what educational and cultural exchanges ought to be achieving. No one else in the Department from the Secretary on down really cared very much about the educational exchange program, leaving the Bureau pretty much on its own to develop the program and to try to strengthen it.

We spent four years working on the program. It was a large Bureau, but it was the only activity in the Department that had a relatively large domestic constituency. That made it both an interesting and different experience for me. We worked very closely with the academic community because we had the Fulbright program in our jurisdiction; we had the International Visitors program which brought foreign visitors to the United States and spread them throughout the country. This program also had support groups in the country.

Q: Why was this Bureau in the Department of State and not USIA, which would appear to be more natural? And where it is now?

FOX: The Bureau was there because when the legislation was passed in 1961 it placed the Bureau in the Department or more accurately, placed the programs in the Department. It had always been in the Department, not USIA, but it was obviously not the best arrangement. There were a number of people in the Department and in Congress who felt that it was more appropriately placed there than in USIA. They were determined to keep it in the Department. The people in USIA on the other hand were somewhat chagrined about this arrangement. The programs were assigned to the Department in Washington, while overseas the exchange programs--the Fulbright program--and the international visitors program were really carried out by the USIA posts. It was a jerry-built arrangement and it worked only because the people in Washington--in the Department and in USIA-- saw to it that it worked very well. It obviously meant that we had a very close working relationship with the USIA staff.

Q: There wasn't a "dog in a manger" attitude on the USIA side?

FOX: There was some of that. I think they were somewhat resentful that the programs had been assigned to the Department. On the other hand, it offered some very good assignments to USIA officers when they were back in Washington. These officers would be assigned to these programs in State. This arrangement also provided State officers an opportunity to develop and manage programs and budgets. That opportunity was not available in any other assignment in the Department. We used that fact as part of our recruitment pitch to get FSOs to accept assignment to the Bureau.

Q: What did you see as your main tasks in your particular job?

FOX: First of all, we had a budget to develop and to defend in Congress before John Rooney and Frank Bow. If you recall John Rooney of Brooklyn, he was a shrewd and savvy legislator and you couldn't put anything over on him. You had to go up there with your facts and you had to know more about the programs than he knew. He had sources that were amazing. Every year, in our appearance before him, we never knew what to expect, what Rooney would be concerned about, what he would take issue with. Beyond that, it was a complicated budget. We had "excess foreign currency" which was available for the programs and we had the appropriated funds. We had to decide how we would allocate these availabilities based on what we assumed to be the priorities among countries for each geographical areas. It had been conventional wisdom from the beginning of the program that the largest allocations would be made to Western Europe because those were the countries that were closest to us in political and strategic terms. But yet John Richardson and some of us felt that we should begin to look at the developing countries to see what linkages and connections we could build with them through the use of the Fulbright and international visitors exchange programs. We began to change the allocations to reflect that interest and to try to strengthen the relationships with the newly developing countries. We were also concerned with some of the newly industrialized countries, such as Japan, to see what kind of linkages and inter-cultural connections we could make with them long before the American public became

conscious of the fact that Japan was going to develop into an economic and technological giant.

We spent a lot of time thinking about what the programs could be doing to strengthen inter-cultural and international understandings and communications.

Q: Did you have battles of Europe vs. Africa vs other places in the financial resources allocation process? I would think that European Bureau would question some of your thinking on the grounds that we would be losing our ties with France, for example, by transferring some of the money to Africa.

FOX: We had some inter-bureau contests; that is, to the extent that we could get the geographic bureaus to express an interest in the exchange programs. Interestingly enough, in those days, EUR was not as interested in this activity as was NEA and AF and EA. They were the ones that were beginning to see the potential of these programs for support of political objectives over the long run. They were the ones who wanted larger allocations of funds made to the posts in their regions. To that extent, we did have some bureaucratic squabbles, but none were really serious.

Q: Are there any other areas of work in this period that you would like to mention?

FOX: There were a couple of other things that we did in those days that might be of interest. There were a number of fledgling organizations that were developing during this period--the "sister cities" program, the "Friends of the Americas", "The People to People"--. These were the early volunteer programs that were being supported largely by public funds and volunteers. The directors of these programs came to the Department and to the Bureau requesting support and endorsement. The Bureau wisely decided that these were activities that could have great benefit to the American government and people over a longer period of time. We gave them support, we gave some financial assistance. We drew them into a network of organizations involved in educational exchanges that kept them in touch with us and we with them.

Q: There was a major effort made to insure that they didn't go completely in their own way without some close coordination.

FOX: Yes. Not necessarily coordination, but simply assurance that they had the best information available to them as they tried to develop their overseas connections. We kept them informed and were always willing to consult with them when they needed some information about what reception they could expect in any particular country. It was a very interesting job. I enjoyed working in the Bureau very much. After three years there as Executive Director, I was asked to move up to Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of the country programs. Since I had been involved in the financial resource allocation process for three years, I knew the country programs quite well. I spent a year as Deputy Assistant Secretary before being asked to take an assignment in personnel. That was the next stage in my career.

Q: One other question before we move to that. In the educational-cultural exchange program, did the Vietnam War play a role? Did it cause a problem for you and the CU operations?

FOX: I don't recall that Vietnam affected the exchange programs in any substantial way.

Q: When you went to Personnel, what was your assignment and with whom were you working?

FOX: I had been in the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs for four years. I had expected to be in the job of Deputy Assistant Secretary for another year, but Nathaniel Davis, who was the Director General of the Foreign Service then called me one day and asked me to have lunch with him. The result of that was that he wanted me to take the job as the Deputy Director of Personnel for Counseling and Assignments. Personnel operations was an activity of which I had some knowledge, but I didn't know the inner workings of the personnel system. I thought about the offer for a little while and asked Davis why I should take this job. He said that it was a job that needed to be performed and secondly, he said that he had in mind some changes in the personnel operations in the Department and was trying to assemble a team of people who could help him to effect those changes. He said that he thought I could help. With that kind of invitation, it was pretty hard to turn the Director General down. Nat Davis had a powerful personality. He kept after me until I decided that I would take the assignment. I transferred from CU in the summer of 1974.

I found the personnel job perhaps the most difficult one I have had in my life. First of all, the personnel operations of the Department are very complex and almost unmanageable. This was particularly true then because the geographic bureaus controlled the assignment process. They decided who they wanted and who they didn't want. They held on to the people they wanted and would turn those that didn't live up to their standards over to the personnel system to be reassigned. Making assignment in those days was a real bartering process.

Q: It had every element of the Iranian rug merchant bazaar in it, I think.

FOX: Right. What you saw above the surface wasn't always the actual story. That were a lot of deals that had been made between people in the Bureau and those coming back from overseas assignments that we in Personnel knew nothing about. We were sitting there proposing what we considered to be a series of rational assignments for people returning from overseas only to find that none of these conformed in any way with what the Bureaus expected or intended to have happen. The Bureaus were in control in those days, so that when they refused an assignment we had to start the process all over again. That was my introduction to the personnel operations of the Department and I found it one of the most frustrating experiences I could possibly have had.

Q: Did you get a lot telephone calls from senior officers around the Secretary, for example, giving you instructions on how to handle individual cases?

FOX: No, there was not so much of that as there was the bargaining among the Bureaus themselves and with us. It was a matter of the Assistant Secretary calling the Director General requesting the assignment of certain officers to positions in his jurisdiction. The Assistant Secretary would state that the officers were known to him or to his Bureaus officials, that they had been assigned overseas in certain positions which qualified them for the onward assignments. This would happen after my office had already proposed assignments to the Bureau of other people and after negotiations had already taken place about our proposals. If the Bureau officials couldn't stare me down, they would return to their Bureaus and report that Personnel had been uncooperative. Then the Assistant Secretary was asked to call the Director General. The D.G. was of course interested in supporting his staff's recommendations, but he realized that if the dispute were to be appealed to one of the Under Secretaries or to the Secretary that more often than not we would lose.

That was one of the activities in which I was involved. I also was deeply involved in the assignment of senior personnel, proposing DCM candidates and participating in the preparation of slates of career officers for Ambassadorial assignments. I spent a lot of time reading files. I think I read the file of every Foreign Service officer in Classes 1,2 and 3 within a three-four months period. That was not an easy feat.

Q: One thing that people who are not familiar with the system might miss is that although the Foreign Service has a fair promotion system -- I say that based on personal experience having served on selection boards-- the position to which one is assigned-- which is a frequent occurrence in a system that requires movement every three-four years, particularly at the senior levels--is absolutely crucial to promotion opportunities. Therefore, in many cases, an assignment is a matter of life and death and an effort will be made by all involved to make sure that their friends or the "right" person, as they see it, will be given the "right" assignment. This provides far greater pressure than in probably any other negotiation conducted by the State Department.

FOX: Right. You characterized it correctly. Assignments were viewed then and now as the stepping stone to promotions. If you got the "right" assignment then it was believed, and probably correctly so, that you would get the next promotion. Foreign Service officers pay a lot of attention to the kind of assignments they are going to receive and they consult widely with lots of people about their careers and the positions they should be seeking. There is a lot of trading with one officer willing to help another now on the assumption that the latter may be in a position to help the former in the foreseeable future with his onward assignment.

Q: I served a stint in personnel and I dined out on that experience for years. I can't think of any other major organization where an assignment in personnel, which is generally a fairly routine task in most other institutions, is highly prized and many "bright stars"

have obtained assignments to personnel because this is an important element to have in their career--to know how the system works and to develop contacts within that system.

FOX: That is a very valid observation. I would also add that officers sought jobs in Personnel in order to help with onward assignments for a number of people who might subsequently need assistance to them. As I completed my first year as Deputy Personnel Director, Nat Davis was reassigned to Assistant Secretary for Africa Affairs. Carol Laise was appointed as Director General--the first woman to be so honored--. One of the things we discussed as she was breaking into the job was a way to change the personnel assignment process in the Department. Specifically, what we had in mind was the centralization of the authority for the assignment process in the Office of Personnel. We thought that her arrival was the propitious time for forwarding a memorandum to the Secretary. You may recall that about this time, Secretary Kissinger had become concerned about the concentration of assignments of particular officers to a single geographical area. He felt that there was too much of this in the Foreign Service and he proposed something which was called "global outlook program" (GLOP). So Personnel had already begun back in 1974 to try to wean people away from their primary geographical area and to assign them to a second geographic area. We thought that this effort, coupled with the GLOP notion and the attempt to improve the utilization of the Department's personnel resources, gave us the best opportunity to propose to the Secretary that the whole personnel assignment process should be centralized in the Office of Personnel. With the Director General's blessing and strong support, that proposal went forward.

To our great surprise, the Secretary agreed to it. We later found out that his agreement was only part of the picture. The rest came when we tried to get the geographic bureaus not only to agree but also to implement the proposal. You haven't experienced difficult negotiations in the Department until you get involved in trying to get geographic bureaus to give up powers that they consider vital to their own interests. It was a very, very difficult period of negotiations that took place. As a matter of fact, I spent another year in the Office of Personnel from 1975 to 1976 trying to implement the new personnel operations; i.e. the centralization. I must have worked 15-16 hours each work day and Saturdays as well because we had to be able to present a convincing justification to the bureaus for each assignment made which would over-ride any of the ideas they had about the acceptability of people already in the Bureau.

Q: I imagine that EUR was the most difficult.

FOX: Absolutely.

Q: Once you become a Europeanist, not many people wanted to leave the area.

FOX: Nobody wanted to leave EUR, of whom I am aware. On the other hand, you had those who had served in Africa, slogging their way through those small posts, feeling that they had served in that region long enough and wishing to see another part of the world. Same was true for the Latin-Americanists. So this was a difficult period.

There were some other interesting developments at that time. The economic "cone" was beginning to be perceived as a very important functional activity in the Department. The economic training course at FSI had been running for sometime and a number of officers had been through it. That was essentially an introduction to the fundamentals of economics. It was sufficient to qualify you for an assignment as an economic officer, but you could not be considered to be a qualified economic officer until you had several tours after that. There were competitions between "cones" at that time. Political officers were beginning to see that the route to fast promotions wasn't necessarily in the political "cone". Opportunities were better and brighter if you were an economic officer. That generated a number of attempts to transit from one "cone" to another. In addition, there were a number of very interesting opportunities developing in the Middle East at that point. There were small posts with a number of DCM positions.

Q: For example, there was the Persian Gulf posts--Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, etc-- which were opening up.

FOX: Right. Those were interesting assignments then. The assignments were largely going to the economic officers because of the economic issues which were predominant in that area. The political officers were being left out of these opportunities. That was one of the reasons for the attempt to change from the political to the economic "cone". But all these issues were converging at the same time: the Secretary's interest in having officers acquire knowledge in a second geographic area, centralization of the personnel authority, the concern about the "cone" designations and the attempts to move from one to another, and then the breaking of the lock that the geographic bureaus had on the assignment process. I went into the job with little gray hair and two years later emerged as an old man.

Q: Did this bring you to your appointment as Ambassador?

FOX: No. After the personnel assignment, I spent a year in the Senior Seminar.

Q: You became Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago from 1977 to 1979. How did that come about?

FOX: I don't really know. I wasn't in Personnel at time. I had been told in 1974 when I was still in CU that I was the Department's candidate for the post in Barbados. My name had actually gone to the White House. Unfortunately, the White House had a political appointee in mind. By 1974, I had been a Class 1 Officer for several years and presumably I was being considered for appointment to Ambassadorial assignment. I think it would have been just a matter of time before I would come up for consideration again. After the job in Personnel and the Senior Seminar, I was on a couple of lists.

Q: What were our interests in Trinidad and Tobago in 1977?

FOX: Back in 1977, the Carter administration had indicated that it wanted to strengthen our relationships with the Caribbean, and particularly with the Eastern Caribbean. We had come through a period of time in the latter part of the Kissinger era and during the Ford administration when it was felt that we had tended to over-look the countries in the Eastern Caribbean. We had not really supported them and yet they were our closest neighbors. They supplied a large number of immigrants to the United States--I am referring primarily to Jamaica and Trinidad and Barbados--. I had done a paper when I was in Personnel pointing this out and suggesting that we had made a mistake in assigning non-career people to the Ambassadorial positions in that area when ideally we should have career officers there who could recognize the importance of the relationship between the Caribbean and the United States. That may have surfaced at some point and may have led to me being considered for one of those jobs.

Back to your question concerning our interests in Trinidad. The Carter administration had announced at its beginning, the "Caribbean Initiative". The idea was to try to strengthen our relationships with those countries through some direct support and through multilateral assistance as well. They needed help because in 1973 the oil prices had skyrocketed and all of these countries were facing very serious debt problems. They needed some means of servicing their debt as well as some funds for internal economic development. The Secretary had gone down to the Caribbean in early 1977, had visited each country and had stopped in Jamaica for a conference at which he agreed that he would propose an Caribbean initiative which would have the United States attempt to persuade a number of Western European governments to form a consortium of donors, that would make funds available to these countries for debt servicing and internal economic development. Trinidad was the only country in the Caribbean that did not need this kind of assistance because it was an oil producing nation. Trinidad had profited from the increase in oil prices. Our interests therefore in Trinidad in those days was to get it to agree to be a donor. I went there with instructions to try to move Trinidad in that direction to the extent possible and to do all we could to keep it supportive of the Caribbean initiative.

We had some problems because one of the countries that had been identified as a major donor was Venezuela. The relationship between Venezuela and Trinidad historically has been very poor. Eric Williams who was then Prime Minister in Trinidad had always looked on Venezuela as an extremely racist country. He was very critical of Venezuela. One of reasons for this attitude was that the Venezuelans would allow Trinidadians to enter Venezuela but they could not become citizens, even if they married Venezuelan nationals. He thought that this was typical of a racist government and so when we began to talk about donor countries and mentioned Venezuela among them, Mr. Williams was offended by this idea. I had to keep the Trinidadian government aware of our interests in proceeding with the initiative and to persuade them that Venezuela would not be the prime mover. The United States would be chief sponsor of the proposal and we hoped that the British and the Canadians and the German and the Dutch governments would provide assistance. We had however to approach others in the area who had enormous amounts of assets to contribute.

We also had some US investment in Trinidad which were to protect. We had a navigational facility, the OMEGA station, was extremely important to us.

Q: How did you find dealing with the government of Eric Williams?

FOX: It was extremely difficult. Eric Williams was a recluse and as a matter of fact, he was characterized as being manic-depressive. He had periods when he was very visible and socially active, but then there were long periods when he would seclude himself in his residence and would only be available to his Cabinet. He was a very difficult man to deal with. He developed the idea that he as Prime Minister would not be available to any foreign Ambassadors. We would have to work through his Foreign Minister. However, I did see him on a couple of occasions when he was interested in discussing an issue with me. When I had instructions to get in touch with the Prime Minister, he was never available.

Q: Your main dealings were therefore with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FOX: Main, but not solely. Trinidad had in addition to their oil production large amounts of natural gas-- a by-product. In those days, we were concerned about having an adequate supply of natural gas. The Trinidadian government decided that they had a sufficient supply of natural gas to export it and the United States was the obvious market. They began discussions with us about developing a facility for gas liquefaction. They also began negotiations in the US about sales. They quickly found out that liquefaction is an extremely expensive venture because you not only had to build a plant in Trinidad, but also had to have tankers for transportation and then you had to deliquify it in the United States off-shore and pipe it to terminals on the mainland. The brunt of those costs would have to be borne by the Trinidadian government. In addition, they had competition from natural gas from Canada as well as from Alaska and it appeared that the US would have an adequate supply.

So I had long discussions with the Minister of Petroleum about this proposal. We also discussed with the Trinidadians their foreign reserves which at that time amounted to two-two and half billion dollars. They wanted to start a very ambitious development program, at the center of which would stand an iron and steel mill. When the people in Washington heard that Trinidad was considering building an iron and steel mill, it caused a great deal of concern because our steel industry was in the throes of a down-turn at that time.

Q: That was period also which lasted till today during which steel was in surplus--it is one of those products that looks wonderful and employs a lot of people, but the product is going begging.

FOX: They had done a very quick survey and they found that there was a shortage of construction wire rods in south-east US They considered that situation as an ideal market.

They had talked to a number of wholesalers who had indicated a willingness to handle the product. But they had not done an adequate survey of the market and had not really looked very carefully at the potential costs and at the long-range market before committing themselves to this plan. They came to Washington to talk to the Export-Import Bank about credits and loan guarantees in order to build this plant. They got a commitment from Ex-Imp that it would support the plant; subsequently, the Bank backed down. This generated another long series of discussions about the US government renegeing on its promises.

Q: The problems then were primarily economic?

FOX: Almost entirely.

Q: And almost all technical?

FOX: Yes. Technical in the sense that I had to learn quite a bit about the oil and gas industry, which was relatively new to me. I had a very good economic officer and had good support from Washington.

Q: Did you treat Trinidad and Tobago as a whole or as two separate entities?

FOX: I treated it as a whole, but the government did not. The government treated Tobago as a separate entity. The government had very strong ideas about their own counties. Tobago was separated by about forty miles of water--beautiful island--but poorly developed, very inadequately developed. There were several hotels. It was largely a tourist area for the people of Trinidad. Had the government decided to go into tourism, it could have been another Jamaica, it could have been another Virgin Islands, it had beautiful beaches, with shallow waters and a sand-bar that goes about fifty yards off-shore. A lot could have been done with natural resources, but Mr. Williams did not want all these people, particularly Americans, turning his country into a tourist haven. He therefore refused to consider any tourism development in Tobago.

The government in Trinidad felt that the people of Tobago were always critical of the central government and were not very supportive. So they didn't treat them very well. This generated internal political disputes that occurred frequently.

Continuation of interview: June 13, 1989

Q: When you were in Trinidad-Tobago, did you have any trouble with American tourists or businessmen?

FOX: No. I had no problems with either. The number of American tourists was not great. The travel between the US and Trinidad is usually the reverse--Trinidadians going to the United States. Therefore the tourist problems were minimal. US investment was not large

at the time I was there. The largest US firm was Amoco and they enjoyed very good relations with the Government of Trinidad because they were extracting oil.

Q: Did Amoco have its own international relations experts to take care of any problems that might arise?

FOX: They had that office in Chicago which was available to all of their overseas operations. In addition, the Trinidadian Government was cordial to the American oil firms. They had their own network and their contacts within the government. That system operated very effectively. They didn't need any assistance from the American Embassy.

Q: How would you describe the staff of your Embassy?

FOX: Given the state of relations at that time between the two governments, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the staff. We didn't have a lot of economic activity with the Government of Trinidad. Yet we had a solid and competent economic officer. Political problems were minimal and we had a very good staff to handle that area. I thought we were quite well off.

Q: You dealt in those days with a figure who had been in the foreign affairs establishment for a long time, Terence Todman. He was Assistant Secretary for American Republics Affairs (ARA). What was his operating style?

FOX: I did deal with Terry because he came to Trinidad once for a visit to the Caribbean. He had a deep interest in the Caribbean because he was born there--in the Virgin Islands. He had a personal interest in the Caribbean affairs. His operating style was to give the Chiefs of Mission as much support as they needed. There was not great interference out of his office with what we were doing. Yet we knew if we needed to get to him on a particular issue or to get some support either within the Department or outside, we could. I did spend quite a bit of time with him, discussing one specific issue: the tariff on rum produced in the West Indies. We spent some time trying to develop a strategy for attacking that problem.

The issue was that the tariff on rum produced on the West Indies was considerably higher than on rum produced in Puerto Rico. The reason for it was that the funds that were derived from the tariff on West Indian rum was used for a federal payment to Puerto Rico. So the West Indians always complained about the difficulties they were encountering to win their share of the market, in light of the high comparative cost their rum. That was a problem which I was aware of when I went to Trinidad. I began to try to solve it, but after looking in to it for some months--talking to people on the Hill-- it became apparent that because of the federal payment, there was little inclination to change the system.

Q: After Trinidad-Tobago, you went were assigned to the Inspection Corps as the deputy Inspector General. How was that as an assignment?

FOX: I felt quite good about it. The Inspection staff had always enjoyed a high reputation in the Department. It had its ups and downs in recent years, but when I went to it, the whole inspection, auditing and use of resources process had become extremely important. I spent almost four years in that office. It was one of the more enjoyable assignments that I had in the Foreign Service.

Q: What were the principal concerns that you dealt with?

FOX: I was the senior Deputy and therefore worked pretty much across the Board. My main responsibility was over-seeing the inspection process--the inspection of foreign service posts to see how the conduct of foreign relations was being handled. As such, I had to supervise a number of senior inspectors who were heading the various teams that were working throughout the world. In addition, we were beginning to increase the size of our audit staff which was at that time something entirely new and different for the Department's Inspector General's office. We had not gotten into auditing to any large extent up to this time. The passage of the I.G. Act of 1976 placed a much heavier responsibility on all government agencies to look into waste, fraud and mismanagement. Consequently, we were told to increase the size of the audit staff and to combine it with the Inspection process. We were in effect restructuring and creating a new kind of inspection procedure for the Department of State, which took some effort. The posts had to make adjustments in their preparations for and views of inspections. I would add one thing: one of the fundamental tenets that we kept in the conversion process was to try to maintain the practice of never pulling any surprises on the posts. We were interested in a constructive approach to the issues of waste, fraud and mismanagement and not so much in acting as policemen.

Q: Looking back on your Foreign Service career, what gave you the greatest satisfaction?

FOX: Probably two things: one was early in my career when I was able to, with the help of some others--Herman Pollack in particular--persuade the Ford Foundation to give a grant of \$ 600,000 to a group of black colleges so that they could work with the Department on a Foreign Affairs Scholar program, which I described earlier. It was unprecedented to have a government program designed primarily to increase minority representation in the Foreign Service financed by a private non-profit philanthropic organization. It was an extremely ambitious effort and it created a precedent and pattern for others to duplicate.

The other high point was my selection as Chief of Mission. That is the ultimate ambition of most of us in the Foreign Service and I was delighted to reach that level.

Q: If a young black came to you today and asked you whether you would recommend the Foreign Service as a career, how would you counsel him?

FOX: I would be most encouraging because as I say repeatedly to young black people, we have a responsibility not only to be interested in and involved in domestic issues in this

country, but also its international policies. We can't sit here and complain about US policy in Africa or in Central America or elsewhere, unless we are willing to become involved in it. And not just as observers. We must be participants. That means that some of us are going to have to make sacrifices to enter government service--if sacrifice, particularly financial, is in fact what is required--. Nevertheless they are going to have to make that decision. Some few are going to have to point their careers in the government's direction because that is the only way we are going to have any real impact on the way our government acts and operates in the international sphere.

Q: What response do you get to this view?

FOX: I get a response that is supportive of the concept, but it is very difficult for young people who are being wooed and pursued by some of our large corporations to think of government service because of the difference in financial rewards between the two groups.

Q: Dick, I want to thank you very much for your contribution. It will be a valuable addition to our collection.

End of interview