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

RICHARD ST. F. POST

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is February 14, 1990. This is an interview with Richard Post, on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Dick, could you give a little bit of background about yourself. Where did you come from?

POST: I am a Westerner. I was born in Spokane, Washington. Grew up in the Bitterroot Range in Idaho in a mining town. My father was an Episcopal priest. At the time when we were there, that was a missionary diocese. He spent a good deal of his time ministering to the needs of miners. Particularly for a group of Finns that had settled in that area.

We moved briefly to California, to San Francisco and Berkeley area and I went through the sixth grade there. Then on to Lewistown, Montana. We lived for about a year there. And then my parents did something that it took me a long time to forgive them for, and that was that we moved to Connecticut. I couldn't even speak the language.

Q: Where did you go in Connecticut?

POST: To Darien. I went to school in Darien and then to Phillips' Exeter. I got a scholarship there. And then I got a scholarship to Harvard. And while in my senior year at Harvard, in Spring of 1951, some friends of mine, from the previous year's graduating class, were back in town. We went to Jim Cronin's Bar to have a beer and they told me how they were waiting at that point for their oral exams, for the Foreign Service. At the time I didn't even know that we had such a thing as a Foreign Service. I asked them to describe a little bit about it and they did. They described the written exam. I had had an English course at Harvard, reading good books. They said I wouldn't have a snow balls' chance in hell of passing this exam. After that I had to try of course. I passed and that's the story of my life.

Q: That was when there was the three and a half day exam.

POST: Yeah, it was really grueling. It was only given in Washington, in September. And that year it was a very very hot September and it was before the era of air conditioning. So I sweat so much over that blue book that I was given that it must have obliterated half of it and they gave me the benefit of the doubt.

Q: You came in in 1952.

POST: Yes.

Q: What sort of training did you get and where did you go?

POST: I had the basic officer course which wasn't much in the way of training in those days. Then in the course of it we were asked where we wanted to go. I didn't really know where I wanted go. But I thought that I would go to a place that had a nice exotic-sounding name. So I put in for Addis Ababa.

Certainly in those days, if anybody put in Addis Ababa, you would certainly get it. So we got it.

Q: You went then to Ethiopia in 1952 until 1955. What was the situation like as you saw it.

POST: The situation as far as the United States was concerned?

Q: How you thought Ethiopia was running?

POST: Well the emperor was very much in charge. Haile Selassie. He had everybody cowed, including the diplomatic corps.

As an illustration of that, whenever we saw the imperial Rolls Royce, with its flag flapping, we were required, and we did, stop our cars, get out and bow as the emperor went by. Then of course, the business of having the ambassador present his credentials was another rather demeaning experience. Because he and all his staff would shake the imperial hand, but only after starting at the end of the hall, bowing, walking up half way, bowing, walking up to the base of the dais, or throne, bowing, shaking the hand and then bowing and walking backward to the halfway point, bowing again, walking to the far end and bowing, and then scuttling off to the side. The guy was really in charge and in charge of us too.

Q: It was the only place where you had to wear striped pants and a tail coat for the ceremony. That and Japan were the only places left.

POST: Would you believe. There I am an impoverished, brand new Foreign Service Officer and to go there I had to invest not only in striped pants and cutaway coat, and the tuxedo, naturally, but white tie and tails. I had to have all these things. Thank God for S.S. Schwartz in Baltimore.

Q: For the record S.S. Schwartz was the one store that had cut rate clothes wholesale and in a warehouse in Baltimore that would run exclusively for the Foreign Service. You could get summer weight clothes, for example, in the middle of a blizzard, because they stock year round.

What were you doing in Addis?

POST: I went into the Foreign Service and just at that point they decided that information work would be a permanent part of the Foreign Service function. As you remember, we were all supposed to be interchangeable parts. We were expected to have our tours of duty in consular work, political work, economic work, admin work and all the rest. So information work was added to that just at the time I came into the Foreign Service. About ten percent of my class were asked if they would go into the information work. I thought that sounded like a fine idea and I did that.

I was in Addis for about a year when they created a separate agency, U.S. Information Agency. I was then put on detail to USIA. So my job in Addis was as Assistant Public Affairs Officer. In that role, I did a lot of traveling around. We had an extensive film program, and that was a lot of fun, too, traveling around the country. But it was a country that was, aside from the emperor and the top, who had a reasonably good life, lovely homes and the rest of it, the rest of the country was really very abjectly poor.

The city of Addis was a mess. It was dirty, except of course when there was going to be some state visitor. At those times we would have teams of coolies running around the main streets where the visitors were going to be escorted, putting up walls to cover the most obviously putrid parts, and painting all over the place. So that the visitor would look upon Addis as a clean, well-lighted place. We got a little more into that than others, because although I was a U.S. Officer I was assigned there in a position that was a little outside the normal workings of the Embassy. I did not, as did all the other FSOs, I did not have quarters on the Embassy compound. I had to go out and find my own. And we found a house that was brand new, in fact we had to wait three months in the hotel while it was being finished. But it was in an area well removed from the Embassy. The road leading to it was like crossing the Andes Mountains. So we got a little more than our fair share of the nitty gritty side of Addis Ababa living there.

Q: What was our American interest in Ethiopia at the time?

POST: We had, as our major interest at the time, the radio base in Asmara, a new station. It was primarily a Navy communications base. It had been an Italian radio station before the war. The British took it over during the war and we took it over from the British. It

was basically the quid pro quo for what we gave Ethiopia in the way of assistance. In fact from the point when we had expanded that into a major installation, we justified just about everything we did, in favor of Haile Selassie, by that base. In other words, we had to come forward with the aid he was requesting from us, because if we didn't do it, he would close the base down. A little later on, when we had established a position in Mogadishu, Somalia, anything we wanted to do with respect to the Somalis was circumscribed by the alleged effect this would have on the emperor's attitude on the maintenance of Kagnew station.

Q: So you found, as is often the case, once you put a base in, you become hostage to it.

POST: That's right.

Q: With all sorts of consequences which are not envisaged at the time.

What about as a Public Affairs Officer. Did you make much contact with the Ethiopians?

POST: I'd like to think I did. What we were usually doing was showing what great things the United States was doing in and for Ethiopia. We had, as you recall, just about the time I arrived, we had just started the Point 4 program. Point number four given in a speech by Harry Truman. Ethiopia was one of the first countries to have a Point Four program, now called AID. So we were busily trying to persuade Ethiopians that we were doing great things for them. That American policy generally in the world was a good thing. I think perhaps at the time, we were a little unsophisticated in our efforts. We were using a shotgun approach. We weren't targeting all that much on key people. We did but we also dissipated our efforts I think a great deal, on somewhat marginal audiences. There were times when I did things and I wasn't really conscious of the adverse effects of what I was doing.

For instance, on one occasion, we had had a visit by the emperor to the United States in 1953 or 54, and we did a film on it. We didn't have vast technology available to us but I managed to work with one of our Ethiopian employees and with a variety of what would seem very odd--tape recording--machines and so on, we put together a sound track to go with it. We had it running simultaneously. It was difficult to keep it synchronized, but we managed. We thought this was a great thing. It showed the emperor and the United States in harmony and therefore, his people should be delighted with the United States. Well we took that thing down into the desert and showed it to a bunch of Somalis. I didn't know much about the Somalis at that time, but I know now they must have thought I was crazy in the head.

Q: Like shots of Hitler in Israel.

POST: I think I did sense a little bit of the hostility. The next morning I took off and I thought I was missing something but it didn't register. Finally it dawned on me that I didn't have my Harvard letter sweater that I had gotten playing lacrosse. To this day I

have assumed that some Somali stole my sweater in retaliation for my showing that movie of Haile Selassie.

Q: One further question on Ethiopia. How did you find dealing with Ethiopian officials?

POST: I didn't have an awful lot to do with Ethiopian officials. I did get to know a number of the younger members of the nobility, if you will, who did indeed occupy some positions in the government. These were people I would get to know socially, in some cases, I could do things through USIS that would be of benefit to them in their jobs. For instance, there was a Dejazmatch Ameha Abera Kasa, who was a vice minister in the Ministry of the Interior. He had nothing in the way of a law library. Well, I managed to get USIS to provide him with a law library, which had been donated from some law school. So there was some value to what I was doing and what I could command in the way of resources that enabled me to make some progress with some of these officials. But then there was the social side as well.

This is perhaps an illustration of how pampered this noble set of Ethiopians was. We were once invited, having invited a lot of Ethiopians a number of times to our house, we were finally invited by some young Ethiopian nobles to a picnic. When was the picnic? They said, "We'll drop by at 9 in the morning and we'll pick you up." Well, by noon nobody had arrived. But finally about one o'clock they did come and pick us up. We drove off and went to some land near the airport of Addis that was owned by one of the families of these youngsters.

They stopped and opened up the trunk of their car and they had there a beautiful picnic set. Knives and forks and dishes and so on. But no food. They said, "Well didn't you bring some food?" "No." "Didn't you bring some food?" "No." "Well we need something to eat, don't we." So they spotted a young boy, a young herdsman, with some sheep. And they went over and bought a sheep. "Now we can have a sheep for lunch." Well, then the question was, "What do you do with the sheep." You don't eat him raw, you don't eat him live. You've got to kill him and skin him and cook him over the fire. So who ends up having to kill and skin the sheep? Me. They couldn't touch it. They couldn't find any boy who was available to do this. So I had to wind up doing this.

Let me get back briefly to Kagnew Station because my service in and on that part of the world went through various repeats. I was in Ethiopia as my first post. Then a few years later, I was in Mogadishu, Somalia, from 1958 to 1960. Then I went back to Washington. I was briefly on the Libya desk, but then I took over the Ethiopia/Somalia desk. And after the moon went over the tops of the mountains a few more times, I found myself back in Washington, in the seventies, 1975, 76, 77, as Office Director for East Africa, which included Ethiopia and Somalia.

Well, when I first arrived in that particular position, I was asked by our then assistant secretary to undertake a review of our policy towards Ethiopia, and we convened an interdepartmental group. By then the emperor had been overthrown, we had a Marxist

government in place, and our ambassador at that particular time, Art Hummel, had virtually no contact at all with this government. Either he couldn't get appointments to see the leadership or he didn't try.

But in any case there we still had this enormous AID program, economic aid program, a huge military program. We had a mapping team in there. We had a consulate in Asmara as well as Kagnew Station. We had a vast USIS operation in the country. We had a medical team. Just about everything that we were doing anywhere in Africa we doing in Ethiopia. And it didn't seem to me and to others in this group that our interests in Ethiopia were at all commensurate with the vast amount of things we were doing there. Also by that time, satellite communications were being used and the technology totally outdated Kagnew Station. There was really no reason for us to hang in there.

So I authored a NSM (National Security Memorandum) and got clearance throughout the Washington establishment, including the Defense Department, for a revised policy towards that part of the world, where we would scale down our operations in Ethiopia and we would try to build our positions in the countries surrounding, including Somalia, where we were not in very good standing at the time. The Soviets were very big in Somalia. We were also not well found in Sudan. But we had prospects of advancing our position in both Sudan and Somalia, particularly if we scaled down our operations in Ethiopia.

That was accepted as policy. The first step was to go to the Ethiopians and say that, in line with the worldwide reduction in our MAAGs (Military Assistance Advisory Groups) we were going to have to cut down our MAAG in Ethiopia. We had a couple of hundred who were supposed to be advising the Ethiopian army and they couldn't get any of the officers to listen to them. So they were basically cooling their heels. So we went to the Ethiopians and said, "Look, we are going to have to cut this by next fiscal year roughly in half." About three days later the Ethiopians came to us and said, you are not quitting, you are fired. We want to have the whole military advisory group out by 48 hours, and we want Kagnew Station closed, and we want the consulate in Asmara closed; plus all of the USIS libraries around the country. We want you down to just the embassy. So we had a rather exciting time in the tank, up in the seventh floor of the State Department. We had to put together a task force to manage this. And we complied, although it took a lot of doing. They actually extended the deadline.

Q: That must have been a relief to you.

POST: It was. It accelerated the process and it meant that what we had to do, had to be done in a rather hot house condition.

Q: Any options missed dealing with them? The officer group came in when?

POST: They took over from Haile Selassie in 1973. I was in Portugal at the time. And initially, it looked like it might be an interesting group that replaced him. He had a lot of

shortcomings of course. And initially, the man who seemed at the top of this group of army officers was a major when I first knew him but was now a lieutenant general Ammanuel Andom. He was a very good friend of the United States. He was a very strong individual. He had the respect throughout the army. He was an Eritrean, too. And I had just rejoiced that this had happened, because of the possible effect on the Eritrean problem which, of course, had been simmering for years, with the Eritrean Liberation Group fighting a guerrilla war. Here was an Eritrean in charge in Addis Ababa who had the capability of resolving that conflict. And then he was murdered. There was another man briefly on top but he was murdered by Mengistu too. I don't think there was anything we could have done about that. I think that I have the feeling that we tended to not be too upset that we couldn't get too much of a hearing from Mengistu and the Derg people. We looked upon then as ideologically our opponents. Of course then they had to look upon us as opponents. We had always been the strongest supporters that Haile Selassie had. And so they had to assume that we, as his supporter, had to be hostile to them, as being responsible no only for dethroning him but for eventually killing him. I don't think we made a hell of a lot of effort trying to overcome that situation. Whether or not we could have is questionable. But we had the leverage, up until the time when I came on the scene, of being their sole military supplier. And I think we could have used that a little more than we did in terms of inducing them to be more open to us.

Q: Back to Kagnew Station, there is the story that if it were left to the military, we would still have fully manned forts in Apache country. How about for Kagnew Station? This is 1977 period. Did you get much resistance in the Pentagon or were they ready to get out too?

POST: They were basically ready to get out. They were less eager than we were but I couldn't say that they dragged their feet. When I, in drafting this national security directive, put in a phrase, which everyone else cleared on, to say that technology, communication technology had now rendered Ethiopia of very little strategic interest to us, they put in a footnote saying that they didn't agree with that. I think what they didn't agree with was that there was no strategic interest whatsoever. Well, there is the Red Sea, so there is some strategic interest, but as far as the specific strategic interest that we had, that was what we were addressing. They certainly would not have wanted to move as quickly as they did. They wanted it to be a gentle landing.

Q: You had a tour from '55 to '58 in Hong Kong. What were you doing.

POST: As I said, we were all interchangeable parts, and that was my consular duty. I was still picking posts by their exotic name.

Q: What was the impression of the People's Republic of China, as far as you saw it?

POST: It was a nasty piece of work. They were a hostile presence. A very large hostile presence. Looming over us. We had virtually no contact. Except of course the Communist Chinese bank was right in the middle of Hong Kong. They had put it right up next to the

Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, which had been the tallest building in Hong Kong. They put it up right next to it and had it two stories above the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank. We were conscious that there were Communist Chinese there. One was more aware of their presence when you went on trips to Macau, the Portuguese colony. To get there you had to take a ferry boat. Now they have hydrofoil. But in those days it was an overnight trip, generally, but very pleasant. You get to Macau and I remember the first time we went there, we were in a Chinese hotel, of course you are never very far from the water in Macau, and all night long, there was firing going on as Chinese refugees swam across that harbor from the other side, which was the Chinese side.

The closest thing I came to have anything to do with China was interviewing people who came back, one or two Americans who had been imprisoned in China and who had been released while I was there. I then had to go up to the Lowu border, Lowu is a little town on the train station, the train comes down from Canton, stops at Lowu. I had go up there and certify to the British authorities that the person had not lost his or her American citizenship. And then take them back to the Consulate and ask them what had been going on. It was a pretty grisly picture that they painted.

Q: Then you were assigned to Mogadishu, in 1961. What were you doing?

POST: I was the number two in what was then a Consulate General. The political officer. I did a lot of reporting on the internal politics of Somalia which was a very instructive thing to do. One had to get very, very knowledgeable about the tribal and subtribal breakdowns of that society. Of course it was a fascinating transition time because it was the time when it was a UN trust territory under Italian supervision. So we had to deal with Somalis but also with Italian officials, and very often the dealings with one were kind of antipathetic to the dealings with the other. The Somalis had by then their own Prime Minister, although it was not yet an independent country. They had a legislature. They had just appointed the first Somali to be the Chief of Police of the country, Mohamed Abshir Musa. He was appointed over the head of another police officer, Siad Barre, who is now the president of the country. That meant the language, the administration of the country was in Italian, so we had to learn Italian. Unfortunately, there was no time for me, between what I had done just before and when I had arrived, to take any Italian language training.

What had happened was, when I was in Hong Kong, the Department had come to the realization that independence was coming to a lot of countries in Africa, probably a lot sooner than we thought at that time, and we had better have some people who know something about Africa there. So they sent me from Hong Kong to Boston University, which was one of only two schools at that time that had African program, the African Research and Study Program. So I did that for an academic year. At the end of that they had arranged a program which was called the African Seminar. They selected twenty of us Foreign Service Officers to go out on a three month tour of Africa. We went first to Ghana which by then of course had already become independent. It had become independent the year before in 1957. Ghana was the center for the study of English-

speaking West Africa. We did also go to Lagos and then on to Leopoldville, and Stanleyville, and then to Kampala, Makerere University was our center for our study of East Africa. Then on to Nairobi, down into Rhodesia and South Africa. We actually drove through Swaziland on our route to Lourenço Marques in Mozambique.

Anyhow that is what I had spent my time doing. Otherwise I would have been going to language school.

Q: How was that seminar? It was quite famous.

POST: I think they had one or two other ones. Not quite as long. It was an attempt to very quickly get into the picture. Filling the blanks as far as personnel with experience in that whole area.

Q: What was your impression of our missions. Were we happy about these independence movements or was there a co-opted feeling?

POST: I think among the people, among particularly the people in our missions, that they were quite excited at the thought of independence. I think that the attitude that I encountered in the State Department was a little less enthusiastic. They were all for independence but there was more of a tendency on the part of the State Department in its policies to want to have the responsibilities for the aid and what have you to remain with the former colonial masters. I think that was not an attitude that was universally applauded by people who were actually in the field, having to put up with the former colonial masters, many of whom had stayed in their jobs and were rather hostile to the United States. Hostile to what they saw was Americans coming in to replace them.

Q: What about going to Mogadishu. You had the Italians ready to give up. How was it dealing with them?

POST: It was a mixed bag. Some of the Italians were still clearly hoping that somehow they could still hang in there. As you may recall, at the end of the war one of the questions before the United Nations was what to do about the former Italian colonies in Africa. They decided that in the case of Libya, it would become independent, virtually immediately, in 1952. Libya was to become independent on December 25th. I remember that the fellow who was my chief subsequently in Mogadishu, had been in Tripoli at the time and he was trying to urge the United States to come forward with an aid package to announce to the Libyans before independence came, so that they would have an independence gift. And I remember him telling me that he kept firing telegrams telling them, "We only have so many shopping days before Christmas." That was decided as far as Libya was concerned. Eritrea was to become federated with Ethiopia. Somalia was to become independent in ten years time, December 2, 1960. In fact the Somalis were working to a faster time table. But some of the Italians were hoping that something would happen that would enable them to stay in there. So they were working with Somalis who

they thought would enable them to do that. Others were playing it very straight. Most of them were playing it fairly straight. And they were going about it in the right way.

I remember having gone through Somalia back in 1954, when I was serving in Addis, I took a trip to Mogadishu

Q: What were the American interests as you saw them?

POST: I suppose again the dominant interest in that part of the world was Kagnew Station. American interest was to try and contribute to stability in the horn of Africa. The Ethiopians and the Somalis didn't exactly enjoy each other's company and yet they had to live side by side. The border was not an agreed-upon border. It was an administrative line. The Italians and the Ethiopians, one of the things they were supposed to accomplish before Somalia became independent was to get that border dispute settled. The main problem was that the border cut across an area that was totally settled by Somalis. All that area of southeastern Ethiopia was inhabited by Somalis, administered by Ethiopians and the Somalis didn't like them one bit. Actually at the time that I drove through in 1954, there was an additional little area, a little strip of land, a buffer between Ethiopian Ogaden and British Somaliland. It was an area called the Reserved Territory. It was reserved and kept under British control because there was a good deal of conflict between some of the Somalis in the Ethiopian interior and some who came from the coast. As you know, the Somalis are a nomadic group, meaning that they practice what is called in the trade, transhumance. The Somalis that lived nearer the coast had their own home wells there. They tend to dry up after a while and when the rains come, they leave and go into the interior where there will be a certain amount of surface water and where the wells will then be restocked by the rain. They go into the interior and stay maybe half a year there, four and five months, then they go back to their own homes, by which time, the water table has gone up and they can survive another half year there. Meanwhile the ones in the interior are doing the same thing. So they get to this area where there are interior wells and you have a certain amount of conflict.

The good British officers could calm this sort of thing down. When I went down, I went through at a place called Awareh. There was a British officer there who had just arrived, because his predecessor had been murdered by the locals. It was a kind of rough position for British officers to be in.

Our hope was that by establishing a Consulate General and then an Embassy, we could, on the one hand, make it very difficult for the Italians to renege on the mandated departure from Somalia, that we could develop relations with the Somali leadership of the future, and that we could encourage the development of a democratic society in Somalia, and we could hopefully mute some of the problems that might develop between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Q: You were there for the independence ceremonies and all that?

POST: Well it was interesting. What the UN resolution had said was that Italian Somalia was the one that was to become independent. They had moved the date up to July 1st 1960, it was supposed to take place on December 2nd. Up until just a few months before there was the question of what was going to happen to British Somaliland. The Somalis have this five pointed star on their flag which was blue with a white star which represents the five Somalilands, that is, the former Italian Somaliland, the former British Somaliland, the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, the Ogaden of Ethiopia and French Somaliland, which is now the Republic of Djibouti. But things moved rather rapidly in British Somaliland, the British authorities, at least some of them, because there was ambivalence there, too, the British finally agreed that British Somaliland would join Somalia. Actually, how the mechanics worked, it became independent four days before the Italian part. And I was dispatched to Hargeysa to represent the United States at the independence celebration of British Somaliland. I stayed with a British officer, a political officer with whom I had had dealings in the past. I had been there many times, reporting on the developing politics there. And he made a superb suggestion, when he said, "I have a bunch of envelopes. I'll give you half and write your name on them and your address, and then we'll take them down to the Post Office and put some stamps on them, and get them canceled. And these will be the only first day covers, and nobody else has done it and you'll have a gold mine. So we did this and rushed down and got the date of independence stamped on them. Of course over the years, any time a guest in our house expressed any interest in philately, my wife would give away one.

Four days later British Somaliland was no longer a separate state, it was part of the combined state of Somalia.

Q: Was this a forced marriage between Italian and British Somalia?

POST: No, the Somalis all wanted this. There was only a question of whether the British thought it was right for their Somaliland to join. And of course there were a lot of differences. The British had a very competent Somali civil service, a lot more than in Mogadishu. There was some fear in Mogadishu that these British Somalis would take over. And to a certain extent, they did. As I mentioned, when I was there, Italian was the language of most social intercourse. There were quite a number of Somalis even down in Mogadishu who did speak English, because the British had been there briefly at the end of the war and they had trained some of the police officers. It was quite clear, except to the Italians, that in the course of time English was going to replace Italian. One of the reasons that Siad Barre had been favored by some of the elements in the Italian administration to become the first police chief, was that he didn't speak any English, only Italian. Whereas the other guy, Mohamed Abshu, was fluent in English. When I went back in 1977 at the time of the Ethiopian-Somali war over the Ogaden, Siad Barre, then President conducted all of his conversations with foreigners in English. English has definitely replaced Italian now.

Q: How were the relations between ourselves and the Somalis.

POST: We had very good relations with them and I think we cultivated good relations among a whole spectrum of politicians. With perhaps one exception. There was one outfit called the Great Somalia League. We were not about to talk to them, we would talk to them but not show too much sympathy for their particular aim which was to unite all of the five Somalilands. All of the Somalis wanted to have all five points of the star as one nation. But this one was militant about it. They were prepared to go to war. And there were allegations that perhaps the Russians were messing around with them. But with the bulk of the politicians, we had quite good relations.

Q: Were you concerned with the "Soviet menace" at that point?

POST: Well, not all that much. They weren't there before independence. They did come in and open up an Embassy just after independence. I was only there a few months after independence so I didn't experience any effort on the part of the Soviets to penetrate people.

I suppose the very fact of our having opened the Consulate there, was designed to give ourselves a foot in the door and establish relations with the politicians before the Russians could come along and mess things up. They did come along and mess things up.

I was again involved in 1963-64 because by that time I was desk officer for both Ethiopia and Somalia. The Somalis had decided by then that they would have an army. They didn't have one before, they only had the police. So they decided to have an army. Every self-respecting country had an army. They came to us and the Italians and the British and said that they would like some arms for their army. We were looking over our shoulders at Kagnew Station and saying well, what you want on that list is just a little too much. I felt that it was inevitable that they were going to have an army and that it would be wise for us to have some influence and control over the way this thing developed by becoming involved with arms supplies, despite the emperor. I thought we should be able to go to the emperor and explain to him that it was in his interest to have countries that were friendly to him supplying the Somali army, because they are going to get it anyhow, and it might not be from someone so anxious to cooperate with Ethiopia. Not so willing to exert leverage to keep them from using that army against Ethiopia.

Well, that got really bogged down in our bureaucracy. We finally came forward with a little package. It was pretty punk. We got the British to kick in something, we got the Italians to kick in something, and the Somalis took one look at this package and said, "We're off to Moscow." And that is exactly what they did.

Q: You were on the Libyan desk for a couple of years. From 1961 to 63. Briefly what was your principal concern.

POST: Wheelus Air Base. According to the Air Force it was important to us because it had unparalleled training capabilities that couldn't be found anywhere in that area. So we would bring down our pilots from all over Europe to train. We had a lot of nifty hunks of

desert that they could bomb the hell out of and theoretically nobody would get hurt. In fact the occasional Bedouin did get hurt. Then we would have endless problems with the Air Force, trying to get them to come through with compensation. They were really very sticky about that. But Wheelus was virtually the whole name of the game at that point.

Q: This was before Qadhafi?

POST: Yes.

Q: Then you were the Horn of Africa desk officer. Could you describe how the African bureau operated under Kennedy, Mennen Williams and Henry Tasca and Wayne Fredericks. How did they operate?

POST: As a desk officer, I didn't have an awful lot of dealings directly with those people. I did but I am not sure I could provide the kind of insight I would have as an office director.

I think Mennen Williams was quite a sincere guy but in many ways rather unsophisticated. I think that it was a lack of sophistication that was rather helpful. He would do things that to the normal State Department official and his wife would be kind of rube-ish, such as square dances up on the seventh floor for the Africa diplomatic corps. The African diplomatic corps was ecstatic about this. Someone actually paying attention to them. Providing them with a native dance of our own. So I really respected that.

Incidentally, when I was the Libyan desk officer, I had an occasion to be in the room with the President with only one or two other people in it. This was Kennedy. The Libyan ambassador was going home for consultations and would be coming back and so he came to us and asked for an appointment to see the President. He said, "I saw him when I presented my credentials and I haven't seen him since. Now I am going home to face my king who sees your ambassador practically every day for hours and he is going to want to know about my contacts with your president. So I have to see him."

It is kind of hard to get things like this done. We finally got an appointment which was to be for fifteen minutes. We stressed this over and over again. Mind you this ambassador, although Libya was almost a client state of ours at that point, he was very very influenced by his previous post which was Cairo. He was a real lover of Nasser. In addition to being Ambassador to Washington, he was their Permanent Representative in New York at the UN. Despite all of the representations that we would make through our ambassador in Tripoli to the Libyan government to vote this, that and the other way on resolutions, he'd go up there and vote with Nasser, with the Egyptians, every time, even though it was totally against what we thought to be our interests.

Well, we went over to the White House, and I accompanied the guy. (I don't think they do that anymore, but I did.) I took him upstairs. Meanwhile the office director, Bill Witman, went up into the bedroom to brief Kennedy. He described this to me afterwards. He went

up there and Kennedy was changing his clothes for this meeting, and asked Bill, "Come on and give me a briefing on this guy. What do I say to him and so on," while he is changing his clothes. Then he saunters in. First of all I was struck at how tall he was. I hadn't realized that somehow. So he sat the ambassador down and he talked about this and that for a while and the ambassador kept looking at his watch as it got closer to the fifteen minutes. Then he put his arms on the armchair and made to rise and Kennedy said, "Just a minute, Mister Ambassador, please don't rush off. If you have the time, I'd like to get your views on some issues that we consider to be very important. We'd like to know what you have to say about this." Then he trotted out several major issues and in addition he said that one of the ones that he wanted to talk to the ambassador about was the fact that we had been trying to negotiate a treaty with the Soviets to have no atmospheric testing and it hadn't yet taken place, but we felt that we had to have one last blast in order to remain in the competitive ballpark as far as nuclear weapons were concerned. So Kennedy -- this was absolutely top secret, we were going to have this explosion the next day -- lost nothing by telling this ambassador this deepest of secrets, "Mr. Ambassador, I want you to know that we don't want to do this but we feel that we have to do it, and I wanted to have the understanding of you and your government of the reasons for doing this."

Well, we left there, I think after almost an hour with Kennedy. That ambassador floated on a pink cloud up to New York before going off to Libya, voted with us every time. That was a beautiful example of Presidential diplomacy. I was really very impressed.

Q: I was a little bit involved with the Horn of Africa. I was hauled out of Saudi Arabia and made the INR officer for the Horn of Africa from '60 to '61. There was always a push and pull between Somalia and Ethiopia, but the chips always fell to Ethiopia. Kagnew Station was it, wasn't it?

POST: Kagnew Station was driving our policy. No doubt about it. Our AID program, for example. We would try and plead for more aid for Somalia but were told, "You can't get it because in the allocation for Africa, Ethiopia gets the major share ...."

Q: I thought that Somalia could be bought for a fairly small price. But everything was predicated on Kagnew. Were people in the State Department challenging the importance of Kagnew at that point?

POST: No, they were not. The State Department, aside from those who had served in Mogadishu, perhaps, was quite comfortable with the emperor. He was behaving they way they wanted excepted when he came through and wanted outlandish requests for aid which we tried to scale down. But by and large he was safely in our camp and the military insisted on the importance of Kagnew and the State Department wasn't in the position to challenge that. So I think that basically the State Department went along with that. I think it went along specifically with not rocking the boat as far as Kagnew was concerned.

One particular illustration that really got me annoyed was when the emperor in 1962 annexed Eritrea. Up until then it had been a federation. Eritrea had its own chief executive. It had its own assembly. The sovereignty of the coastline was Ethiopian but otherwise Eritrea was supposed to have internal autonomy. It wasn't exactly as autonomous as the Eritreans would have liked but there was a measure. The emperor managed to engineer a vote in the Eritrean assembly to join Ethiopia, to give up on the federation idea. He pushed that through and we sat there and watched it and we didn't do a damned thing. There wasn't any public protest, anything to suggest that this was vitiating the intent of the United Nations. Why? Kagnew Station.

Q: Was this when the Soviets started to get involved?

POST: Well, shortly thereafter. It was in 1964 that we offered the Somalis the lousy military package and the Somalis went to the Soviets.

Q: What was our impression of the threat of the Soviets to Somalia at that time?

POST: I think at the time we gave, for our own reasons and following our own policy, we attributed much too much importance to Ethiopia, so much that we did not think the Russians would endanger the possibility of improving their position in Ethiopia, the much bigger prize, by doing something in Somalia that would earn them the wrath of the Ethiopians. I think that was our thinking. Mistaken but there it was.

Q: What was the effect of the Soviets?

POST: I then had a gap in direct dealings with the Horn from 1964 til I became office director in 1976. Clearly the very fact of the Soviets supplying the Somalis with arms and a lot more of them than we would have supplied them with, they built up the army as their favored institution. The police were still very much Western-oriented, headed by Mohammed Abshir, who was a very close friend of mine. The Soviets built the army up and, although I don't have any evidence that they engineered the coup, but certainly the instrument of the coup was the army they had created. So what happened as a result, if you can fill in the gaps from some other people, you may find that they were responsible for one of the few genuine democracies in Africa being overthrown and turned into a military dictatorship. From that point on things got pretty tough for our people. They couldn't move around. When I was there, I went all over that country. Couldn't move around, confined to the Embassy, those kind of things. Of course then the Soviets went ahead and built their air base at Berbera, which we now are enjoying. There is a certain irony involved.

Q: You were tagged as an African specialist. Were you happy about this?

POST: Yes, I was happy with it. There were lots of places that I went that were raunchy but there was always something that I enjoyed about it.

Q: Was there an African corps by this time and how did they feel about the hierarchy in the Department.

POST: Well I think we felt that we were looked down upon as a lesser breed, certainly by the European types. Sort of totally ignored by the Latin American types, who were a breed unto themselves. Of course it was interesting when I was in Angola and I went from there to Portugal. That was a case where a real battle began from the Europeanists.

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

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

Q: Were you the first to go there?

POST: I was the first diplomat of any country to be stationed in any of these three countries. After being there for about a year and a half, I was joined in Swaziland by a Portuguese Consul.

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

POST: I was showing the flag but I was also reporting on political developments, particularly reporting on what the South Africans were doing in that part of the world. I was reliving those moments last week with the release of Nelson Mandela, because I arrived just after he had been convicted and sent to Robbin Island. When I got to Swaziland there were quite a number of black South African refugees living there. One of the things that was going on for some time after I got there was every now and then an African, an ANC person or somebody like that, would be kidnapped by the South African authorities in Swaziland. I was reporting on that sort of thing and also about the political developments within the three British territories.

Q: What sort of developments were going on then?

POST: Well, they were all working towards independence. That is the Africans were anxious to have independence. The British officials that I dealt with, I think that they felt it was somewhat inevitable, that they should try to prepare the place as well as they could

for that eventuality. Others seemed to have the attitude that the place really ought to go to South Africa or that we British ought to stay in here. There was a lot of resentment on the part of some at having an American peering over their shoulders. And some efforts on the part of the Chief Commissioner in Swaziland to curtail my activities. He seemed to feel that he should be the one to tell me who I should see. I told him in no uncertain terms that that wasn't our style. But there really wasn't an awful lot of politics, as we know it, in Swaziland. It was a question of personalities within the Swazi community. It was a kingdom. There wasn't that much of political interest there. It was more the South African angle, the Portuguese angle. On the other hand, particularly in Basutoland, the interns politics were very active. They had several parties, some that were alleged to be financed and influenced by the South Africans, some alleged by the South Africans to be supported by the Communists. I must say I was rather annoyed at that period of time by the kind of reporting on individuals that the CIA was doing in my territory. For instance, there was one leader of the Basutoland Congress Party, BCP, who looked like he was a comer and I wanted to recommend him for our leader program, a free trip to the States, for exposure to the U.S. democratic process. I had great difficulty because there were reports filed by the CIA representatives that he was a Communist. If that were true he would be denied a visa to the United States. I had to challenge that and get down to the source of the report that this person was a Communist and sure enough it was the South African security reports.

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

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

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

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

Yes, I had some dealings with South Africans, at the border points. There was a time when my visa for South Africa had expired and the South Africans did not renew my visa, by this time I was in Basutoland, not Swaziland, when independence came and I went to open our embassy in Lesotho. The South Africans, instead of giving me a visa, gave me, each time I wanted to make a trip, I would have to apply and get a Laissez

Passer. I was really annoyed at this because it took some time to do. It made it difficult to make trips except for those that were planned well in advance, and further what really annoyed me was that, as Americans, we were supposed to get reciprocity on visa matters, I didn't see any South Africans forced to get Laissez Passers to get to the United States. I couldn't get the State Department to do much about that.

Q: How about the Embassy in Pretoria?

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

Q: You were there in Swaziland in 1964-66 and in Lesotho in 1966-68.

POST: Lesotho is a country inhabited by Basutos, one of whom is a Mosuto, and all of whom speak Sesotho.

Q: Oh boy, oh boy!

POST: Unfortunately, the French missionaries got in there first with orthography and they decided that the "utu" sound was best rendered by "otho". That's why so many people call it Lesotho.

Q: What was our policy?

POST: That was basically it. I think we were anxious to have in those countries, certainly after they became independent, we wanted to have people in charge who were clearly independent of South African control. Now that certainly happened in Botswana. Seretse Khama was virtually unopposed in becoming the head of that government. I must say it was a wrenching decision for me, as independence in those two countries approached because I could have had my choice, either to go to Lesotho or Botswana. I opted for Lesotho, because the domestic politics promised to be much more exciting. Indeed they were too exciting. But it was wrenching because I had such a great relationship with Seretse Khama and his wife Ruth, who, of course is white. That was a source of great anguish to the Afrikaners that they were going to have on their borders, a country ruled not only by a black but who was married to a white.

Anyhow I had really good relations with them. They were really very delightful people. I would drive vast distances across South Africa to go and visit them every now and then, to check up on what was going on. In those days Gaborone, which is now the capital, was being built. They hadn't completed it. It was just a railroad siding. They did have a few houses up, including a house for the Prime Minister. The nearest hotel was in Lobatsi,

which is near the South African border. Well, the last couple of times that I went there, I would drive over--it was the dustiest drive that you could imagine in your life--and get to the hotel in Lobatsi, to be told that my reservation had been canceled. "What?" "You are expected to stay with the Prime Minister." So I would go to Gaborone and stay with the Prime Minister. He would give a party, a cocktail party, a dinner party, whatever. And I would be there after the guests had left to hear Seretse and Ruth tear apart the minister of agriculture and that sort of thing. Fascinating insights. As I said, I gave that up for the likelihood of a more active political scene in Lesotho.

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

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

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

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

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

Q: We might move onto your next assignment, unless you have something further to add. Then you really move to these places to a place that was quite a change and a much more dangerous and volatile situation. Going to Luanda from 1969 to 1972, the capital of Angola. What was the situation when you arrived there?

POST: It was a Portuguese colony. The Portuguese called it an overseas province. It had been a Portuguese colony since the 15th century. I don't want to get too far into the history of the colony.

When I arrived the Portuguese there were very hostile to the United States. There was an insurgency going on. There had been an insurgency going on since 1960. The United States had voted in the UN in favor of decolonization in this part of the world and had an arms embargo, although we supplied Portugal with a certain number of arms, in exchange for the use of the Azores as an air base, but we insisted that they could use none of what we provided in Africa. One of my predecessors as Consul General in Luanda, following a vote by the United States against Portugal, had his official sedan dumped in the Bay of Luanda. That is an indication of how welcome Americans were.

There was an insurgency going on but it was a long way out of town. I guess one of the major tasks that I had was reporting on what the situation really was like for blacks in Angola. The Portuguese maintained that they had this great non-racial policy, that everybody was equal and all the rest of it. In fact that wasn't the case at all. It was very clear, the Portuguese whites were at the top of the society whether they were the lowest born or the highest born. They clearly had advantage over blacks and Mestiços. The Mestiços, the mixed blood, they had a somewhat privileged position in the society. I should give the Portuguese some credit in that the Mestiços were provided with this larger role than the African. The Mestiço class, of course, was created before there was any treatment for malaria and therefore before any Portuguese women went out to the Portuguese colonies. Men would have liaisons, almost never marriages, with African women and produce children. They would recognize those children, you have got to give them credit for that. They would have the benefits of education for their children. They also allowed Mestiços to have a reasonable amount of representation in the administration. The blacks, no. Their position in the society was much, much more marginal. I tried to get at it by finding some reliable figure for the number of blacks that were in the university. Of course the answer I would get from the Portuguese was, "well we don't have statistics on that sort of thing. We are a multi-racial society. We are color blind." In fact by getting in touch with some blacks and Mestiços, I finally got something that looked like a reasonable figure. Something like 5% representation by blacks at the university.

Q: What were American interests in Angola. We are now at the start of the Nixon Administration. Was there a change of interest in Africa?

POST: I actually didn't sense as much of a change as was actually going on apparently, in relation to policy. When I went there, my understanding was that we did see this place as

being a Portuguese colony, that we were in favor of the country becoming independent. That we were in effect aiding one of the liberation movements, the FNLA of Holden Roberto, clandestinely. I wasn't given much in the way of details about that support and I was just as happy not to have the details, because then I could plausibly deny to the Portuguese that I had any evidence that we were in fact supporting these people.

My understanding of our interest in Angola was to see it proceed towards independence. It looked like it was going to be a difficult thing to do. The Portuguese were in fact going to have to be convinced of the need for change. But if changes did seem to be coming, that we should encourage that sort of thing. In fact, our embassy in Lisbon, when the Caetano regime came in and replaced Salazar, our embassy in Lisbon did see some things that they were doing as looking to be genuine steps to reform in Angola.

I and my people in Luanda saw things very differently. We saw that the things that the Portuguese came out with were largely cosmetic, designed to get the kind of reaction from the Embassy in Lisbon that it did. So there was a certain about of tension between our Embassy in Lisbon and our Consulate General in Luanda. Because events would happen in Lisbon and we would report on their effect in one way and the Embassy in another. That is why it came as such a surprise to me when towards the end of my tour in Luanda, I was in Lisbon on a R&R trip, and I got a call from the ambassador to go and see him.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

POST: Ridgway Knight. He asked me if I would have any objection if he asked for me as his DCM. I was quite surprised. Except that he had come down on a trip to Luanda several months before that and I had taken him around the country. When he got back to Lisbon and reported on what he had observed, it was the sort of report that I could have written, it bore out more or less what we had been saying. He tacitly admitted that he had been hoodwinked by the Portuguese authorities.

Q: From the Luanda viewpoint had this been a problem?

POST: Yes, it had been something of a problem for us. It meant that when we sent in contrary views, they came as a big surprise to the Embassy in Lisbon. We did have a few officers come out from time to time. And some of them were sympathetic to the way we were reporting things and skeptical of what they were hearing from people in Lisbon.

Q: Was there any tension between the European Desk, which of course was terribly interested in the Azores, as in the case of Kagnew Station, did you feel anything like this in Luanda?

POST: No, not really, because I reported to the African Bureau. I didn't have anything to do with the European Bureau. This was a source of great unhappiness for the Portuguese because to them, Angola was a Portuguese overseas territory and they should look to our

ambassador in Lisbon as their point of contact, whereas we were going through the hated African Bureau.

Q: You came up to Lisbon as DCM from 1972 to 1975. What was the situation in Portugal when you got there?

POST: Certainly the Azores was one of our interests. But I think we were also encouraging, to the extent that any embassy can, or another country can, we were anxious to encourage evidence of motion towards a more open society, a more democratic society within Portugal, not to mention the overseas territories, as we could. There was by that time in Lisbon a group of members of the National Assembly who were rather liberal, and who were challenging, in a rather gentle way, the policies of their country. These were the kind of people who were advocating change that we would be pleased with. So there were some allies from within the Assembly. Certainly part of our mission was to give them as much encouragement as we could.

Salazar retired as a vegetable and I think he died while I was still there. He was out of it.

Q: Who took over?

POST: Marcello Caetano.

Q: What kind of government would you call it?

POST: It was pretty much a continuation of the dictatorship that existed before. Although the term dictatorship is a kind of a harsh term to apply to anything Portuguese. The Portuguese are not that nasty. There were a lot of Africans in jail in San Tomé who would have thought different. It was a semi-fascist system but the Portuguese were not efficient enough to make it a thorough-going fascist system.

For instance, one example was when I was in Luanda. I guess it happened just after I left. A bill came to our Consulate General from the Post and Telegraph Office, which was a government office, and it was for 50 escudos for the month of whatever, for a "linha de escuta," which means a telephone tap. They sent the bill to us instead of to their secret police. You can't run a thorough-going fascist state if you are that inefficient.

Q: Did Knight stay on long?

POST: I got on board in August of 1972 and he left the following January. He retired from the Foreign Service to become Uncle David Rockefeller's ambassador to Europe and the Middle East. This was Watergate time so no ambassador was appointed. I remained in charge until the following January. Which was great fun. To be in charge--it is a reasonably sized embassy and we have a lot of interests there. We had some excitement in that while during my incumbency as chargé d'affaires the October war broke out between

Israel and Egypt and I had to negotiate with the Portuguese authorities for the use of the Azores to resupply Israel.

Q: This was absolutely crucial.

POST: Yes. In those days, we didn't have the capability to refuel the C-5s in mid air.

Q: C-5s being our largest transporter.

POST: There were some other smaller transporters that we used as well. It was a very interesting time.

Q: How did the Portuguese feel about getting involved with a Middle East War? It looked like Israel was losing and needed a lot of new equipment and we wanted to rush, to the great dismay of many of our own military because we used some of our own stockpiles, in order to get them to Israel in a great hurry. Portugal was really the one country that was crucial to this resupply.

POST: It certainly was crucial because nobody else would let us do it. The Spanish refused. The Germans refused. You name it, they turned us down. The Portuguese were not at all anxious to do this. Not at all, because although they had a certain amount of oil from Angola, they were heavily dependent upon the Arab countries for their oil supply. They also felt that they had some historical interest in the Middle East, long relationships, and were most reluctant to come across. Unless they could get some quid pro quo out of it. And of course what they wanted was for us to provide them with some military hardware to use in the overseas territories. Well, we did not allow this. We kept after them for about three days, we implied that it would be to their advantage ultimately, we could not give them any definitive undertaking but we would do our best to be as helpful as we could. We were all very vague. A certain amount of bald pressure, saying if you don't help us, you can just forget about us being any help at all. Now in fact the way our agreement runs, we actually didn't have to ask. I'm glad we did because politically it was essential that we do this. But after three days without sleep for me we finally got them to agree. I was finally able to call Washington to tell them they had agreed. This was already at a point when the F-4s had reached the point of no return.

Q: Who were you in contact with in Washington?

POST: With the State Department, by telephone with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and of course cable traffic galore. I'd have a cable of instructions, put it in a form of something written to be handed to the Portuguese, I'd be cooling my heels in the Foreign Minister's outer office, and a telephone call would come to me there from Washington, altering some of the things I was to say. Or beefing up this. They put it right on the open line.

Q: What was the effect of this episode?

POST: Mind you, our relations with Portugal were not what the Portuguese would have liked them to be. The Portuguese would say, "We're a NATO ally, we are supplying you with this important facility in the middle of the Atlantic, which is important to the alliance as a whole because it gives you the capability of monitoring the Soviet military submarine traffic that otherwise could travel around hidden by that mid-Atlantic mountain range, which is what the Azores is on top of."

So they felt that we should be supplying them with what they wanted. Their wars in Africa were to save these places from the communist threat. That was their attitude. So that we should be prepared to help them with that. They were fighting our battle. So I think while we gave them no specific commitments, to get the flights going, they still felt that they had leverage because of that. Having subjected themselves to a virtual oil boycott from the Arabs, and running these risks on our behalf, they could expect to get something from us.

Then came a visit by Henry Kissinger, where they attempted to put this a little more boldly. That had been preceded by a little vignette. In those days you didn't expect much of any great interest from a Portuguese newspaper. But there was a little vignette about how Ambassador Hall Themido, the Portuguese ambassador to Washington, had had a half hour meeting with the President and Henry Kissinger. That was a little unusual and yet we hadn't heard anything about it from the State Department. So I went down to the Foreign Ministry, to Freitas Cruz, the Director General of Political Affairs and said to him. "Well I guess you know that Hall Themido has been in to see the President and Henry Kissinger, and this kind of meeting is important and I think it terribly important that neither side has a misperception as to what transpired. So I'd be very grateful if you would give me a rundown as to how you feel it went and what transpired as a result." I, of course, hadn't a clue myself, but he gave it all to me.

Q: Was this the fine hand of Henry Kissinger?

POST: It certainly was.

Q: How did his visit come?

POST: At the time he was doing one of his shuttles all around the world. Negotiating with the Syrians, and the Egyptians and the Israelis and God knows who all. He found a gap of a few days. We knew that he might come. But we had no definite date for him. On a Sunday I came back from what was my sport in Portugal, riding to the hounds, to find the message that Henry Kissinger would be arriving the next day. So there was a certain amount of rushing around to get things organized. One of the things that I mentioned to him, driving in the car from the airport, I was alone with him in the car, and I said to him, that we were very pleased at a statement that he had made upon becoming Secretary of State that, and that now he had made a number of initiatives as head of the National Security Council that now he wanted to rely on the traditional diplomacy and our

diplomats. I said that we were very pleased about that because we feel that we really do have some contribution to make, we do have some expertise to put to use and we would very much like to be part of the process. He was glowing about this. "But I have some problems, because that would mean that we are kept informed of what's transpiring in important relations between our country and the country to which we are accredited. And yet I read in the papers the other day that you and the President saw the Portuguese ambassador and we never heard about it from the State Department. We don't have any idea what transpired at that meeting." Of course I did at that point because I had gotten it from the Portuguese. He said that there was nothing important said there and if there was any change in policy we would let you know of course. But anyhow during that visit, we did have a dinner party at the Foreign Ministry after which Kissinger, his NSC man and me were taken aside by Rui Patricio, the Foreign Minister, with their Ambassador to Washington, Hall Themido, and there they put the pitch. "We want this, that and the other thing." He was again very vague and non-committal. "We'd look into this sort of thing." Rui Patricio subsequently claimed that he left with the impression that we were going to provide them with Stingers, these shoulder-fired missiles to use against, they were claiming, the insurgents. They were claiming that in Guinea-Bissau the insurgents were going to get MiGs and they had to have these things. Well, he was as forthcoming as he could be, and he then said, that of course these discussions that we are having are highly sensitive and we must insure that there are no leaks, and of course if there are any leaks from our side we will know where they came from, and he looked at me. I said, "Mr. Secretary, there are two other Americans in this room."

Q: There was a coup while you were there. A change happened.

POST: Well, something happened overnight. Then there was subsequent developments.

Q: Could you explain what happened?

POST: Yes, well first of all, by the time that the coup came, an American ambassador had finally been appointed. He was appointed in January. He was a non-career ambassador, a lawyer from New York, highly intelligent obviously because he did everything I told him to do. Among those was that he should make an early trip out to the Azores where he went on about the 23rd of April. On the 25th of April came the revolution in Portugal. This was 1974.

This had been preceded by some events. We had reported things that gave evidence that there was unrest in the army, and that there might very well be some drastic changes. We didn't predict a coup but it came awful close to that. Particularly a book had come out in December 1973 written by General Spínola, previously a Portuguese commander in Guinea-Bissau. He had then come up to Lisbon, was in a staff position. It was important because he was basically challenging a lot of the rationale for the Portuguese presence in the African colonies in the book. Without coming right out and saying that they ought to be independent, be implied formulating a course for that should be done. They allowed it to be published. Mind you this was a country where there was a lot of press censorship.

They allowed it to be published because of who wrote it, a pretty tough thing to turn down a book he had written, because he would not take it in a kindly fashion, and because it was endorsed by the Chief of Staff for the army, General Costa Gomez. So there were a lot of signs that there were changes in the air. So we were not as surprised as people in Washington seemed to be.

To me it was a very satisfactory kind of coup to have. Because on the night of the coup, the new Junta of National Salvation was introduced to the Portuguese public on radio and television. In the five-man junta, two were close friends of mine, one was Costa Gomez, Chief of Staff of the army. He had been the commander of the forces in Angola when I was consul general. He was probably my best contact when he was there. I would go to him, and the line I took with almost everybody, among the officials in Angola that is, was that U.S. policy is going to be somewhat determined by what I report about developments here. Now you have it in your power to tell me what is actually happening, or you can take the risk that I am going to have to be reporting hearsay. Therefore U.S. policy is going to be based on hearsay. It worked with him, but it didn't really work with anyone else. But he gave me a lot of information about the military situation which was quite accurate.

The other guy who was one the five-man junta was a real ne'er-do-well. He was a retired Air Force general. Young but retired. Some scandal, that apparently was to his credit as far as the revolutionaries were concerned. I knew him because he too rode to the hounds. He was a real ladies' man. All of a sudden he's a part of the junta. So I have two of the five who I can immediately approach directly. Now, that's pretty unusual.

Q: Yes it is.

POST: A government to which the United States is about the last friend in the world, to be overthrown and have that kind of contact immediately with the successor government? Incredible. Of course the reason for it was the majors and captains who carried out the coup were basically apolitical types. The Portuguese army was not the kind of place that attracted very many of the left side of the ideology camp and it was a disciplined army. So of course they go to their top generals. And Costa Gomez was one of them. Spínola was another. This was the authority structure that they were accustomed to. Even though their own ideological druthers might be somewhat different, they were basically apolitical.

Then we had this other problem of trying to persuade
Washington that these were not communists. "Write Portugal off. It's finished." We were arguing that these guys are apolitical. The one thing that they know about the United States is that we supported the last government. Therefore they had to be somewhat suspicious of us. And we should allay that suspicion by welcoming this revolution in any way we can including coming forward with an aid package for Portugal. Above and beyond what we were doing already. Well we argued that until we were blue in the face to Henry. I assumed it was Henry. If anything exciting happened in the world, he took it

over. After that point on it wasn't anybody else's concern. We made very little headway with that argument although we made it repeatedly.

Finally two things helped to bring it about. One was that we had a visit by Teddy Kennedy. He went back to Washington advocating that we support this revolution. And I think Henry Kissinger could see policy getting taken right out of his hands by Kennedy, or the threat of that. The other was that we stepped up the ante in our reporting, saying that if we don't do this, because we fear the country is going communist, we may well be acting out a self-fulfilling prophecy. I think that that hit home. Well, on December 11th of 1974, I remember it because it was my birthday, we got a telegram, "You may inform the President that we are going to provide aid. The Foreign Minister was then Mario Soares, who is now President, with whom I had had a lot of dealings. The ambassador and I got to the President to inform him of this aid package but not to Soares. However, that was okay because I was going to a dinner party at the French ambassador's house where Mario Soares was to be the guest of honor. I went there and during the drinks before dinner, I approached Soares and said, "Today is my birthday and I just got the best present I could possibly have gotten and that is a telegram from the State Department agreeing to provide an aid program for Portugal." Oh, he was very happy. We went and had our dinner. At the end of the dinner the French ambassador gets up and gives a toast to the President of the Republic of Portugal. Soares gets up and gives a toast to the President of France, and then while everybody was still standing, he said, "And while we are all standing, I'd like you to join me in a toast to Mr. Post whose birthday it is today." You can just imagine the face of the French ambassador.

Q: How did things work out in Portugal?

POST: There was a lot of pulling and tugging. The coup installed General Spínola ultimately as President. In his book he had advocated some change in the overseas territories, but what he ended up insisting upon was that there should be free and fair elections, that there could be independence but there should be the option of staying with Portugal. He thought that option would win. But it would be a voluntary association. Well the majors and the captains were not buying that. They were insisting that they should hand them over to the liberation armies and that they should get the hell out. These were guys who had gone there repeatedly, not in the best of circumstances. It became clear that he was of an older school of thought than they were. So there was a tussle going on between him and a group that was gradually coalescing, as the people who were the heart and soul of the coup, the planning force, who were quite clearly farther to the left than he was. He was very far to the right. So although they were to the left of where he was, they were certainly people we could still deal with. And we did.

I had extensive conversations with a couple of them. People I did not know beforehand, but that I got to know after the coup. And we maintained pretty good relations with this revolutionary council.

There was then the question of elections. Of course the people who were about to write Portugal off assumed that there never really would be free and fair elections, but that these army officers would skew things in favor of the communists and they would win. They went ahead and did hold elections and the communists did not win. They did not win more than 20% of the vote. It was the socialists, people at the center and the right that came up with the big majority. That was a clear indication that the people of Portugal were people who wanted to stick with democracy in the West and all the rest of it.

The situation stayed that way pretty much until I left in January of 1975. At that time Frank Carlucci had just been named as ambassador, Kissinger still did not trust what he was getting from the embassy in Lisbon and he felt that the problem was that we had there an ambassador who was the tool of his DCM and his embassy staff and that they were too wide eyed and innocent about this place. What we really needed was a really tough guy who could deal with these communists.

Q: Kissinger was seeing this as the hand of the Soviet Union.

POST: In fact Stuart Nash Scott went back on consultations at one point and he was told that this guy the people who are now in charge are going to be thrown out and replaced by communists. These are the Kerenskys of Portugal that you are dealing with. So Kissinger was to send his tough-as-nails professional Carlucci and Carlucci wanted his own buddy as DCM and so I had to look for another job.

Q: Then you went to Ottawa as political counselor. You were there for about a year or so. Who was your ambassador at the time?

POST: First it was Bill Porter. Porter had been office Director for North African Affairs when I went to Ethiopia. I was in Washington, looking for a job and I bumped into him. I told him I was looking for a job and he said, well look, I need a good political counselor, why don't you come up. So we did. He was there for I can't remember how long and then Tom Enders came in early 1976.

Q: Enders was a very controversial figure. How did he operate?

POST: Imperial. A grand imperial style. Of course he is very tall, 6'9". In contrast to Bill Porter, who was a very low key administrator, but one who kept in touch with things in an interesting way. In addition to the grand limousine that the government supplied, he had a beat up Chevy. I don't think he had diplomatic plates on it. He'd drive, stop and talk to people. He got a lot of insight that way.

That was not Enders' style. Enders traveled with the glitterati and the politicos. His wife was very supportive of that role.

Q: What were the main issues that you were reporting on as political counselor?

POST: There was the political situation in Canada, reporting on that. Probably one of the most important functions was that we had responsibility for the environment. So we had a lot of discussions with the Canadians on environmental issues. Back in Teddy Roosevelt's day, we had entered into an agreement with Canada under which each of us agreed not to pollute the other side of the border. So there were a lot of issues that came up where that was precisely the issue. An iron mine in British Columbia couldn't be allowed to proceed because it would be fouling the waters that eventually ended up in Flathead lake.
There was another issue was whether under the treaty there could be a refinery built in Eastport Maine, near Campobello Island, which belongs to Canada. It was a very impoverished area. Pittston Company wanted to put this refinery there. That would have meant supertankers going through this stretch of water that came between Campobello Island and the Maine coast, an area that has the highest incidence of fog per year of any part of that coast. The channel is relatively narrow, and it was clear that they were afraid that it would cause enormous damage to the environment. I agreed with them 100% but I had to argue the other case.

Q: This brings up a point. What did you think of our environmental policy. Was it business driven?

POST: Well, certainly in the case of this Pittston thing. Our position was being driven by business interests. There were legal rights that we had to do that. If it could have been done without the tankers getting out of the channel or running aground or something like that, it would have been perfectly legal and not harmful to the environment. But the danger was clearly there and we finally admitted this and backed down. But there were other issues where business interests certainly came in. For instance, a dam in North Dakota. Garrison Dam. We wanted to put up a great big dam that would have diverted waters and changed the ecological patterns, there would be exotic organisms in Canadian rivers that would flow up from North Dakota, plus the Canadians would be getting a heavy dosage of the fertilizer runoff from American farmlands. So that was a big issue between America and Canada. Again, our role was both to enunciate as forcefully as we could what were the American positions and at the same time, to report back what we thought about the whole thing in terms of the damage we could do in terms of our relation to Canada.

There is a whole range of these issues. It is really amazing how many Americans are affected by what goes on in Canada. Of course the reverse is even more true, when you have got a country of some 25 million people, and 90% of them live within 200 miles of the American border. It is mind boggling.

Q: I've always been told two things in these interviews regarding Canada, one is their extreme sensitivity, but also that they are the toughest negotiators you will ever find.

POST: Yes, they are pretty tough negotiators.

Q: As far as the politics of Canada. What was our attitude?

POST: We just reported what was going on. They're perfectly free to have whatever kind of government they like. In order to report and keep in touch with what was going on, we had good relations with all of the political parties, including the more or less socialist party, NDP, Ed Broadbent was the head of that. In fact he ended up buying my house when I left.

Q: You then moved back to East African affairs, your greatest expertise. You were there from 1976 to 1978. East Africa included what?

POST: It included thirteen countries. It ran from Sudan in the north to Zambia in the south. It ran from Uganda in the west out to Mauritius and the Indian Ocean territories.

Q: You had been in several administrations in African Affairs. What was the Carter outlook and how did the African bureau run? Were there any differences?

POST: I think the most dominant element from my point of view, being in charge of East African Affairs, and having as the most critical problem that I faced the war between Ethiopia and Somalia, the biggest problem I had was that the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs who eventually became Assistant Secretary, fairly early on in my stay, Dick Moose, he was almost totally preoccupied with what was going on in Rhodesia, and working with the British on it.

Q: This is the unilateral declaration of independence?

POST: Well it was trying to work towards independence for Rhodesia. But there was also an attitudinal change. In the past the common thread to almost all of the other administrations that I had dealt with in African Affairs, was that we were in a contest with the Soviet Union over the hearts and minds of what have you, of Africa. We have to keep our influence and go down there. It was one of the major things.

The Carter Administration, particularly Moose's attitude was, we should keep the Cold War out of Africa. Now, that is a commendable point of view. The only trouble is that it takes two to tango. The Soviets, well now they might be prepared for that, now in the nineties, but in 1976-77, they were not about to...

Q: It was right in the heart of the Brezhnev era.

POST: Right. Here we had a situation in Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, where a basically Marxist group had taken over from our guy, Haile Selassie. The Soviets, meanwhile, were ensconced down in Somalia. So things were looking a little bit dicey for us. The sort of dominant view, which I had to battle was that the Soviets have all they could ever want in Somalia. They have an air base in Berbera, through that control of Aden. There is nothing in Ethiopia that is comparable. My view was, "Oh that's quite the contrary." Ethiopia is a much bigger prize. It projects them into the continent. They would

have the same kind of strategic position, vis a vis the Red Sea and the Gulf, that they have in Somalia, they might even think they could have it both ways. But I think that if they have a chance to move into Ethiopia, they are going to take it. The head of the Organization of African Unity Headquarters is there. It is a much bigger country. All these things. Plus the fact that the Russians, curiously enough, have a long historical connection with Ethiopia. Pushkin's grandmother was an Ethiopian. They have a long romance with Ethiopia.

But, Moose didn't want to have problems in the Horn of Africa and didn't want to spend much time when they did develop. Because he had these other preoccupations.

Q: What role did we play in the war?

POST: Our decision to reduce our MAAG and the fact that they told us to pack up and get out, that happened before the outbreak of the Ogaden War. What we had in the way of theoretical leverage was only with the Ethiopians. We had virtually no position in Somalia at that time. At least at the start of the outbreak. So what we could have conceivably used as leverage was the fact that the Ethiopians were still heavily dependent on us for military supplies. But that was changing because the Russians started pouring in massive supplies, airlifts, just massive airlifts of stuff.

I remember another thing I had to fight within the bureaucracy. That was, on the face of it, looking at the situation, you had Mengistu theoretically in charge in Addis Ababa but there were insurgencies all over the country. There were some groups opposed to the regime in Addis Ababa, there was fighting going on all over the place. There was the trouble with Somalia. The thought was why would the Russians ever get themselves involved with a thing like that. How could they possibly think that they could control a situation like that. And from having, not lived through it in Angola, but maintained something of an interest in Angola, I suggested that they have a card they can play. They can whistle up the Cubans as they did in Angola. Even the Cuban desk didn't agree with me on this, saying that Castro had much too much on his plate. My argument was, look, if he can do something that is going to tweak the Eagle's tail, he will grab it.

Of course that is what happened. As soon as the war broke out, they got the Cubans to do the fighting for them. We've moved away from your question, but...

Q: No, this is it. In many ways, though, it was out of our control.

POST: Yes, it was. Eventually the Somalis at the start moved very quickly and got as far as Dire Dawa, which is well inside. Basically, they had captured nearly all of the Ogaden and were going beyond it. That was when the Cubans moved in. We then saw that they weren't going to be able to maintain this position. We had been urging them to withdraw, before that. But we didn't have an awful lot of leverage with the Somalis. So, having learned that the Soviets were supplying the Ethiopians, the Somalis more or less terminated their relationship with the Soviets. They had already made some approaches to

us about arms and we had been saying, "You have much more than you need, clearly, because you are using it for a purpose we could never support." Well then the Cubans started beating up on the Somalis and beating them back. We then eventually went to the Somalis, in fact with a Presidential message, saying if you pull your forces back, we will undertake to study your needs for the kind of rational defensive posture that you might need. In effect, that if they pulled back entirely from the Ethiopian territory, that we would take over as their arms supplier.

There was an interesting little contretemps at that point. When the Ethiopians and the Cubans started moving, rolling them back, a lot of people started getting apprehensive about the possibility that we would have the reverse process. And policy in those days was made in a very haphazard fashion. Let me tell you. We would get a call from the NSC staff, Paul Hensey, saying that Brzezinski wants to hold a meeting on Somalia, tomorrow at 9 o'clock. We want no papers and no agenda. We just want you to bring your principals and we will discuss it. Which meant that Brzezinski wanted to dominate what policy there was. Well we immediately, that is I, the guys in the Pentagon, would exchange papers quickly and have something for our principals to take with them when they went. So that they wouldn't be totally locked out. Well, in one of these sessions, Brzezinski suggested that maybe what we should do would be to move an aircraft carrier into the Red Sea as a signal to the Ethiopians and the Cubans that they had better stop, or we're going to use our military power against them. And I was on two different minds on this. On the one hand, I didn't think it was necessary because I was persuaded, and in fact this is the view that prevailed, I was persuaded that the Ethiopians would not give up the one saving grace that they had as far as the rest of Africa was concerned and the rest of the world, and that is the sanctity of borders. This was their big card against the Somalis. They certainly would lose that if they violated the Somali border. So I didn't think that they were going to roll over that border at all. On the other hand we had been getting a lot of flak from the Saudis for not helping the Somalis more. And if we had moved in a carrier, even though it would not have stopped the Ethiopians, they would have stopped anyhow, and then we would have gotten credit with the Saudis. In the event there were no carriers available that were close enough.

Q: Then you left about that time?

POST: By the time I left, which was in August of 1978, the war had stopped. The Somalis did pull back. We were then in the process of trying to see if we would carry through on this Presidential commitment. I was arguing that we had to. That we had a Presidential commitment. I was running into a lot of flak because we were getting a lot of intercepts indicating that the Somalis were still screwing around inside the Ogaden, and therefore not living up to what had prompted us to do this. My argument was that the Somalis are always going to screw around in the Ogaden. They had been doing it forever and would continue to do it. But we had a clear interest in establishing a solid position in Somalia by living up to our commitments. Okay, let's put as many constraints as we can on it, but live up to the commitment. They finally agreed to send Moose out there on a fact-finding mission to report about the time I left.

Q: You then moved out of your normal area. You go to Europe for an R&R and you were there for a most auspicious time, the one time in thirty years that there was a change in the government in Portugal. Then you went to Karachi as Consul General, just at the time when things started to heat up in that part of the world, because of Afghanistan. When did you go to Karachi and what was the situation?

POST: I went there in July or August of 1979. General Zia was in charge having overthrown Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who eventually was executed. In fact the execution took place in March of the year I went there.

It was a military regime. We had problems with it for that reason. We had done our best, along with a number of other countries, to persuade Zia not to allow the execution. But he went ahead and did it anyhow. I wouldn't say that that was necessarily a principal note of contention between us but it was clear that his concept of human rights and our concept of human rights were a little different.

On the human rights side, more or less, and on the ideological side we were anxious to have Pakistan return to democracy. Zia, when he took over, promised elections in ninety days. Well, that never took place. In fact when I arrived, municipal elections were held, and that was supposed to lead to general elections. Well, they had the municipal elections, and Bhutto's party, the PPP, won a hell of a lot more seats than they had anticipated and so he canceled the next elections too. That was another bone of contention with him.

But the principal one was the nuclear issue. Despite our efforts to get them to stop going down that path they were continuing efforts to do so. We had in law, we were required by the law, well the law didn't actually say that if they were trying to get a nuclear bomb we had to cut off aid, but we interpreted it to mean that. In effect that was what Congress was trying to say. Use this leverage of withdrawal of aid to get people to shape up on the nuclear proliferation issue.

So we had decided to stop our aid, and therefore the situation when I arrived was at a pretty low ebb between Pakistan and the United States.

Q: I also had the feeling that Carter, partly because his mother had been a Peace Corps volunteer in India, was moving away from the Nixon-Kissinger tilt towards Pakistan into a more. If you weren't for Pakistan, you were on the side of India. Was there that feeling.

POST: There is a general feeling in South Asia that when the Democrats are in the White House, India benefits and when the Republicans are in the White House, Pakistan benefits. There is obviously some slippage there. When the Bangladesh war came, from our point of view, we thought we were tilting towards Pakistan, by getting our aircraft carrier out in the Bay of Bengal, and issuing warnings and so on. The Pakistanis don't see it that way.

Pakistanis, since there has been a Pakistan, have always looked upon the United States as their big brother. So that basically there is a very close relationship. But what happened is that it leads them towards expectations of behavior on our part that are totally exaggerated. Totally false. If they get into a war with India, even though it is their fault, they expect us to support them. We didn't do that in the case of the Bangladesh War or the earlier 1964 war over Kashmir. In fact in '64 we had been their only suppliers. We had supplied very little if at all to India. And we put an embargo of arms to both countries. Well that clearly was a detriment to the Pakistanis and they very clearly saw it that way. The point is that when we don't do things that they would like us to do, or expect us to do because of the closeness of the relationship, their reaction gets to be much more drastic and violent. It is sort of like an affair between people. If it is a love affair, when the other person doesn't do what you expect, your reaction is much more strong than if you didn't have much of a relationship.

Q: Then you had your Consulate in Karachi and the Embassy was at Islamabad. What was your relationship with the Embassy? Were there different points of view?

POST: There were certainly different points of view. The embassy, seen from Karachi, was up there in this artificial town. They had contacts with other diplomats and people in the government. They were a long way from any action. Karachi was certainly the economic and business center of the country. And one of the major political centers of the country. Lahore, a little less so. But still even Lahore much more than Islamabad.

But particularly Karachi was where most of the action was. We felt that we were much more in touch with things than they were. So we'd read what they were reporting about what was happening in the country and we would find it quite ludicrous. Like looking through the telescope through the wrong end.

Q: How did you report?

POST: We had to report through Islamabad. We would send cables through Islamabad. They would look them over and either they would send them out directly, changing them as they saw fit, or they would ask us to send it directly to the department. It was not a particularly happy experience.

Q: In other places the Consulate Generals report directly with a copy. In other words there was some tension there.

POST: I tried my best to persuade the Embassy that they would lose nothing by allowing us to go ahead and report. If they disagreed with it they could send a cable and say so. But one thing that I felt was important was for others on my staff, writing reports, to be encouraged to do the very best job that they could. If they knew that it was going up and be cannibalized in Islamabad, why bother?

Q: There is a bad feeling. When I was Consulate General in Naples, not that there were any great tensions, but we never felt any compulsion and we sent an information copy up to Rome.

You had two ambassadors while you were there Art Hummel and Ron Spiers. Can you compare and contrast?

POST: Well, first of all we didn't see Hummel very often down in Karachi. I was there with him a lot longer than I was with Spiers, but I saw Spiers many more times in Karachi. Also I had a real battle with Hummel over contacts with the opposition. Specifically with Nusrat and Benazir Bhutto, the mother and daughter of Bhutto. The daughter is now the Prime Minister.

Q: Was this a legal party?

POST: Well, yes the party was a legal party. Now, most of the time I was there, Benazir was in or out of house arrest or jail. There were very few windows of opportunity for me to have any kind of contact with her, but I thought it was really my duty to do what I could with all of the various political groupings, and particularly the one that seemed to be the only one that was a country-wide party. That had been the party in power before the coup, and therefore the one most likely to come out on top if there were ever any free election. So I did my best to keep in contact but I got a direct order not to do so from Hummel.

Q: Why?

POST: Because he was afraid that it would hurt his relationship with Zia and his government. I argued this back and forth in cables to him. I had it in the back of my mind that if his relationship with Zia was so bad that it could be upset by what a Consul General in Karachi could do in the way of having contacts with others, he was in dire shape. What I suggested to him was that this was my view and that it could be said to the Pakistani government up there and that is that we have had all too recent of an experience of not having had sufficient contact with the opposition in a neighboring country.

Q: You are talking of course about the Iran hostage situation.

POST: The fact that the Shah had been overthrown and we had not had sufficient contacts with the others.

Q: There too was the underlying instructions from Washington, "Maintain good relations with the Shah."

POST: My contention was that we could say that the situation in Iran was a reminder of the necessity for us to keep in touch with all shades of opinion. It doesn't mean that we are endorsing them. It just means that we are finding out what they are talking about.

The way this developed was, I was invited to a party by a retired general. Who should be there but Nusrat and Benazir Bhutto. I didn't know that they would be there. It was the first time that I had met either one. I think Benazir had been in jail before that. We had a long conversation and I reported it. It was the first report of any kind that had come out by an American diplomat who had had direct contact with Benazir Bhutto. So the ambassador thanked me for it. He did send it into Washington. Then he said that "I want to make sure that you don't have any more contact with those two ladies. I don't even want you to have any chance contact." In other words he was virtually ordering me not to have contact with anybody. Because I couldn't be sure that she was not going to be at a party that I was going to. I went to an average of three parties every night I was in Pakistan. Karachi is a big city. There are an awful lot of people very anxious to have the American Consul General come.

So from that point on it was a little more difficult. She was in and out of prison. On the few occasions when she wasn't it would have been difficult in most circumstances to have contact even if you were planning.

What happened was very interesting. My wife got into a group of Pakistani women who stuffed dolls which were then sold for charity. And one of the women in that group was Nusrat Bhutto's niece, Fakhri Khan, an Iranian, married to a Pakistani, and therefore an "auntie" to Benazir. Through her we kept up on what was happening, with reports of Benazir being in this or that jail. Which enabled me to have another source of reporting. But also what I did was on the few occasions where she would be out of jail for a while, we would get an invitation to go to dinner, at Fakhri Khan's, and sure enough, the Bhutto ladies would be there. And we would have more contact. And I had several other friends in the community who could be counted upon to invite us with Benazir, but not necessarily letting us know that she was going to be there. Or in fact, a few times they did and I went anyway, despite the ambassador's instructions, because I frankly felt that he was totally wrong.

Q: Did you have any encouragement from the desk or the department?

POST: Certainly not anybody in the embassy. Certainly not from the DCM. There was the office director who came out on the trip and seemed to be rather more sympathetic. At least to the extent of saying that the reports that I had sent in on Benazir Bhutto were fascinating and they were very happy to have had them. I don't know that I got in too deeply with him about the actual directive. Because I didn't want to be put in the position that I was violating the ambassador. But I expressed my view that it was unconscionable for us not having as much contact with the opposition.

Q: What did Benazir Bhutto feel about the role of the United States?

POST: Well she felt that we should be putting more pressure on Zia to restore democracy. This is something that virtually everybody in the opposition would be saying, to which

my reply would always have to be, and it would be accurate, that we don't control him. Pakistanis don't believe that for a moment. They assume that anything that happens in Pakistan happens because we allow it to happen or we make it happen. She wasn't as naive on that subject as some but she still felt that there was a lot more that we could do to induce change.

Q: What happened when Hummel left and Spiers came?

POST: Things eased up considerably. At that time, Benazir was in jail but Nusrat was out, and I think the first test of Spiers' attitude came when I suggested to him that I would like to invite Nusrat Bhutto to the Fourth of July party. No way I could have gotten that through Hummel. Spiers said fine. So I did.

Q: How did the Iranian revolution and the takeover of our Embassy effect you?

POST: There came the time when the mosque in Mecca was taken over by the renegade Shiite group, in 1979. The first report of this event came over Voice of America. Mind you this was at a time when Carter had just dispatched a second carrier task force into the Arabian Sea. Things were looking a little tense between the United States and Iran. Here comes this report by Americans pointing the finger at a Shiite group who had taken over the holiest of holies. This was then reported by the BBC, and attributed to the Voice of America. So they immediately got the idea that the Americans are doing this and are taking over the Mecca mobs. Having already connived with the Israelis to take over the mosque in Jerusalem. Result: riot.
They burned down our Embassy in Islamabad and tried to do the same to us in Karachi. But the Karachi police force is much more accustomed to this sort of thing and controlled them, using probably a year's supply of tear gas, (which, ironically, we had embargoed for shipment to Pakistan). Meanwhile up in Islamabad, first of all, the security forces that were normally available are pretty thin up there. But they were all arrayed on the streets in nearby Rawalpindi, because President Zia was out riding a bicycle to demonstrate the need to rely on other energy sources. So there was nobody there to defend the Embassy.

Of course Zia delayed sending any help until it was already completely burned down.

Q: So what did this do to relations? Both from the Embassy and the Consulate. Zia did not respond as he should have. This may be a lesson. Some Americans were killed. It was a very nasty, very nasty situation.

POST: As I said earlier, relations were already rather tense. This made them much more tense. At least in Karachi, well Karachi is basically an anti-Zia camp, so there were a lot of people who were very sympathetic to us more so than they might have been there. They became even more sympathetic when the department ordered all of our dependents and non-essential personnel to go back to the United States. I don't know if you have ever had to tell an officer that he was non-essential.

Clearly our lines were cut. We didn't have our dependents back for six months. I think the relationship itself would have deteriorated a lot more except for what happened on Christmas Eve, with the Russians walking into Afghanistan. That changed the whole picture overnight.

Q: How did you see the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and how did Pakistan?

POST: I myself saw it as a limited thing, not a roll up of the area. A lot of people in Pakistan and in our own government viewed this as a latter-day expression of the Russian interest in having a warm water port. The Great Game. Everybody's favorite port for that would be Karachi, or Gwadar. Some said that Gwadar was the port they really wanted. I had been to Gwadar. You certainly don't invade Afghanistan to get to Gwadar.

I looked at it from the point of the Soviets that they were preventing the collapse of a Communist government right on their border. The Soviets don't like to see communist governments collapse anywhere. But when one does right on your border, and it is on the border with your Muslim population, and the reason they collapse is because of militant Islam, you don't want that message to get across to the Muslims of Central Asia. That was my view.

The public pronouncements by Brzezinski would suggest that a different view prevailed and that in fact they bought, or at least wanted people to think that they bought, the warm water port theory. Which of course did justify our going and offering military assistance to the Pakistanis.

Q: What was the Pakistani view?

POST: There may have been negative or hostile attitudes at times but they were still very interested in the United States. But now it was much warmer. We were now doing the right thing by them. While they were a little unhappy that it would take a thing like the Soviet invasion to get us to do the right thing, more the less here we were offering to help. Of course the initial offer by the Carter Administration was dismissed by Zia as peanuts. I don't think that he realized that he was talking to a peanut farmer. And he got the ante upped. Also an exemption to the foreign aid act restriction of providing aid to a country who was going for the bomb.

Q: Was your role changed at all because of this?

POST: No, not really.

Q: You were there from 1979 to '82. The Carter Administration got this shock about Afghanistan which turned Carter around in his view of the Soviets. When the Reagan Administration came in did you have any feel for their views towards Pakistan?

POST: Oh, immediately there was a much warmer view towards Pakistan. I think even though the Afghan thing had turned things around, there was still evidence of concern about human rights, concern of the absence of movement towards restoration of democracy. That kind of thing appeared.

Q: What about the role of the CIA and the military? (This is an unclassified interview.)

POST: Certainly the role of the military increased because we began to provide military assistance. What increase there may have in CIA activities was not evident in Karachi. Now up in Peshawar, it might have been something different. You had the odd CIA fellow passing through who gave hints about this or that, but aside from that we were not conscious of that going on.

Q: What about Bhutto and the rest of her father's party?

POST: Their feeling was that, had we been in the government, we certainly would have wanted to be receiving this assistance from the United States. Perhaps the United States feels that it has to give this to Zia, but we would hope that the United States would exert as much influence on him as they could through the provision that it should help him move towards democratic change. And they didn't see us doing that.

Q: From Karachi you went to the United Nations.

POST: Yes, but that was just a temporary assignment. I came back from Karachi, like so many senior officers, walking around trying to find something to do. NEA offered to send me up to New York to cover the UN General Assembly as the Near East South Asia Area Advisor. Which was kind of fun. It was where all the action was. The Middle East and so on.

Q: What was your impression of Jeane Kirkpatrick while you were there?

POST: Nothing surprising. A very professorial type. I just really saw her in staff meetings, there wasn't an awful lot of give and take in those meetings. She pretty much gave and we took. She is quite a competent person and she had some people around her who were reasonably competent although arrogant, but...

Q: It was more of a business atmosphere.

POST: Yes. I had more to do with the desk in IO than with those in the mission. Because I would go and get from them instructions on what they were most interested in my doing.

Q: This was your first brush with the United Nations. What was your impression, particularly in your area?

POST: I had the impression that nothing much happens except on the margins at the UN. I think I was able to turn around one vote on the Afghan vote. No big deal. What people do this year is what they did last year, unless they get very specific instructions to change. You may come up with the most wonderful set of reasons as to why they should change but they'll still say, "Well how did we vote last year. I'll vote that way again."

So it is kind of a marginal function. But it was fun.

Q: You spent a couple of years at OPIC?

POST: One of the things I did when I got back from Karachi, was I called on people. I went to call on Craig Nailan, President of OPIC, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. He had stayed with me in Karachi, our very, very nice residence in Karachi, gorgeous place. I went to see him just at the moment that he was going to send a memo to an Assistant Secretary of State, actually the wrong one and I corrected him on that, canceling an OPIC mission that had been planned to go to Pakistan.

Three months hence, President Zia was due to come on a state visit. I said to him, you can't do this. What kind of mixed signals are you going to be sending to the Pakistanis. He said, well I won't cancel it, I'll just postpone it, if you will agree to come over and organize it. Listen, I said, I don't know diddly squat about investment or economics or commerce. But he said, you know Pakistan. I was sure the senior assignment people would be happy, not having to worry about me for a while, so I organized this thing for Pakistan. It was a great success. We got about 26 participants, which is quite a lot. So then they asked me to do one to Turkey. I never served there but certainly wished I had. So I did that. That was also a success. And then I did one to Portugal and that was a success.

I divided my time between working for OPIC and working on another project at the request of our ambassador to India, Harry Barnes. He had recognized that the source of funding for virtually everything we were doing in India, the so-called excess rupees, was coming to an end. The excess rupees were those generated by our PL 480 program, which up until the early seventies was to be repaid in local currency. By 1974 that had reached such proportions that the Indians owed us something like $3 billion worth of rupees. It was becoming a political embarrassment. Even some of our friends were accusing us of having devised our aid program so that we could have a strangle hold on the Indian economy. So Pat Moynihan, as ambassador at that time, negotiated a treaty under which we basically forgave half of what they owed us. Theoretically, they paid us off in full and we gave half of it back for good projects. Half of it was to be put in a State Bank account in India and used by us to finance US government operations for ten or so years. That was coming to an end. Meanwhile there had been an awful lot of programs, some twenty odd agencies in India, public health, agricultural projects, Smithsonian Activities, Fish and Wildlife. All of these were using these excess rupees. So that was coming to an end and then clearly very few of those functions, those cooperative programs, were very likely to get funded from Congress. So he asked me to look into it and see what could be done.

What I devised was an endowment fund. What I did basically was to take 110 million dollars worth of rupees that we still had, deposit them in U.S. banks in India, and then the plan was to use the interest from the proceeds to keep these programs going. In fact they could have gone on indefinitely. It took a lot of doing to get that thing off the ground, first of all to come up with the idea, secondly to sell it. The initial opponent was OMB, Office of Management and Budget, who were under instructions to keep the budget figure down. Here we were going to add another $110 million in appropriations for this fund, and they were dead set against that. Then I did a little research and came up with the idea of turning this into an off budget item. So it didn't raise the dollar budget level, and OMB went along with it. I had to devise how the structure was going to work, a framework for it that would satisfy all these twenty agencies and then I had to provide the embassy with instructions to try and get the Indians to agree. The process took about two years. By then I had to persuade the Hill to pass that program, which a lot of them were reluctant to do because it meant that this would go into a fund over which they would lose annual oversight. But it all came together and now we're getting 11 to 12 million dollars worth of rupees every year that is keeping things going. Unfortunately the Indians insisted on having a termination date after ten years. So eventually that will dry up, unless they change their minds as I sure hope they will.

That was kind of fun.

Q: What would you say to a young man or woman wanting to enter the Foreign Service today?

POST: I would say that I have no regrets. I have a lot fewer illusions than I had when I started. I recognize that you certainly don't make money at it. That you will see people getting ahead because of connections that they have. I guess that happens in any institution, any organization. It is one that when I entered the Foreign Service, I thought it was not that kind of organization. I have since found that it is. That doesn't rule out being able to contribute and being a part of history. Maybe being able to have a footnote in history books about you.

I remember when I went back for my 25th reunion at Harvard, they handed out a survey in advance, about what people were earning. I was at that time earning pretty near the top you could get in the Foreign Service, which was $25,000. But the categories of my classmates was, $75,000 and over, that was about 30% of the class; $40,- $50, was another 30% of the class, then you got down to a few clerics and Foreign Service Officers. So you don't expect to make any money at it.

But it is a very rewarding experience to live abroad, particularly, I think, if you move around from bureau to bureau. You learn so much more if you move from bureau to bureau. It is personally more satisfying to know that you are able to cope to deal with new, strange circumstances effectively. But as I said, I would certainly advise them that you are in a bureaucracy, that it is one that is virtually despised by the body politic and by presidents universally. You have the expertise and you have to watch it not getting used.

Q: Thank you very much.

POST: I thank you.

End of interview