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

AMBASSADOR WILLARD DE PREE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is February 16, 1994. This is an interview with Ambassador Willard A. De Pree and is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Bill, could you start off by giving us a little of your background. I notice you were born in the great year of the dragon, 1928.

DE PREE: I am a product of small town America. I am from Zeeland, Michigan, a town of about 5,000 between Holland and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zeeland was originally settled by Dutch Calvinists, Dutch Reformed. I had a very strict upbringing. Church three or four times on Sunday, once in the middle of the week. My interest in overseas work probably originated right there because we had a number of missionaries who came through and spoke at the church. One in particular, a Dr. Thoms, who had been in Muscat, Oman had some fascinating stories. For a young kid growing up in the mid-West that was excitement.

Q: This was during the '30s, too, when you wouldn't have much exposure to overseas affairs.

DE PREE: I guess the furthest I ventured away from home was Chicago. We didn't travel that much. It was the depression years and we didn't have the money to travel.

Q: What did your parents do?

DE PREE: Well, my father was in the furniture business. My mother grew up, homesteaded in the West. Both had Dutch backgrounds and settled in Western Michigan. I was from a family of five children. I was the middle one.

Q: Did you get much in the way of foreign history in school? I take it you went through public school.

DE PREE: Yes. The high school offered only American history. They didn't teach Latin. The only language you could take was Spanish. I think I had a year of Spanish and that was it.

Q: No Dutch?

DE PREE: No Dutch. The community was divided into two groups. There was one group that wanted to become totally American; the other group clung to the Dutch culture. My parents were in the first group. They spoke Dutch but didn't teach me Dutch. I regret it now looking back.

Q: I had the same experience. My mother spoke German, but it stopped with her, I didn't learn it. You graduated from high school when?

DE PREE: In 1946, and then went to Hope College. That was the school supported by the Dutch Reformed Church and it was five miles from home. I had a full tuition scholarship. I was interested in going to the University of Michigan, but at the time with a whole tuition scholarship I decided to go to Hope with the thought of transferring after a couple of years. After two years I transferred to Harvard.

Q: Going from Hope to Harvard must have been an experience. How did you find Hope as a college?

DE PREE: Oh, fine. Looking back on it I had a couple of outstanding professors who were willing to spend time with me and let me go at the pace that I wanted to go or was able to go. Hope has a fine academic record but was parochial in many respects. I wanted more than that. After two years I applied to Harvard and got a small stipend. I went there for a couple of years. It was a new world for me. I hadn't traveled very much before that. I found I had had it relatively academically easy up to that point. At Harvard I found that I really had to buckle down.

Q: Did you have any particular field that you were interested in in Harvard?

DE PREE: I had an interest in becoming a university professor or teacher, but was also interested in going overseas. As I mentioned before I had been stimulated by hearing about the work of missionaries. And during the war, of course, a lot of young men from Zeeland went overseas. I heard and read a lot about North Africa, Europe and the South Pacific. There was a National Guard unit in Western Michigan that went off to New Guinea. I majored in political science at Harvard and developed an interest in politics. One summer, while working at my father's store in Zeeland, Jerry Ford, just back from the war, walked in and said that he was running for Congress and asked if I would help him. That sounded exciting, so I agreed to circulate some nominating petitions for him. I stayed in touch with Jerry Ford for many years.

While I was at Harvard the Zeeland Rotary Club nominated me for one of the Rotary Foundation Fellowships. I was selected and asked if I would be prepared to go to the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, Wales. I had to look on a map to find out where it was. I said, "Yes." I was excited, this was a real opportunity.

So I went off for a year. It was a marvelous experience. I studied international politics, concentrating on the period between the wars in Europe. But for me the value was largely just getting overseas and mixing with a lot of people from different backgrounds. The Welsh students were largely from the mining communities. They called themselves Nye Bevan's boys and were strong Labourites. However, they all joined the Tory Club. I couldn't figure out why. It turned out that they could get beer there an half-penny a pint cheaper than in the Labour club. I did a lot of speaking at Rotary Clubs in Wales, England and Scotland.

Q: Since we are exact contemporaries, what was your impression when you were in school about the United Nations? I went to Williams from 1946-50 and I remember the United Nations was really the thing that was grabbing us.

DE PREE: I too had high hopes for the UN during the immediate post-war period. In 1950, when I was in Aberystwyth, the war in Korea broke out and the United Nations provided a useful vehicle to marshal international resistance to the invasion.

Q: At Harvard while you were studying government, what was the impression that you were getting?

DE PREE: In retrospect, I guess Harvard reflected the Eastern Establishment's view of world politics, which wanted to see the United States engage actively in international affairs.

Q: You graduated from Harvard when?

DE PREE: In 1950.

Q: Then you went on to....?

DE PREE: I had a year at the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth. While there I met a lot of students from the British colonies. Quite a number were from Africa - Tanganyika, Uganda, and Mauritius - and I developed an interest in African issues.

The year abroad was very important in another respect. I had some money left over from the grant at the end of the year and looked around to see where the dollar would stretch the farthest. It was Austria, so I decided to go there to study German. While studying in Salzburg, I met the woman who eventually became my wife five years later.

Q: What was your impression of Austria at the time?

DE PREE: It was still under occupation. The American dollar went a long way there. It was a beautiful country. I didn't delve much into the politics of Austria or the position of Austria in international affairs. I was more interested in the young girl from Sweden.

Q: When I was in the military around the same time, I spent time in Japan. When I came before the Foreign Service Board they asked me about the politics of Japan and I drew a blank. That was not my major preoccupation at that point. So this takes you up to 1951.

DE PREE: At that point I had developed an interest in the Foreign Service but I wanted first to go on and do graduate work. I had thought I might want to go into politics or teaching, and if so, the University of Michigan seemed a good place to be. So I enrolled at the graduate school in political science. At the time I was still corresponding with Congressman Ford and there was an outside chance that I might be invited to work for him in Washington. Eventually I was offered such a job but I turned it down because by then I had decided to pursue other interests.

So I went back to Michigan and spent a couple of years there working on a Ph.D. I had a job as a teaching fellow in government. I was a little disappointed with my studies. I was interested in big picture issues, but the graduate school seemed to want to narrow my focus so that I could come up with something original for a Ph.D. thesis. I wanted to move in the other direction.

I had applied for a Fulbright and had received one to go to the University of Bonn, but the draft board caught up with me at that point and I was drafted into the Army in 1954. By that time I had completed all the required course work and had taken my orals.

Q: Where did you serve?

DE PREE: I took basic training at Fort Knox and then went overseas to Germany, Heidelberg, where I had a job in psychological warfare research. An enlisted colleague and I occasionally lectured at NATO conferences. He became Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Minnesota. Being enlisted personnel, we

had orders not to disclose our rank, were given a civilian clothing allowance and billeted in the officers' club.

Q: When did the Foreign Service begin to appear on the horizon?

DE PREE: During the summer of 1952 I had an internship at the Department of State, working in the Office of British Commonwealth Affairs. I took the Foreign Service exam in Washington that Fall.

Q: I took it in Frankfurt in 1954.

DE PREE: When I was in the Army in Kentucky I was invited to come to Washington for the orals, and fortunately I passed. The oral was brief, only a half hour. I had the exam in the morning and was told that afternoon that I had passed. I decided when in the army that I would defer going back to graduate school, and have a crack at work in the Foreign Service first.

Q: So you came into the Foreign Service when?

DE PREE: I got out of the Army in February in 1956. I had informed the Department that I would be available immediately for Foreign Service work. I was engaged at the time and interested in getting married. At that time, one needed to get permission from the Department to marry a foreigner.

A few weeks after leaving the army, I was home in Michigan and was called on a Thursday and asked if I could be at work on the following Monday. I accepted at once. The Department didn't tell me what the job was, just to report to a certain office. When I reported in, I was sent off to Cleveland to recruit secretaries for the Foreign Service.

Q: Just to get a little glimpse of this. The Foreign Service secretary is really a different breed of cat in this mid '50s than came later on. Where were these women coming from?

DE PREE: They weren't coming fresh out of any secretarial school nor were they unemployed. Most had good secretarial jobs, but had decided that they wanted to try something else and thought work overseas would be exciting.

Our recruitment team usually was given space in the State employment office. I recall in Atlanta there were two employment offices, one for blacks and one for whites. We started off with our space in the office for the whites. When our team told the state employment staff that the State Department was interested in recruiting black secretaries as well as white secretaries, the Atlanta employment officials politely told us we would have to move to the employment office at the other end of town if we wanted to interview black applicants. They didn't expect us to move, but we did.

Q: Were you getting some good responses from the black community at that point?

DE PREE: The interest was there and we began to recruit blacks, yes.

Q: This was still the days of segregation in the South. Were you told to recruit blacks as well as whites?

DE PREE: Yes, I was told that we were to make it clear that we were interested in recruits from all races, black and white. The team was warned that we might encounter difficulty in Atlanta.

Q: What happened after you finished this?

DE PREE: When I wasn't recruiting secretaries, I worked in the college relations section arranging recruitment trips for Foreign Service officers to college campuses. After one year in the Employment Division, I entered the A-100 class at FSI.

Q: This would be 1957. Can you describe a bit the training you got in the A-100 class, which was the basic officer training course?

DE PREE: I thought it was pretty good. At that time consular training was included in the A-100 course. It was taught by Frank Auerbach. I thought our consular training was the best part of the course. It was good hands-on training.

Q: He was very Germanic. He essentially had written the immigration law.

DE PREE: We had a good class. Larry Eagleburger was in our A-100 class. So was Elinor Greer, now Elinor Constable and Deputy Assistant Secretary in OES. I think I got as much out of my fellow students as I did out of the instructors.

Q: Could you give a little feel about the group coming in? Each generation is a little different. What was their outlook, those coming in in the '50s?

DE PREE: There was a mix at that time. We were not primarily East Coast Ivy League. We were getting people from the mid and far West. We had a number of women in the class. There were no blacks. Many of us had done some graduate work. Most of the men had had military experience. The average age was probably around 27. At that time, the Department still had an age ceiling of 32, or something like that. I gather the average age of current classes is much older.

Q: Did you look upon the Foreign Service as a career or something to try out for size?

DE PREE: I think most of us were trying it out for size. At least I was, and I think a good many of my colleagues were. At that time we weren't quite sure what it was going to be like, life in the Service.

Q: I know when I came in I sort of had the feeling that I wasn't sure whether it was my type of work, these diplomats being more social types and all. I just didn't feel comfortable with that. I was relieved to see that the people who came in with me were also of the same background.

DE PREE: In the '50s it was still tough getting into the Service, so one wanted to give it a good try.

Q: Your first posting abroad was where?

DE PREE: It was in Cairo, Egypt. Actually, throughout my career I have had a pattern of assignments being broken at the last minute. In this case I was initially assigned to Elisabethville in the Congo. But when our daughter was born premature, the Medical Bureau thought the medical facilities there were questionable, so I was reassigned to Cairo as vice consul. When we were about to leave Cairo, we were told we would probably be assigned to a post in Africa, but that was changed when a vice consul was shot in Cyprus and we were assigned instead to Nicosia. When I was in INR, I was assigned to go to Kaduna, but that was broken at the last minute because of an unexpected opening in Ghana and I was assigned instead to Accra. While I was in Ghana, we were told we were going to Benghazi, but that was changed when there was a coup in Sierra Leone, and the Department, looking I guess for someone with West African experience, sent us to Freetown instead of Benghazi. So much for the bidding system.

Q: Okay, let's move to Cairo where you were from 1957-58. You were doing what?

DE PREE: I was vice consul and did citizenship service the first year and visas the second. There were four consular officers in Cairo at the time, the Consul General, his deputy, an officer for the visa side and one for the consular services side.

Q: What kind of applicants were coming for citizenship services, where were they coming from?

DE PREE: There was quite a large resident American community. We also had a number of tourists who lost their passport or had other problems. And we had some prison visitation. On the visa side at that time everyone wanted to go to the United States and our rolls were filled with applicants. We had an excellent FSN staff on whom we depended.

I learned a number of things about myself at that post. First of all we had instructions at that time not to issue visas to members of the FLN party in Algeria, then resident in Cairo, without first getting an okay from Washington. One afternoon a note came in from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry requesting visas for members of the Egyptian delegation leaving that evening to attend a meeting the nest day at the United Nations. I looked at the list and there were some Algerians of the FLN included as members of the Egyptian delegation. What do you do? Do you deny the Egyptian government the right to appoint

whomever they wish to serve on their delegation or do you deny the visas because there wasn't time to get the okay from Washington? Ray Hare was ambassador at the time. I asked him what I should do. He in turn asked me, "What would you suggest?" I said, "I would issue the visas and then send a cable to the Department saying we did it." Ray said, "That's fine, I will back you up." I appreciated the confidence the ambassador had shown in me and his willingness to back me up in case I got in trouble. We never had a peep out of Washington.

I also made my share of mistakes. I thought I knew the visa legislation. One day a Swiss citizen, who had a job with the Hilton Hotel, came in for a visa. He wanted to transit through the States to a conference in Canada. He told me he was a resident in the US and wanting to become an American citizen. I advised him that since he was only transiting the States, I would issue him a transit visa, which I said was cheaper and less trouble. "Fine." He came back in after returning from the conference saying that when he had arrived in New York he had been told that all the time he had spent in the US to become an American citizen had been lost because I had given him the wrong kind of visa. He asked if there was anything I could do. I said I would try my best since I had given him bum advice. I cabled the Department, acknowledged that I had been at fault and urged the Department to take corrective action. A cable came back, wrapping my knuckles, but stating that since I had acknowledged I was at fault, the Department would introduce private legislation. So in the end the man wasn't penalized. I realized that I had better be less sure of myself in the future.

Q: Although you were in the consular section, what was the political situation in Egypt at the time?

DE PREE: It was an exciting time because Nasser was at his height. While I was there Egypt formed the union with Syria, the United Arab Republic. It didn't last long but Nasser was strong and very active in the non-aligned movement. There were a large number of political exiles in Cairo. Many would come in for visas.

It was an opportunity for me as a vice consul to do some reporting because the political section was eager to get information about these people. I developed contacts with a few of the African political exiles. I got to know Felix Moumie of the Cameroon, who was subsequently poisoned, and some of the exiles from Nigeria, who were studying at Al-Azhar University. I did a few reports that the political section welcomed.

The US wasn't particularly happy with Nasser at the time. We thought he should have been more appreciative of the support we gave him in the Suez war when Eisenhower intervened to halt the British, French and Israelis. But Nasser didn't see it that way.

Q: What was your impression of Ray Hare, who died just last week? What was the general feeling about him?

DE PREE: I liked Ray Hare. He went out of the way to make junior officers feel part of the team. It was a strong mission. The deputy was Pete Hart, who subsequently became an assistant secretary. Tony Ross was head of the political section. There was excellent reporting coming out of the unit. We, in the consular section, weren't that close to what was going on. We were separately physically, although in the same compound. We had enough to keep us busy. Once a week we would attend a general staff meeting. I saw some of the political officers because of the side reporting I was doing. At the time I felt that the United States should be making more of an effort to try to work with Nasser. But this wasn't the views of the mission or Washington, who more or less concluded that US-Egyptian relations were not going to improve as long as Nasser was in power.

Q: This was the impression one had and it was reflected by Dulles who couldn't abide Nasser. What was the view of Israel within the embassy at that time? Israel was still a new state and we weren't giving it a lot of support.

DE PREE: From where we were in Egypt, the fact that the US had been the first to recognize Israel and had a close relationship with Israel didn't help in terms of developing a working relationship with Egypt. Yet it appeared to me that we were being reasonably even handed. We had after all intervened to halt the British, French, and Israeli invasion of Egypt. Unfortunately Eisenhower's intervention didn't earn us as much credit as we thought it should from the Egyptians and from Nasser.

Q: This is your first Foreign Service post. Were you at all tempted to become an Arabist?

DE PREE: No, I wasn't. I was still interested in Africa. I told the Department when I entered the Service that I was interested in Africa. The Department had originally assigned me to Elisabethville in the Congo, but for medical reasons I had been reassigned to Cairo. In my annual April Fool's bid list, I continued to ask for an assignment in sub-Sahara Africa. But then, in 1958, when I was about due for reassignment from Cairo our vice consul in Cyprus in Nicosia was mistaken for a Britisher and was shot, and the Department needed somebody in Nicosia quickly. Since I had just about completed my two year assignment in Cairo, I was picked. I packed off the wife, and the kids, (at that time we had two kids), to my wife's parents in Sweden while I went off to Nicosia. Once again an African assignment had to wait.

Q: You mentioned the vice consul who got shot, was he killed?

DE PREE: No, he was not. Basil Wentworth was his name. He returned to the States. I really don't know what happened to him afterwards. I never met him.

Q: To go into some place where someone has been shot as a Foreign Service officer wasn't in those days an expected hazard of the business. How did your wife feel about you going off to something like that?

DE PREE: She wasn't all that happy, but took it in stride. I was more disappointed that my family wasn't able to accompany me than I was concerned about going into Cyprus. I had talked to Toby Belcher who was consul general in Nicosia at the time. He reassured me that the Greek Cypriot resistance movement was not targeting Americans. Of course, I realized that I might be mistaken for a Britisher, as had been Basil Wentworth, but it didn't really bother me.

Q: What was the situation, you were in Nicosia from 1958-60, on Cyprus at that time?

DE PREE: When I arrived the struggle of the Greek Cypriots for Enosis, or union with Greece, was still raging. General Grivas was the leader of the Greek Cypriote resistance, EOKA. They were engaged in guerrilla activity against the British forces on the island. Sir Hugh Foote was governor at the time. There had been talk of a truce but at the time I arrived they still hadn't reached an agreement. So we had to be very careful where we went. I can recall being invited to a reception at Government House, where we had to be escorted in by military convoy. But there was an air of expectation that agreement on the transition to independence would soon be reached. In fact, it did take place within a few months. With the agreement came a cease-fire.

My years in Cyprus, 1958-1960 were a promising time to be in Cyprus. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were talking and mixing together. The Consulate General was often the site for these meetings. The Consul General, Toby Belcher, was particularly active in bringing Greek and Turkish Cypriots together. Alas, it didn't last very long.

Q: What was the feeling towards Enosis, union with Greece, at that time?

DE PREE: Many of the Greek Cypriots preferred union with Greece to independence, but they began to realize that this probably was not achievable. Therefore, the next best option was independence. The issue then became how much power would be in the hands of the Greek Cypriots who were the majority and what rights would the Turkish Cypriots have. These were sensitive subjects. Neither trusted the other. You could tell the Island was headed for trouble, when the only flags you saw around the island were either the Greek or Turkish flags, not the newly-designed Cypriote flag. I left before independence.

Q: Did you get much of a feeling for the role of the Turks? Were they pretty much a peasantry as opposed to the more commercially minded Greeks?

DE PREE: Most Cypriots, Greek or Turkish, were peasants. Some Turkish Cypriots had commercial interests, but the big mines and most commercial trade were largely in the hands of Greek Cypriots. The big banks were controlled by the Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots didn't like it, but that was the situation on the island.

We had a problem in the consulate general. No American officer on the consulate staff spoke Turkish. Toby Belcher tried hard to treat the two communities equally, but because he spoke Greek there was a perception among some of the Turkish Cypriots that he

favored the Greek Cypriots. I gather now the US tries to have at least one Turkish speaker on the staff.

Q: How was Toby Belcher as a principal officer?

DE PREE: I thought he was first rate, one of the best officers I worked for. He was good with people, an excellent reporting officer, adept in negotiations, and highly respected by everybody on the island. He didn't stay on to become the first ambassador, but was brought back a couple of years later after fighting broke out again because of the high regard in which he was held by the Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

Nicosia at the time was a very small part. There was Toby Belcher, myself, a CIA officer, and a rather large administrative support section because of the radio relay station and FBIS station. There was no AID staff, no defense attaché, nor anyone from USIA. That was it. As the vice consul, I doubled as reporting officer and the public affairs officer. It was a great learning experience.

Q: As public affairs officer, did you have any contact with the local press?

DE PREE: We had contact with both Greek and Turkish press. Toby Belcher largely handled these contacts. I did know one or two of the editors. I kept busy with our small exchange program. I also worked to found the Cypriote/American alumni association, which was made up of graduates of American universities, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the American embassy in Athens at all? Were they taking an interest in what was going on?

DE PREE: Yes, we did. But the embassy was letting Toby Belcher call the shots in Cyprus. It did not try to treat the Consulate as a constituent post. Actually we had more to do with London, since Cyprus was still a British colony.

Q: How did this play?

DE PREE: The Greeks on the mainland in a sense looked down on the Greek Cypriots. Cypriots were country cousins. But there is a kinship of Greek speakers and the mainland Greeks were supportive and tried to make sure that Greek-Cypriote interests were not shortchanged during the transition to independence. The feeling in Greece was that the Greek Cypriots should have power corresponding to their numerical numbers. They had about 80 percent of the population, and the Turkish Cypriots about 18 percent, as I recall. In this respect the Greek-Cypriots may have been short changed by the London accord.

Q: Did Grivas appear at all during the time that you were there?

DE PREE: Yes, he came out of hiding. But he wasn't that conspicuous on the local scene. It was Archbishop Makarios, who returned from exile, who captured most of the attention. He was the acknowledged Greek Cypriot leader, not Grivas.

Q: What about the British part of the equation? The Brits were going through a very difficult period all over the world with decolonization. The United States is just sitting back. We had been a colony and basically were opposed to colonialism, etc. Did the British officials that you dealt with kind of resent "you Yanks?"

DE PREE: I sensed that there was some of that. A year or two before I arrived on Cyprus, or maybe just shortly before, the British combined the Colonial and Commonwealth Services into a single Service. Cyprus began to get a number of people out of the Colonial Service to serve in the British administration of the island. They had a different mind set. I had the impression that they were more resistant to change than the people in the Commonwealth or diplomatic services. There was a discernible difference. But the differences were largely muted on Cyprus because of the dominant position played by Sir Hugh Foote, who by virtue of his strong personality, was determined that there was going to be a transition to independence and that it was going to take place under his leadership. He was highly respected on the island by all elements.

Q: Except those who were trying to kill him.

DE PREE: That reminds me of a delightful story. It involves the governor immediately preceding Sir Hugh Foote, Harding was his name, a general. One of the Greek-Cypriots working at Government House planted a bomb in the bedroom of Governor and Lady Harding, and it went off. No one was in the bedroom at the time so no one was injured. After placing the bomb, the Greek-Cypriote suspect, of course disappeared, joining his colleagues in EOKA. A few weeks after the settlement was reached and the EOKA people came out of hiding, this ex-employee got on a bicycle and peddled off to Government House to request his back pay. Apparently he thought there would be no question, even though he acknowledged that he had been the one who had planted the bomb in Governor and Lady Harding's room.

Q: What were American interests in Cyprus?

DE PREE: Our interest largely was to support the transition to independence. We had very few economic interests. There was a pyrites mine which was owned by the American/Cyprus Mining Corporation, but trade was minimal.

We had a military interest in the two bases, the British Army base at Dhekelia and the British air base at Akrotiri. Even after independence these bases were to be considered to be part of the UK. Given Cyprus' location on NATO's southern flank, we had an interest in this continued British military presence. Perhaps our major interest was to work to ensure that Cyprus not exacerbate the already fragile relationship between our NATO allies, Greece and Turkey.

Q: At that particular time, did you feel that the problems of Israel and the Middle East intruded?

DE PREE: They didn't seem to intrude on our work in Cyprus. We had people transiting through Cyprus on their way from Israel to the Middle East, so we had to handle the passport work, otherwise...

Q: This was because they couldn't go directly?

DE PREE: Yes, that is right. We were following developments in the Middle East, but it wasn't a major element of the work done in the consulate general. Cypriots were preoccupied with developments in Cyprus.

Q: Was your family able to join you?

DE PREE: Yes, as soon as there was an agreement on independence the family joined me.

Q: Well, then in 1960 you finally got your wish....

DE PREE: No, I didn't Stu. I had hoped that after my tour in Cyprus I would finally be assigned some place in sub-Sahara Africa. Instead, the word came that I was to be assigned to Northwestern University for African Studies. I protested, stating that to make it worthwhile I ought to have a tour under my belt before I went to the university. It didn't work.

Q: Well, you went to Northwestern for a year, 1960-61, in African Studies. How would you describe the Northwestern approach and what you were getting out of the program?

DE PREE: It was heavy on anthropology. Northwestern had an outstanding anthropology section, headed by Mel Herskovits, who had done some research in West Africa. Northwestern was not as strong in the other social sciences. But there was a very fine African library. I did a lot of reading. The University had a weekly African seminar, which often attracted interesting Africans. But by and large it was a disappointing year. I wanted to get to Africa; I didn't want to sit in a library reading about Africa. My only consolation was that after the year at Northwestern I would get my wish and be assigned to sub-Sahara Africa. But that didn't work out either.

Q: Northwestern and Boston University were the two places for African Studies. Looking at it in retrospect, did you feel that Northwestern had any view of Africa that didn't accord with what you later encountered?

DE PREE: I have had the impression over the years that academia doesn't quite capture the real world out there, that something is missing, which can only be obtained by

residence in the field. There was great enthusiasm in Northwestern and throughout the US for what was taking place in Africa in the late 1950's, early 1960's, which was the heyday of independence. Everybody was excited. In retrospect, I think the media, the US Government and academia oversold Africa to the American public. We didn't foresee the difficulties down the road.

Q: We were going to be leading the way and having tremendous influence. We were going to be a very positive influence within the area and bringing it quickly up to standard all over.

DE PREE: Yes. At Northwestern too, most everyone thought the sooner the African colonies became independent the better. We thought the British and French were slow in realizing how important it was that these people achieve their independence. In retrospect, one has to ask the question whether everybody would have been better off if the pace had been a little slower.

Q: What happened after you got out of the training?

DE PREE: I thought sure now I would get to Africa I did, but only for a two month orientation trip. A small group of officers interested in Africa - Ed Streator, Tom Thorn, George Sherry, Ray Perkins among them - toured Africa going from West to East, talking to African leaders and embassy people in route. The trip convinced me that I really did want to work in African affairs. But an assignment to the field was not to be. Instead I was assigned to INR to the Office of Research for Africa.

Q: I ended up doing the Horn of Africa in INR and leaving just about the time you arrived. What was the role of INR then and how did you feel it fit into the situation in the State Department?

DE PREE: I was in INR/RAF at a very fortunate time. This was 1961, at the beginning of the Kennedy Administration. Soapy Williams, former governor of Michigan, had been designated Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. The Kennedy Administration had reservations about Williams. George Ball, who was Deputy Secretary, was looking about for someone in the Department, to keep an eye on the Bureau and Williams for him. That person was Bob Good, who was head of the Office of Research for Africa, in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Bob Good came out of one of the universities. In time, the Department's leadership looked to him as its reality check on the African Bureau. Thus, RAF had the attention of the Department's senior policy makers.

I stayed for three years in INR. There were two big issues that I was concerned with during this period. Ghana was one. Kwame Nkrumah was in power and riding high on the international scene. He was arguably the most influential African leader, at least in the late ''50s and early ''60s, and an important voice in the non-aligned movement. The other issue was the Congo. I didn't have specific country responsibility for the Congo, but Congo issues were dealt with out of our unit, and I had a ringside seat.

Q: West Africa was where the action was.

DE PREE: That's right. West Africa and the Congo.

Q: It was on the front pages of the paper every day.

DE PREE: In Ghana the big issue for us was whether the US Government should assist in the construction of the Volta dam. The White House was uncertain. One day it would decide we should go forward, and then Nkrumah would say or do something to make the White House have second thoughts. Eventually, we decided to go ahead with it.

Q: When I came into INR, for the first time somebody was saying, "Nkrumah really has charisma." That was the first time I had ever heard the word and I thought, "Is it fatal, or what?" It had just started to become a buzz word about that time. You were sitting there dealing with Ghana, how were we seeing Nkrumah and wither Ghana with him at that time?

DE PREE: We were unsure, I think, at that time. Obviously he had garnered the respect of most of the black Africans. He was their spokesman. Ghana had become one of the first African states to become independent. He championed independence for all of Africa. Nkrumah had a wide following in the American black community. What got him in trouble with many in the US was his willingness to develop close relations with everybody including the Soviet Union and China. This caused us concern because we were still in an era in which many perceived that you had to be on one side or the other. It was very difficult to be neutral or non-aligned. We weren't sure in what direction his true sympathies lay. Eventually the Kennedy Administration made the decision to go ahead with the construction of the Volta Dam. It was a calculated risk. I thought at the time it was the right decision. I still do.

But the Congo was the big issue during the three years I was in RAF. It was constantly in the news. We were concerned about a host of things; the instability of the Congolese government, the safety of American citizens, Soviet influence in the country, Tshombe's secessionist movement...

Q: This was down in Katanga.

DE PREE: Yes, Katanga. We had hoped that we could restrain Tshombe without having to resort to military force. Eventually, as you know, the UN did send in military units. Tshombe was the target of the UN action. I can recall participating as note taker at a meeting which was called when the fighting in Katanga had reached what appeared to be a decisive stage, where the issue was whether the US should allow the UN forces to achieve a military victory, or whether the US should try to stop them and seek a negotiated settlement. Many of the Department's big guns were there...George McGhee, Governor Harriman, Governor Williams. Opinion was divided, but eventually the group

decided to try to persuade the UN Secretary General to call for a cease-fire. Somebody went out of the room to telephone Adlai Stevenson in New York to urge him to intervene with Dag Hammarskjold but they couldn't get Stevenson on the phone. It was then decided that somebody should fly to New York and try to track down Stevenson. (Apparently there was some thought that Stevenson would not want to intervene and might deliberately have left instruction with his staff not to be disturbed.) But it was a very wintry day in Washington and all flights were grounded because of bad weather. As a result, the US did not intervene with the UN and the UN forces defeated Tshombe's forces. There were a number of us working on African affairs who felt that this was fortunate, since a cease-fire would have left the door open for Tshombe to continue to create problems.

Before we leave my work in INR, I should perhaps mention one other incident, which tells us something about the Kennedy Administration's operating style. I think it was 1963. I was duty officer for RAF. It was on a Sunday and there had been a coup attempt in Togo. The President of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, had been assassinated and died on the American embassy compound. I went in to the Department to find out more about what had happened and to add an INR comment to a paper that the Department would be sending to the White House. I wrote that the French were the dominant power in Togo, that they seemed to be on top of the situation and that in the circumstances, the US should wait to see how the situation developed before deciding what action, if any, it should take. I sent my comments forward and the next day it came back with the note that this was the Kennedy Administration and it was not appropriate to recommend a policy of doing nothing.

Q: Don't just stand there, do something.

DE PREE: Yes.

Q: It sounds like somebody from the political side of the Kennedy Administration just wanting to do something. Well, tell me, in some interviews I can recall having people saying during this period when they would report from an African post that the government is ineffective, there is a lot of corruption, etc., they would sometimes get a rocket back from Soapy Williams or from his office, essentially saying that you don't report nasty things. Did you have any feeling that in INR you were supposed to be sort of the honest broker, that you were kind of looking for things beyond some of the reporting? Did you feel there was a muzzle on or not?

DE PREE: I didn't sense that during the period I was there. I had the impression on the basis of the reports that I was seeing that the posts were calling the shots pretty much as they saw them. I think there may have been a general disposition within the US government to view some of these adverse developments as inevitable and not to get too alarmed by a turn in the road that doesn't go in the direction we had wanted it to go. But I didn't have the impression that we were carried away with that. That came a little later I think. This is still 1961-64. I certainly didn't sense there was a muzzle on us in INR.

Q: How did you feel about the Soviet influence at that time? Did that weigh heavily?

DE PREE: It did. It was always there. The Chinese were also very, very active in Africa.

Q: Were you doing papers about what the Soviets and the Chinese could do here?

DE PREE: Very much so. What were the Soviets' interests? What were they up to, where could they make inroads into our major interests in Africa? Some of us in INR thought the US did too much worrying. Maybe it would be a good thing if the soviets would take over some small African country. Someone suggested Zanzibar. It was an island off the mainland. Let the Soviets have it; See what they could do with it.

Q: Were you finding at that time dealing with West Africa that you were in collision some times with the European Bureau, particularly because of the French. The British had pretty well washed their hands of it all.

DE PREE: The French very much so. We were very much interested in what the French were up to. We never felt we were on top of what they were doing.

Q: Although you weren't at the policy level, did you feel that the French were playing us? This was before the French pulled out of NATO, but de Gaulle was being de Gaulle. Did you have the feeling that the French were using the European NATO card to keep us from getting involved in Africa or not?

DE PREE: I didn't have a sense particularly of a NATO card, but the French did play on our efforts to counter Soviet activity in the continent to their advantage. Also, the French would constantly remind us that they had been in Africa a long time and understood the Africans better then we did and that we didn't appreciate the long term consequences of some of our actions.

Q: What about South Africa? Although it wasn't your thing did you feel that it was just something different?

DE PREE: Most of us in RAF took the view that the blacks in South Africa would eventually obtain independence and majority rule. But we also knew the whites would resist. It was thought the struggle in South Africa was some years off; probably a decade or more.

Q: But, it was coming.

DE PREE: Yes, it was coming and it was inevitable and couldn't be stopped. The sooner it took place probably the better.

Q: How were the Portuguese territories handled...Angola and Mozambique?

DE PREE: The European Bureau saw this as largely a European issue. The resistance movement in Angola and Mozambique didn't really begin until the tail end of my tour in INR. It was felt that the movement for independence was going to have to run its course in these territories as well, but that the Portuguese had a bit more time and that they would benefit from what happened in the British and French colonies.

Q: What kind of reporting were you getting on this?

DE PREE: I don't know; I wasn't reading the daily traffic from the Portuguese Territories. I had the impression that our embassy in Lisbon may have been putting a metropole spin on the reporting of developments in Mozambique and Angola.

Q: In other words, just don't meddle, in a way. The Azores, I suppose, were the thing. But really talking about Portuguese Africa just didn't come up on your radar?

DE PREE: Yes, that is right. It hadn't come up on the screen as yet. Everybody was thinking it was inevitable, it is going to happen there, but we were preoccupied with the Congo and the British and French colonies.

Q: Our policy was then and it is now, that African boundaries may not make much sense but if you start breaking away from them you are talking about absolute chaos because of the tribal patterns. Was there any dissent or any feeling in INR that maybe the tribal things are un-overcomeable and maybe we should take another look at this policy or not?

DE PREE: No, there wasn't. None of that at the time. Nobody questioned that. Everybody thought that the boundaries divided so many tribes that you didn't want to touch this one. Once you did there would be no end to the unraveling. I did a paper at Northwestern University on this question of boundaries cutting across tribal units, and I concluded in that paper, as I think the Department concluded, that the US had best live with the current boundaries. It was also the view of the African leadership at the time. They didn't want to touch it either.

Q: At least it was a problem all over and it makes sense. Once you start, and we are learning that right now, we are having a nasty civil war in former Yugoslavia of the same nature.

DE PREE: Apparently, there are some Africanists today who suggest that Africa might be more governable or manageable if the tribe were the basic unit of governments. But at that time there wasn't any of that. The issue surfaced significantly at the time Biafra wanted to separate from Nigeria, but that was later.

Q: In INR were you getting anything from the CIA and what was the judgment, if you were?

DE PREE: Yes, we were getting intelligence collected by the CIA. I think the African area was relative easy for the CIA to operate in. It was quite easy to buy information. But the best reporting was still coming out of our posts in Africa. I don't think we had a problem of access so much in Africa. You could talk to people. You just had to have people who spoke the language on the spot to dig out the information. The area where the Agency was good was finding out what the Soviets, Chinese and other supporters of the Soviet bloc at that time were up to. That was the area where intelligence from the CIA was very useful.

Q: What were you getting from East Africa, Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Uganda, etc.?

DE PREE: I don't know. Our relationship with the British has always been a close one. We were sharing intelligence. We were periodically meeting with the British to discuss country by country what their views were and what our views were. That was also true with the French although I don't think there was as much sharing as with the British. So on British East Africa, we were probably getting pretty good information from the British, to the extent that the British were on top of developments.

Q: Was Guinea at that time a thorn in our side?

DE PREE: Guinea had opted to break its relationship with France, which prompted de Gaulle, of course, to pull out, to unscrew the light bulbs, as the story goes, and leave them on their own. Of course, Sekou Toure was heavily supported by the Soviet Union and China. For the longest time we were concerned that he might permit the Soviets to establish a military base in Guinea. However, in time, Sekou Toure became disillusioned with his relationship with the East and realized that it was in Guinea's interest to have a relationship with both sides, including us.

Q: Was this sort of a watching brief more or less?

DE PREE: When I was in INR, it was, although President Kennedy appointed political supporters as ambassadors - Bill Attwood in Guinea, Bill Mahoney in Ghana, both of whom made a college try at winning over Sekou Toure and Nkrumah. I think Mahoney in Ghana had more success than Bill Attwood. Bill Attwood, I think, became disillusioned sooner than Mahoney. Sekou Toure gave us more concern than Kwame Nkrumah.

Q: Going back to how things worked, how about with the Desks, were you going more or less up to the top or were you working with the Desks?

DE PREE: We had two routes. Obviously, for those of us at the working level in INR, our contacts were at Desk level, both in EUR and AF. But RAF's director, Bob Good, had direct access to George Ball who had a great deal of confidence in Bob Good and wanted RAF's independent judgment.

Q: Were the Desk officers sometimes wondering what you were doing?

DE PREE: No, at the working level I think there was an excellent relationship and sharing of information. Many on the Desk had graduated out of INR. It wasn't "we" against "them." Everybody was trying to do the best job they could.

Q: Kennedy died shortly before you left, is that right?

DE PREE: That is right, in 1963.

Q: Did this have any repercussions on how things were dealt with or not?

DE PREE: Kennedy was held in high esteem by almost everybody in black Africa. They thought he cared. They had access to him. During the Kennedy Administration I was a member of the African luncheon group, made up of people working on Africa from all agencies, which met once a month for lunch and a program. I was president of the group for a time. We hosted people like Roy Welensky of Rhodesia, Kenneth Kaunda, and African leaders visiting Washington. One time I invited Martin Danquah, who was head of the Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana, to speak to the luncheon group. Even a person of his standing was able to get in to see President Kennedy. This obviously paid off. People in Africa were devastated by Kennedy's death, as in the United States.

If we can jump ahead, when I was assigned to Ghana from 1964 to 1968, the embassy received copies of the film that USIA had put out entitled, "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," about the Kennedy Administration. You probably remember it Stu. Shortly before that film was produced, the embassy had sent the regional governors of Ghana to the United States for a tour. They had been escorted by Jack Matlock, who was then an officer at the embassy in Ghana. When the film arrived, the embassy decided to show it around Ghana at each of the regional capitals. I can recall going up to Bolgatanga with Jack Matlock. The governor put the screen in the middle of the town square and thousands of people, seated on all sides of the screen, showed up to see it. It was incredible, the reaction and feeling of black Africa toward Kennedy and the Kennedy Administration.

Q: When did you leave INR?

DE PREE: After INR, I was assigned to go to Kaduna as principal officer. This was the summer of 1964. Shortly before I was due to leave, however, Bill Edmondson, who was chief of the political section in Ghana, had to curtail because his son had an accident which required medical treatment in the US Oliver Troxel who was DCM in Accra, asked if I would be interested in the job. I was. Nkrumah was still in office and Accra was where the action was in Africa. So my assignment to Kaduna was broken and I was assigned to replace Bill Edmondson.

Q: Although this is shortly into the Johnson Administration, did you feel any change in interest or not from the top?

DE PREE: No. I didn't sense any change.

Q: Two questions before we leave this because this is a very interesting period we are talking about. This is sort of the discovery of Africa by the United States. What about Rhodesia at that time? How were things playing out there from our perspective?

DE PREE: I guess there were two main issues. One, was whether the Central African Federation, comprising Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, would hold together. Of course, it didn't.

The second issue was whether the British would grant independence to Rhodesia and if so, under what circumstances? Would they insist on participation by the blacks in the government of an independent Rhodesia? Of course, Ian Smith and the white Rhodesians jumped the gun and declared their own independence.

Q: This was during your watch?

DE PREE: No, that was later.

Q: But it was more or less on the stove but hadn't boiled over.

DE PREE: Yes, we were hopeful that the Rhodesians would begin to bring the blacks into the government and there would be a multiracial government in Rhodesia, but it wasn't a burning issue at the time.

Q: Last question on this, what about aid? Was the aid program going on and you really didn't know what was happening, were we getting any feedback that it was doing what we think it should be doing?

DE PREE: INR was very much interested in aid. The thinking of the time was that Africa had great promise. You may recall that Walt Rostow's book, "Stages of Economic Growth," was popular at the time. In the book, Rostow looked at what conditions were needed to bring countries to the stage of self-sustaining growth. Many African countries were thought to qualify.

Q: This is where you reach a certain point and take off.

DE PREE: Yes, what level of technology, training, infrastructure or trade was required. I can remember attending a meeting in the Department, on Sierra Leone, a country I subsequently served in, where we debated in all seriousness, what inputs of aid were needed to bring Sierra Leone to the point of self-sustaining growth. So, indeed, aid was a significant factor in our work. And, of course, in Ghana one of the key policy issues was whether the US would guarantee funding for the Volta River project.

Q: With the Volta River project, was the Aswan high dam sort of thrown in our face? Was this a factor?

DE PREE: Yes it was. Before we went forward we wanted to make sure we would carry through to completion. We didn't want to say yes, then later to call a halt to it. President Kennedy sent Clarence Randall, a prominent industrialist, to Accra to talk with the door closed to Kwame Nkrumah and to come back with a recommendation whether to proceed. If I recall it wasn't a very clear cut recommendation. It left the question open.

Q: Why don't we stop here and pick up next time with your going to Ghana, 1964-68.

DE PREE: Okay.

Q: This is a continuing interview with Willard De Pree. We are going to take you at last to Africa, to Accra where you served for four years, from 1964-68. How did you feel about that assignment?

DE PREE: Eager. As you know I waited many years to get to Africa. Finally here was my chance. I had initially been assigned to Kaduna which I think I mentioned in our previous discussion. That was broken because Bill Edmondson, who was head of the political section in Accra had to return to the States for family reasons. Oliver Troxel, the DCM, asked me if I would be interested in going out to replace Bill. I had to be repaneled but I was pleased with the assignment. Kwame Nkrumah was riding high in Ghana and that's where the action was.

Q: Ghana was sort of the focal point of almost everything of American interests at that time.

DE PREE: That's right, and Ghana was the first sub-Saharan black African state after World War II to achieve independence and Nkrumah was active not only in Africa but in the non-aligned movement. Everyone was there. All the foreign diplomatic missions had strong missions because Ghana was in the limelight. So I was pleased with the assignment.

Q: What were you doing there?

DE PREE: I was chief of the political section. Bill Mahoney, a political appointee of President Kennedy's, was Ambassador and Oliver Troxel was DCM. We had a four-person political section.

Q: Before you went out there did you talk to anyone on the desk or elsewhere in the African Bureau? What were our interests as far as you gathered from the State Department and all, when you went out there?

DE PREE: As I said, Nkrumah was active, Ghana was active, and our hope was that the policies he pursued would on balance be in Western interests. Our concern was that he was being courted by the Soviet Union, Red China and he responded positively, letting himself quite often, in our judgment, be used to promote their global interests.

We also wanted to keep tabs on what he was up to in Africa. There were reports that Ghana was training Nigerians and some Francophone Africans to subvert governments back in their home countries. It was in our interest to try to find out what he was up to.

We also reported on the activities of the other diplomatic missions in Accra, particularly the Soviets and the Chinese.

Q: What was the political situation like when you arrived?

DE PREE: It was mixed. In general, Ghanaians were pleased with Ghana's influence and the attention Ghana was receiving. But internally the cocoa farmers were unhappy. The price the government paid them for their cocoa was far less than the price cocoa commanded on the international market. The government was buying the cocoa cheap and selling it at a better price, or hoping to sell it at a better price...quite often it miscalculated and sold it prematurely. Trades people were unhappy because of regulations that were being imposed on their activities. The economy wasn't perking along as Ghanaians had hoped it would and disgruntlement was beginning to set in.

In addition, many were unhappy over Nkrumah's close relations with the communist regimes.

Q: When you got there how were the officers in the political section feeling about this?

DE PREE: We had a strong section. Foreign Service officers bid on Ghana because of what was taking place there. The number two in the political section was Jack Matlock, who subsequently became our Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The number three was Tom Walsh and there was a junior officer. All of us in the Political Section liked the assignment because Ghanaians are a delightful people, engaging, well-educated, and easy to get to know, including government officials. There was a strong cadre of civil servants, particularly in the Foreign Ministry. If we needed information we just called somebody in the Government and generally were able to get the information we were looking for.

The other diplomatic missions were a good source of information. The Nigerians, for example, saw themselves as rivals of Ghana in West Africa. Ghana at that time was supporting opposition elements in Nigeria. People in the Nigerian embassy were well aware of what Nkrumah was doing and readily shared their information with us. So Accra was an exciting place to be.

Q: What was Nkrumah trying to do as far as subverting Nigeria, or was this pretty much felt this was what he was trying to do?

DE PREE: Well, I think he was impatient. He wanted all of black Africa to be truly independent. If the government that assumed power at independence was maintaining what in his judgment was too close a relationship to the former Metropole, he was unhappy. In most African countries there were some people who agreed with Nkrumah, who talked his language. Lumumba in the Congo was one. There were some in Nigeria. Nkrumah supported these people financially and occasionally with military training.

Q: When you were there were you seeing indications of this?

DE PREE: Yes, we were getting information. Nkrumah separated his conduct of diplomacy. He had a Foreign Ministry and an African Affairs Secretariat. It was the African Affairs Secretariat that promoted Nkrumah's wishes in Africa. It was this organization that operated the ideological and military training camps that were located in the country.

In the four years I was there, there were a couple of coups in Africa that could be traced back directly to people who had been trained in Ghana. There was a camp in Winneba, just west down the coast from Accra, where African radicals received their ideological training. Some of these people subsequently led opposition movements or engaged in subversion in independent Africa.

Q: Did you find the hand of the British left wing Socialist movement coming out of the London School of Economics in Nkrumah's economics?

DE PREE: That was certainly there. Fabian socialism and the trade union movement. But Nkrumah, of course, pretended that he was coming up with something different, something unique. "Consciencism" was the title of one of his books. The political section had to try to analyze it. It was almost an impossible task, a mixed bag of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist rhetoric. A good many Ghanaians had studied in Russia and Eastern Europe. Generally we found that these people were not too difficult to deal with. From their experience in Eastern Europe and Russia, they realized there was a wide gap between communist rhetoric and communist practice. They found racism to be very prevalent.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia at the same time and there was a revolt from Bulgaria of all the African students. They all came through my office in Belgrade asking to get to school in the West. We placed a lot of them in schools in the West. They were tired of being called black monkeys by the Bulgarians. They were not the most subtle people.

DE PREE: Ghanaians who had lived in the Soviet Union came back with their eyes open. Quite often graduates of American universities and the UK created more problems for us.

Q: What was our attitude at that time towards these efforts to subvert other countries? Did we just sit back and watch or pass word on to the other countries?

DE PREE: We were pretty much sharing information that we had with respect to what Ghana was engaged in. And, of course, we shared too what we knew about Soviet activities.
The Nigerians had a very active mission and they were passing information to their African colleagues. So it wasn't as if other African governments were oblivious to what was taking place.

Q: From the Nigerians and other black African diplomats, were you getting from them that their view of Nkrumah was not a benevolent one?

DE PREE: That's right. For most of the time I served in Ghana there was division in sub-Saharan Africa between the radicals (the pro-Nkrumah camp) and the moderates.

Q: Were we being active trying to tell Nkrumah to cool it or something or at that point were we just sitting back and being rather passive and watching?

DE PREE: No, we certainly were not passive. This was the immediate post-Kennedy period. We were concerned with our own problems in Vietnam, of course, but we were not sitting back. We were frank in our discussions. Ambassador Mahoney had an exceptional relationship with Nkrumah, in retrospect, maybe the relationship was too close. Nkrumah may have felt that he could do pretty much what he wanted and Ambassador Mahoney would understand. Not that he did, of course. But if we had somebody a little more aloof who could go in and say, "Look, this is what we know you are doing and we don't like it," Nkrumah might have taken more heed. The close personal relationship may have led to some misunderstanding.

Q: Well, it reminds me of Howard Jones in Indonesia with Sukarno. They were very close and Sukarno would twit Jones and kid him, and Jones would just take it because he felt he had this very close relationship. And yet it didn't work out to our advantage there.

DE PREE: Ambassador Mahoney didn't mince his words with Nkrumah but Nkrumah may not have taken what Mahoney was saying as seriously as he would have had they not been so close. We used to talk about it in the mission.

Q: Would you talk to Mahoney about it too, or not?

DE PREE: Yes, it was something that we talked about. I had a good deal of respect for Mahoney.

Q: What was Mahoney's background? He was a political appointee.

DE PREE: He was a lawyer and had been Kennedy's campaign manager in Arizona, maybe more than Arizona. He was one of several political appointees in Africa. There was Bill Attwood in Guinea, Kaiser in Senegal. Before, as you know, most political

appointees went to Europe, but under the Kennedy Administration a lot of them found themselves in the third world. For the most part they were good.

Q: How did we view the Soviets and the Communist Chinese?

DE PREE: At that time it was a confrontation, a rivalry. We concluded that what they were engaged in was not in our interests. To the extent that they were able to develop a close relationship with Ghana or other African states, we were unhappy. Many people viewed it as an either/or situation. One either had to be pro-West or one was on the other side. Oh, there was some sophistication, but this still was the prevailing mind-set in the way we looked at Soviet and Chinese activities. There was, of course, a Soviet and Chinese rivalry that developed, and you could sense that and see that. We reported that to Washington. The Soviets and Chinese were, themselves, competing for African support.

Q: What were the Soviets up to as far as we could see during this period, 1964-68?

DE PREE: I think they were trying to cultivate leaders in Africa who would side with them on global issues. They wanted to stir up trouble for the West.

Q: What were they doing? Aid projects?

DE PREE: The Soviets had a large aid program, primarily economic rather tan military. A lot of Ghanaians were being trained in the Soviet Union. Our aid in Ghana captured more attention because we were facilitating funding for the Volta Dam, which in turn, generated the power for Kaiser's alumina smelter.

Q: Were we looking around and saying, "My God, the Soviets are here and we had better get into this field too?"

DE PREE: Yes, we didn't want to leave the field open to them. We were competing. We had the good fortune, of course, that Ghana is English speaking. And far more Ghanaian officials had been trained in the West and were familiar with the UK and the US than with the Soviet Union. We had an advantage over the Soviets.

Throughout my tour in Ghana, US funding and support for the Volta River project and the smelter was the most contentious bilateral issue. Kaiser had a very strong team in Ghana. We were very close to Kaiser officials. Edgar Kaiser used to come to Ghana a couple of times a year. It was always seen as a big event in Ghana. The State Department and embassy always briefed Edgar Kaiser before he saw Nkrumah so that he was privy to the state of US-Ghana relations. We hoped Edgar Kaiser would use his influence with Nkrumah to further US interests in Ghana and Africa.

A little sidelight. Nkrumah enjoyed novelties. Every time Edgar Kaiser came to Ghana, he would have something special by way of a gift or a novelty for Nkrumah. One time he presented a toy blimp that could be directed by remote control. He gave that to Nkrumah

in his office and throughout the conversation that little blimp was hovering over the conversation. I guess it was rather distracting.

Edgar Kaiser was concerned too with what was taking place in Ghana, but had negotiated what he considered a very favorable arrangement both for Kaiser and Ghana, and stuck with the project, as did Nkrumah. The smelter turned out to be one of Kaiser's most profitable investments.

Q: Who was funding the Volta Dam, itself?

DE PREE: It was multiple funding. The construction of the smelter, and Kaiser's agreement to purchase the power at a fixed price made construction of the Dam viable. The US guaranteed some of the loans which financed the Dam, which was built by Kaiser. There was international funding, the World Bank, and Ghanaian funding as well. So it was a multiple funded project.

Q: With these aid projects, how did we at that time view the problem of corruption? Was it there?

DE PREE: It was there. In retrospect, looking back on my experience in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh, it was there but it wasn't as blatant or as pervasive. Some of the money no doubt found its way to Nkrumah, not so much for his own personal gain, as to promote his political wishes throughout Africa. Some of his ministers, however, were living far beyond their governmental salaries. That was beginning to irritate the Ghanaians. You could see the unhappiness setting in. Civil servants, police and military, began privately to express their concern. The army was unhappy with the creation of Nkrumah's presidential guard, which was viewed as a rival to the professional army. Senior police officials were unhappy at the way corruption was beginning to find its way into their service. And as you know, eventually some of the police and some the military, General Ankrah and Chief of Police Harley and his deputy Deku got together and plotted the coup.

Q: When was the coup?

DE PREE: The coup took place in 1966 while Nkrumah was in China on his way to Vietnam. He had approached us before the trip asking if we would support his efforts to negotiate a cease fire or settlement in Vietnam. The Johnson Administration was convinced that nothing good would come of Nkrumah's efforts, but we didn't want to publicly discourage him, so we indicated that we would be interested in whatever he could find out, without encouraging him in any way. It was while he was in China that the police and the army moved against him and toppled him. Many of those who were with Nkrumah came back, but Nkrumah never did.

Q: For an embassy a coup is always a highlight of one's professional business. Had you, the embassy and the political section been sort of paving the way saying this could happen?

DE PREE: We reported what we were hearing in Ghana. The unhappiness with Nkrumah and rumors of some plotting had been reported back to Washington. So a coup was not that unexpected, although when it occurred it came as a surprise and caught a lot of people unaware. The army and police obviously took advantage of his being out of the country to stage and carry out the coup. There was some fighting around Flagstaff House, which was Nkrumah's offices, but for the most part resistance was short-lived.

Q: How well was the country team plugged into what the Ghanaian military was thinking? I am thinking through our military attachés and all. How were relations with the military?

DE PREE: Relations were very good. Many of the senior officers had fought in World War II in Burma. They had been trained by the British. They were friendly to the West. Our Defense Attaché had very good contacts. So too did many of us in the embassy.

Q: How about the CIA? Were they giving you information or were they sort of operating their own show?

DE PREE: They were sharing the information with us. As I say, it was easy to collect intelligence of what was going on. You just had to have stamina.

Q: Stamina meaning going to parties?

DE PREE: Partly. This was a good way to meet Ghanaians. They are an outgoing people, who generally let you know what they are thinking. Many would share information about what they were up to.

There was no division within the embassy, the country team worked together. It was a well-run mission.

Q: How about with reporting? You had Soapy Williams as head of African Affairs still at that time. Every once in a while in these interviews I would have people say that it was pretty hard to report the warts in a country because Soapy Williams wanted to hear good news of black Africa. Did you have any feeling about that?

DE PREE: No, we didn't sense that at all. There were no suggestions that our reporting was getting out of line. We reported developments as we saw them. That wasn't a problem.

Q: When this new group came in what was our immediate reaction as to where they were coming from and what they were going to do as regards our interests?

DE PREE: Many people saw the removal of Nkrumah as an advantage or plus for the West. However, a military takeover was not something we were trying to promote throughout Africa. We perceived it to be in US interest to persuade the people who took over the National Liberation Council, the military and police, to schedule elections and return to civilian rule. We pressed hard as a mission to get them to commit themselves to do that, and they did it. Again in retrospect some people think they probably moved too quickly because the government that came in after the National Liberation Council proved to be ineffective. The country started to go down hill. The Busia government couldn't get on top of the situation. But we didn't foresee that and we pressed the National Liberation Council hard to hold early elections. And they did.

Q: When you say pressed hard, here was a country where our influence wasn't great or was it?

DE PREE: It was. We had good influence. We had had access to Nkrumah and the government of the day, but they didn't listen to us. In Harley, Ankrah and Deku, we had three leaders who were close to the West. They listened. They had no experience in running the government. They looked to the West, the United States and Britain, for advice on what to do. Both the British and we urged them to schedule early elections, to get on with the job of transition and the return to civilian rule. They were hesitant, wanting to go a little slower than we were urging them to go.

Q: How about the Soviet and the Chinese when the coup came? What did this do to their activities?

DE PREE: A good many of the people in the Soviet embassy left. A number had been training Nkrumah's own bodyguards. They suffered some casualties, as I recall, when the army took over Nkrumah's residence. The new government that came in made it clear that they wanted a different relationship with the Soviet and Communist missions. They didn't break relations, but relations were much cooler.

Q: About when did Franklin Williams come in to replace Ambassador Mahoney?

DE PREE: I guess the Spring before the coup. The coup was in the Fall.

Q: What was Franklin Williams's background and how did he operate?

DE PREE: He had been active in the Democratic Party, a supporter of President Johnson. He had a law background. He came in questioning US government policy with respect to Nkrumah. I think he thought the US was too critical of Nkrumah. He was also critical of the Foreign Service. I can remember he came in and told us that he didn't think much of the Foreign Service. We were going to do things his way and we had better get on board. He was rather open about the whole thing. But over time he began to realize that he had inherited a darn good staff and that changed. He, too, became discouraged with what was

taking place in Ghana. Then, of course, the coup came he developed a good relationship with the National Liberation Council. He was not the easiest ambassador to work for. He talked quite a bit, out of school. Information that we were picking up we obviously shared with him. But he wasn't able to keep some of the sensitive information within the embassy. So we began to be a little reluctant to share everything with him.

Q: Was anybody able to kind of talk to him?

DE PREE: Yes, we told him he should be more careful. Some of the leaders of the post-coup government also were unhappy with his loose tongue. He would share rather freely what the Ghanaian leaders were telling him, which he should not have done.

Q: I don't want to make a strong case for the Foreign Service, but there are times and places where it is a good idea to have a professional and this kind of sounds a time when probably a solid professional, at time of fast change and all this, would have made more sense then to have somebody who is playing the normal political game of glad-handing and going out and around.

DE PREE: I think it would have. Franklin Williams was collecting material for a book he planned to write upon completion of his tour as ambassador. It would have better in my judgment to have had someone more professional as ambassador at that time.

Q: What about United Nations votes before and after the coup. I imagine this must have driven us wild because this was the one place where a country like Ghana can kind of stick it to the United States.

DE PREE: And they did under Nkrumah. Ghana quite often voted in opposition to the way we voted. After the change of government we found that Ghana was lining up with us on almost all significant issues. So in that sense we were far better off after the coup.

Q: What was the role of the British there?

DE PREE: The British at independence had a very good relationship with the government. The British had been helpful in moving Ghana towards independence and it was appreciated. But over the post-independence period, this relationship began to erode, while our relationship began to be perceived by Ghanaians as more important. There were several reasons for this. I think the big reasons was that we were the global power. Moreover, we had funded and made possible the Volta River project, which was the biggest development project in the country. We had a very active mission, but the British did too. We shared information fully with our British colleagues. However, I think we were one step ahead of the British in knowing what was going on.

Q: This was still in Foreign Service terms, high Africa, wasn't it? I mean Africa was still a place where the eager, high charging young officer might aim for.

DE PREE: Well, yes, Ghana was the place to be. Certainly as long as Nkrumah was there and also in the immediate post-coup period.

Q: Well the coup always sends adrenaline through one's veins anyway.

DE PREE: It certainly does. I can remember the night of the coup I woke up and could hear the shooting. We lived on the outskirts of the town near the airport and from our roof I could see the tracer bullets. I decided I had better get into the mission. I decided that on the way I would drive by the Flagstaff House to see what was going on. As I got close to Flagstaff House a car about a hundred yards in front of me blew up and I knew that wasn't the place for me. A soldier came out of the bushes and told me to get the hell out of there. I didn't have to be told, and I high tailed it to the mission by way of a back road. My adrenaline was high at the time.

The final two years I was in Ghana the embassy was busy getting to know the new people. I developed a close relationship with the head of the new trade union movement, a fellow by the name of Ben Bentum, who was helpful in rallying support for the new government. But I was not happy with some of the people who were obviously going to find themselves in positions of power under a civilian government once elections took place. Many in the new government were rather vindictive. Admittedly, some of them had come out of years in prison, but it seemed to me that Ghana needed to look ahead rather than to the past.

Q: How did you find the trade union movement? I think one of the most pernicious things that the British exported has been its trade union and labor movement which tends to be very class orientated. It is divisive. How was it translating in Ghanaian terms?

DE PREE: There is a class difference. Most of the trade union people didn't have the education that people in the bureaucracy had, for example, or the military services and the police had. But in Ghana extended families had members in the bureaucracy, the military and the trade unions. Although there was a difference in income it wasn't as noticeable as you might find in Europe, for example. And, of course, trade unions at this time were quite powerful in Africa. They could bring out people for rallies and for elections. In Ghana in the immediate post-coup period the trade unions played a very constructive role.

Q: You left just before the coming into power of a duly elected government in Ghana in 1968. What was your next assignment and how did that come about?

DE PREE: A few months before leaving Ghana I was informed that I was being sent as principal officer to Benghazi, Libya. Quite frankly I was looking forward to it. I had been four years in West Africa and was ready for a change. But shortly before we were due to leave a cable came in telling me that my orders had been broken and I was going to Sierra Leone as counselor of embassy, as number two at the embassy. And that was it. I thought Sierra Leone was going to be more of the same. It was still in West Africa just up the coast, a former British colony...in that sense we were pleased because we loved the

Ghanaians. But when we got to Sierra Leone, in the Fall of 1968, we found it quite different from Ghana.

Q: You were there from 1968-70.

DE PREE: Yes.

Q: How was it different?

DE PREE: It was different in the sense that independence in Ghana had really brought about significant change. Things were different; the Ghanaians sensed that. They really had had a revolution. This was not true in Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone power had been transferred from the UK to Sierra Leoneans. Siaka Stevens was in power, was Prime Minister, but many people felt they hadn't had their revolution, that they really hadn't broken their ties with the UK as had the Ghanaians. Freetown had been settled by slaves that the British picked up off the high seas and returned to Freetown. This tribally-mixed Creole community as it was called was comparable to the African-American community in Liberia. The Creoles were very Victorian in their outlook. Most of them had trained in the UK and were much more concerned with form than substance. Creole-rule was akin to colonial rule but with a black face. The up country tribal peoples had little say in government. This was not the case in Ghana.

I had a fellow working for me in the embassy, the commercial Foreign Service National, a Creole who had a card which gave not only his name, but an exam that he had sat in the UK, with the notation that he had failed the exam. I couldn't figure out why one would pass out a card noting that the person had failed an exam. Well, to the Sierra Leonean, it was important that he had reached the point where he was qualified to sit the exam. That elevated him above most of his Sierra Leonean colleagues, who never sat an exam. Again, form over substance.

Q: It sounds very much like Liberia?

DE PREE: It was very much like Liberia.

Q: Same origins and everything.

DE PREE: So my wife and I discovered that one ex-British colony could be quite different from another. From this I concluded that one must be careful when generalizing about black Africa. The differences between one country and another can be enormous.

Q: It is so hard. We tend to lump these together as we do in South America.

DE PREE: Yes.

Q: Sierra Leone is basically a river bank isn't it?

DE PREE: It is located along the Sierra Leone River. It had everything going for it at independence. It had the best university in West Africa, Fourah Bay College. It had an able civil service, trained by the British. The police and military were professional. It was exporting rice. It had ample foreign exchange earnings through export of diamonds and iron ore. Its government was pro-Western. We had influence. We had an AID program. They looked to the West for support. It had good roads and an excellent port. It had a multiparty political system, a free market economy. It seemed to have everything going for it. But yet it was going down hill. I returned...I will jump ahead 25 years...a year ago to Sierra Leone to inspect the embassy. The country had gone to pot. A number of coups had taken place. The government was run by young army officers, some of whom were on drugs, some engaged in diamond smuggling. The infrastructure had deteriorated. Roads outside of Freetown were in horrible shape. The university faculty had drifted away. Corruption in the bureaucracy was rampant. Insurgents were active in a third of the country. The army was ineffective and undisciplined. The place was in shambles.

Here was a country that in the early 60's, when I was in INR, was picked as a country with a bright future. I recall attending a meeting in the Department, where we discussed what inputs from outside would be necessary to bring this country to self-sustaining growth. We were serious about it. Yet it went progressively down hill. It wasn't obvious while I was in Freetown that it was going to reach the depths it has, but there was a great deal of tribal trouble and corruption was growing. I can recall talking to the head of the army, Brigadier Bangura, who was distressed that the army was being asked to send troops to try to control poaching and smuggling in the diamond mining area. He resisted, knowing that his poorly-paid troops would be paid big sums - more often than they could earn in a year - if they would cooperate with the poachers, often just agreeing to look the other way. He was sure that corruption was going to penetrate the military. It did.

I was assigned to Sierra Leone because I had just completed four years in Ghana and Washington was looking for someone with West African experience. The Ambassador at the time was Bob Miner, a peach of a fellow, but with no African experience.

Q: Where was he from?

DE PREE: His background was Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece. He was a Roberts College graduate. I think he knew Turkish and some Greek. During World War II he had been in Yugoslavia, which was one of his areas of expertise. But because he had been involved with Tito and the Partisans during World War II, McCarthy and that crowd were suspicious of him and the Department didn't have the courage to take them on. So the Department initially sent Bob Miner as ambassador to Trinidad, then to Sierra Leone.

Bob Miner didn't have his heart in the assignment. His wife was ill. He was disappointed that the Department hadn't gone to bat for him to get him the assignment that he should have had. Bob Miner gave me pretty much a free hand to meet whomever I wished in the government and to oversee the embassy's reporting.

Q: Sierra Leone is basically an enclave, isn't it?

DE PREE: No. You may be thinking of Gambia, which is an enclave. Sierra Leone is up the coast form the Ivory Coast and Liberia, on the bulge of West Africa.

Q: Sierra Leone is bordered by...?

DE PREE: By Guinea and Liberia.

Q: Was Guinea causing problems at that point?

DE PREE: Not for Sierra Leone. It was causing problems for us, I guess. Dave Newsom was Assistant Secretary when I was in Sierra Leone. He was to visit Guinea after his stop in Freetown and decided he would like to go by land. So we drove up to the border where I put Dave into a dug-out canoe, and he was paddled across the river. There wasn't much land contact between Guinea and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone, of course, was Anglophone while Guinea Francophone.

Q: Did we have any AID program in Sierra Leone?

DE PREE: We had an AID program and it gave us some problems. We were supporting the agricultural college at Njala. The University of Illinois had a contract with AID to provide faculty. There was a very high administrative cost factored into the contract. The University of Illinois insisted on sending out people to do administrative bookkeeping work which the Sierra Leoneans thought they were qualified to do at far less cost. In fact they were, but the University of Illinois felt otherwise. The Government of Sierra Leone was unhappy with the contract and wanted to amend it to reduce the administrative costs and delayed its renewal of the contract. With the end of the fiscal year approaching we were in danger of losing funding for the project. Finally, the Minister of Agriculture said that the government would sign, but "under duress." I said, "Nothing doing. This is an AID program and I am not going to report back to my government that you are only willing to sign under duress. Either you want it or you don't want it." The Sierra Leone government signed. But in retrospect I think we should have amended the contract as the Government of Sierra Leone had wanted.

Q: Did you have the Peace Corps?

DE PREE: The Peace Corps was strong. A very, very good Peace Corps contingent.

Q: What was your impression at this particular time, talking about the second half of the '60s, of the Peace Corps? This is still the high Peace Corps time. What was your impression of the influence and effect of the Peace Corps in this particular part of Africa?

DE PREE: I thought it was outstanding. They had a very large contingent. Probably larger than they needed. They often had two people in the same village where one might have been enough. But they were doing an outstanding job of getting to know the people in the village. Many of them were teaching or in agricultural development projects. They wanted to make a difference and were working hard at it. They were living in the villages and the villagers appreciated this. Here was somebody who cared, paying attention to their needs and their interests. The Peace Corps made a very positive impression for the United States. And, of course, in the end, the US benefited. We are beginning to get many of these volunteers into the Foreign Service.

Q: When I was doing recruiting I was skeptical at first about the Peace Corps thinking they were just a bunch of do-gooders, but I was very impressed by them.

DE PREE: I guess one should ask if the Peace Corps made any lasting difference. The Peace Corps itself has asked this question, returning to some of the villages where volunteers had worked for ten or more years. They concluded that the more lasting or more significant impact may have been on the Peace Corps volunteers rather than on village development.

Q: Were there any major issues that you had to deal with while you were there?

DE PREE: No. Sierra Leone wasn't on Washington's screen for the most part. There was the problem with the university contract. I think the cost of the contract was excessive. The Peace Corps took care of themselves for the most part. There was American investment in a rutile mine...

Q: Rutile is what?

DE PREE: It is titanium oxide which is used in paint. It had some application in space vehicles. An American-owned mine had its problems. It was a Rube Goldberg type operation. The company's dredger, which was its key piece of equipment, was constantly needing repairs and the company had to keep putting more money into its investment. The company never showed a profit while I was in Sierra Leone. There was also considerable American interest in Sierra Leone diamonds, but the diamond companies could and did take care of themselves.

Bob Miner, I thought, had the right perspective on Sierra Leone's importance to the US On one occasion, when Siaka Stevens was going to the United States on a private visit, at the invitation of one of the US diamond firms, he asked if he might get in to see the President. Ambassador Miner drafted a cable, advising the White House that it need not go out of its way to receive him. Fine if they could do it, but it wasn't important to our interests. Maurice Tempelsman, who bought diamonds in Sierra Leone and maintained a small office in Freetown, however, thought it important that Stevens see the President and asked Herbert Humphrey to help arrange a meeting. A meeting did take place, somewhat to the chagrin of Bob Miner. It wasn't necessary.

Q: Well, you left there in 1970.

DE PREE: Yes, to go to Senior Seminar.

Q: Because this is not just a history of our foreign relations, I also try to get a feel of how the Foreign Service operated. What was the senior seminar at that time and what did you get out of it?

DE PREE: There were about 25 of us in the Seminar, about half from State, and the rest from other government agencies, one each from the military services. A major focus of the Seminar then was on the domestic scene in the US, which was certainly helpful to those of us who had been serving overseas. I believe the National Defense Colleges focus much more on national security and military issues. I couldn't have been more pleased. I traveled all over the United States. I got to Alaska. We had some excellent lecturers. It was a great year.

But I'm not sure the Seminar is really cost-effective. This is particularly true if officers in the Seminar retire a year or two after the year in the Seminar, which I think had been the case shortly before I was assigned to the Seminar.

Q: I know. I was in the one in 1975 and a couple of our people retired.

DE PREE: Yes, we just shouldn't do that in the Department. You ought to take people of a younger age who have ten years or so left, people who are earmarked to hold responsible positions. Otherwise we shouldn't be investing that much money.

Q: Sometimes it was a little place of a parking spot.

DE PREE: Yes, I know that Personnel occasionally assigned officers they had difficulty placing, rather than starting from what I gather is now the practice of selecting officers in the Service who have a promising future. There weren't many in my class like that, one or two.

But it's a marvelous program. I am delighted it continues although it keeps being mentioned for possible closure at budget time.

Q: You went there from 1970-71.

DE PREE: Yes, and then I stayed on because I didn't have an assignment. Bert Matthews, the coordinator, asked if I would be interested in staying on as his deputy until my assignment came through. So I stayed on for about half a year, essentially arranging the program. After the seminar I was assigned to the Policy Planning Staff in the Department.

Q: You were in Policy Planning from 1972-76, almost four year?

DE PREE: Yes. I served under three directors. The first was Bill Cargo. He was succeeded by Jimmy Sutherland, who stayed just briefly. Sutherland was replaced by Winston Lord, who was given the job by Kissinger when Kissinger moved over from the National Security Council to become Secretary of State. My responsibility on the staff was to follow African developments. Because this wasn't a busy portfolio, I also was asked to work on significant management issues, which had the Secretary's attention.

Q: Was there a difference in how the Policy Planning Staff was used before Kissinger came while Rogers was there and after, or not?

DE PREE: Day and night difference. The first two years that I was there the staff spent a lot of time putting together a publication, which reviewed US foreign policy for the year. Kissinger was over at the National Security Council and wanted to be free to conduct policy. To keep the Policy Planning Staff busy, he called for this annual policy review.

Q: Which, of course, is the complete antithesis of what you are suppose to be doing. You are looking back instead of looking forward.

DE PREE: Yes. While there was some foreign policy projections, the publication was primarily a review of the Administration's foreign policy initiatives of the previous year.

Q: When Kissinger became Secretary of State, what happened then?

DE PREE: When Win Lord came in as director, he asked about half the staff to stay, the other half were asked to move on. Win and the Secretary had some of their own people they wanted to place. And the staff's role changed dramatically. Kissinger's style of operation was to confide in a few people. Winston Lord was one of them. Because of that the Policy Planning Staff took on many sensitive tasks, many of an operational nature, for Kissinger. And because Win Lord had Kissinger's confidence, the Policy Planning staff was listened to. The staff did a lot of the speech writing for Kissinger, which was a tough job. His speeches went through many drafts.

Q: As you worked on these speeches, was he trying to get the perfect speech or was this part of his mental process of thinking something through?

DE PREE: I think both, a search for perfection as well as a thinking through of an issue. His speeches were significant policy documents. A lot of time and thought went into them. Not only into their content, but also into their timing. He used speech making and public appearances to test the waters and move policy along.

Q: One of the things that has been said again and again is that so often policy planning and anything doing with it...the Department of State is almost completely reactive and very seldom is able to look ahead whither Patagonia, or what have you. It sounds as though at least you were having more of a handle on policy and looking ahead if you are

talking about helping with policy formulation rather than reacting to a situation at that particular time.

DE PREE: There was much of that. Of course Kissinger brought to the Department his own construct, his own global outlook. He knew what he was trying to accomplish, and how to get there. I didn't have a problem with his priorities. A top priority was to avoid a nuclear war or to avoid developments that could provoke a conflict with the Soviet Union which would result in a nuclear war. Ending the war in Vietnam was another of his priorities. Africa was low on the scale of issues that demanded his attention or in which he was interested.

One of the first major foreign policy issues with which I got involved was the Azores base renegotiations. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, we had used the Azores to resupply Israel. The Portuguese had permitted us to use the Azores whereas a number of other countries, including many of our NATO allies, didn't permit us to overfly or use their airports to resupply Israel. Shortly after the war our Azores base agreement came up for renegotiation. The Portuguese were in a strong negotiating position. We soon learned that the Portuguese wanted arms for use in Africa, which would have meant a breach of our embargo against use of US military equipment in Africa. The embargo had been in effect for a number of years. But the Portuguese were determined. As a quid pro quo for use of the Azores, they made it clear they wanted military equipment for use in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Since this was an African policy issue, Win asked me to work on it. I was told that the issue was sensitive and that the Secretary did not think that the Assistant Secretary of African Affairs need at that stage be privy to what the Portuguese were requesting. This surprised me because if the US was going to breach the embargo there would be major consequences in Africa. To keep the Assistant Secretary out of the negotiations I thought was a mistake. While the Secretary or President Nixon might want to show their appreciation to Portugal, the US should know what the consequences would be before reaching a decision to breach the embargo. Nonetheless, at the initial stage of the study, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, who was Dave Newsom at the time, was not brought into the picture. The European Bureau had reservations, but wanted to be forthcoming with the Portuguese and favored providing the Portuguese with arms, preferably defensive arms, for use in Africa, if the Portuguese were adamant. When the Portuguese insisted, it became clear that the African Bureau had to be brought into the picture. This was just about the time Don Easum replaced Dave Newsom as Assistant Secretary.

The African Bureau's position was predictable. Fine, if we feel we have to be forthcoming with the Portuguese, why don't we simply give them money and let them buy the arms on the world market, but let us not change our arms embargo policy. But that is precisely what the Portuguese wanted us to do.

I can recall one meeting that Kissinger chaired. Don Easum was there, Win Lord was there. I think Wells Stabler may have represented EUR at the meeting. The Secretary went around the room and asked for comments on a proposal to provide arms. Don

Easum was predictably negative. He noted that the embargo was a long-established policy, that it has served us well, and that the reaction in Africa, among some of our NATO allies, in Congress and with the US public, would be strong. Why didn't we just look for a way to support Portugal without breaching the embargo, if necessary give them money to buy the arms. When Kissinger came to Win Lord he asked, "What does my conscience have to say?" which I thought was high praise indeed. Win Lord took the view that we should continue to explore ways to satisfy Portugal without changing our arms policy. Most everyone took this view. You could tell that this didn't sit well with Kissinger who I think was prepared to breach the embargo.

He then surprised everyone by saying, "Well, does this mean that nobody wants to carry out the wishes of President Nixon?" With Nixon and Kissinger wanting to move forward, the Policy Planning staff was tasked to explore the various ways we could supply arms to the Portuguese. Anton De Porte, who worked on Western Europe on the Policy Planning Staff and I were asked to draft the options paper. Kissinger hoped that the US could provide surplus or obsolete arms from "off the shelf." But the arms which the Portuguese wanted were not available. We concluded that if we were to provide arms, we would have to go to Congress for authorization and appropriation, and our judgement was that if you went to the Hill, Kissinger or Nixon couldn't win this one. Nonetheless, Kissinger wanted to take some readings with friendly senators. It was at this stage of our work that a coup took place in Portugal, the government was toppled and we could relax.

Q: One of the things that I get from these interviews and obviously from reading, was the problem of Kissinger not letting people know what was going on. He would do things and not inform. I get this particularly when he was National Security Advisor that he was often undercutting our announced policy in order to make deals, particularly with the Soviets. In this time did you see this?

DE PREE: Yes. Let me give you a good example. After I left the Policy Planning Staff to be our ambassador to Mozambique -- Kissinger was still Secretary of State at that time -- I received instructions from the Department to discontinue sharing my cable reporting with my colleagues in southern Africa. I believe my colleagues in the area received similar instructions. We were instructed to report to Washington, and the Department would decided what other posts could be sent the report. That was quite contrary to the way I had done things before. Before, I had operated on the assumption that we should make sure we shared information with posts that has an interest in the subject. But Kissinger's style was to keep information very, very close, for fear that bringing more people into the picture would hamper his freedom of movement. I think that was a major failing.

He often tried to keep the congress in the dark as well. His interest in providing off-the-shelf arms to the Portuguese was prompted, I'm sure, by a desire to avoid having to obtain Congress' OKAY

Q: Well, often the accusation, and I think very fairly sometimes I think, is that one of the problems of the Foreign Service is that it really doesn't understand domestic politics and that is where you need politicians at the top to act as a buffer and all. But really the Foreign Service should serve more with Congress as aides to understand it. But in this case I take it it was pretty clear to those of you in the Policy Planning, who were essentially professional Foreign Service officers, what you could and couldn't do within Congress.

DE PREE: Yes, as we got further along on the Azores issue, we had to bring in the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs. Kempton Jenkins followed this issue for H. Kemp's view was that arms for Portugal to use in Africa just won't fly with the Congress and that if you tried to do it without consulting Congress, it wouldn't work. Congress would eventually find out. However, Kissinger seemed to be determined to find some way of getting arms to the Portuguese. He may have been reflecting, as he said, President Nixon's wishes. Those who argued against this were viewed as according too much importance to African considerations.

The second major African issue that I dealt with when I was on the Planning Staff was Angola. This came up shortly after we had pulled out of Vietnam.

Q: We pulled out of Vietnam in 1975.

DE PREE: Yes. The Secretary's concern then was that the Soviets might read our withdrawal as a weakening of our resolve around the globe, that the Soviets would seize this as an opportunity to weaken our foreign policy posture globally. Angola was thought to be one place where the Soviets might test our will. Three groups were battling for power there: one was the MPLA, which had its strength in Luanda. The MPLA was backed by the Soviet Union. A second group headed by Holden Roberto, a Bakongo, was supported by Mobutu in Zaire. And the third group, headed by Jonas Savimbi, had the tribal support of the Ovimbundu in central and southern Angola. Those were the three forces. There were some in the US Government who thought that in the aftermath of our withdrawal from Vietnam, the Soviets might seek to test our resolve in Angola.

We were providing some support to Holden Robert, but it was nominal. We may have been providing some nominal help to Savimbi as well, but I'm not sure. While Holden Roberto did not appear to be in a strong position, we began to receive reports that he was scoring some successes in the field, suggesting, at least to some in the US Government, that maybe with a little more help form the United States, he could make things difficult for the MPLA and the Soviets. In this way we would send a signal to the Soviets that they must not assume that because we had withdrawal from Vietnam, we were weak and would be relaxing our guard or activities elsewhere in the world, in this case in Africa.

I don't know who took the initiative, the Department, the CIA, or perhaps the Secretary himself. In any event, someone in the Administration proposed that the US should step up its covert support for Holden Roberto. Incidentally, this was before the first Cuban soldier

arrived in Angola. The issue received high level attention, with the Secretary himself chairing a meeting at the White House on the subject. I attended this meeting for the Policy Planning Staff. It was decided at this meeting that the US would increase its covert assistance for Holden Roberto. It was thought that with this additional aid he would at least be able to hold his own against the MPLA and maybe even begin to embarrass them. It was clear to me from the discussion that the decision that was reached had more to do with US-Soviet relations than it did with the various African issues in the matter.

I thought that the decision was a mistake, that by stepping up our aid to Holden Roberto we would be fanning tribal divisions, that Holden Roberto, from what we knew about him and his followers, was not an attractive force to bet on, and that stepping up our aid, which would quickly become known, would likely prompt the Soviets to step up their aid to the MPLA in reply. We were getting drawn into something that we couldn't see the end of. And we didn't hold a strong hand.

When I got back to the office I told Win Lord that I was very unhappy with the decision. I thought it was a serious mistake and suggested that another meeting be held to weigh the negative consequences. Win said, "Go ahead and put your concerns in a memo and I'll send it up to the Secretary if you make a good case." So I sat down and wrote a short two-page memo.

I showed the memo to Win and Sam Lewis, who was Win's deputy at the time, and they agreed to send it to Kissinger. This took guts for I was challenging a decision that had been made. I didn't hear anything for a couple of days. Then Winston called me in and said, "Look, the Secretary didn't like that memo. He really thinks that he should have somebody in S/P to help him on African issue who is more supportive of what he is trying to accomplish than you seem to be." "But," Win said, "You've done a good job in S/P and I will support you for an ambassadorial appointment. I think the Secretary will agree to that." So, I considered what was coming up and told Win that I would like Mozambique. The Secretary didn't object. But what a strange way to be nominated as ambassador for Mozambique! It was essentially because I had misgivings about what we were doing in Angola.

Q: The basic premise was that Henry Kissinger as he looked at things globally saw that we looked kind of weak after leaving Vietnam in the spring of 1975, and felt that Angola was a soft spot where the Soviets could do something, so let us do this.

DE PREE: I would put it just a little differently, Stu. The Soviets were already in Angola. The government was pro-Soviet and the Soviets had a presence there and were supporting the government of the day. We had provided nominal covert support for Holden Roberto. When it appeared that there might be an opportunity for us to embarrass the Government and the Soviets, we stepped up our involvement which, I think, provoked the Cuban involvement and stepped up Soviet support.

Q: This is a little bit like poking a stick at a tiger and getting him riled up. As we were looking at it at that time, was this part of the great game between the Soviet Union and the United States? What was our interest?

DE PREE: The interest was that they should not misread US resolve following our departure of Vietnam. We wanted to make sure they didn't see our withdrawal as an opportunity to expand their influence in other third would countries. Africa was perceived to be a place the Soviets might want to test our will. We wanted to show them that it wouldn't work or that it would be very costly. I didn't have problems with Secretary Kissinger's policy priorities with respect to the Soviet Union, nuclear war, or the Middle East. It was that he didn't consider what was happening in Africa to be of much importance in and of itself; Its importance was as an arena for contesting with the Soviet Union.

Q: We were getting into this just about the time we were getting involved, not as much as maintained, but still involved, in destabilizing Allende's government in Chile. There one has the feeling that it was Nixon focusing on that and saying, "Well, we just can't have one of these quasi-communist government's down there and can't we do something about it." Was this reflecting Nixon do you think?

DE PREE: Yes, that was there too. That was part of the picture. Of course, Ford was President now.

Q: Oh, yes, Ford.

DE PREE: He wanted to demonstrate that US foreign policy would have just as much a backbone as before.

Q: Also Kissinger was probably riding high. He had been in the trade for a long time by this point and Ford was the new man on the scene. In the normal course of events he would be heavily influenced by anybody who was Secretary of State. But it is a funny way to look at this to say, "Okay, here we have a guy who is saying things we don't want him to say, so let's boot him out and make him an ambassador to basically the sister country to Angola." I would think they would be much better sending him up to Mauritius, or something like that.

DE PREE: But he wasn't all that concerned about Africa until his last year in office. At that time he was not really engaged on African issues, or when he was, he still viewed our interests there as less important than our interests elsewhere. For example, the breaching of the arms embargo in connection with the Azores base negotiations, would have had dire consequences, in my judgment, in Africa. And yet he was prepared to do it because he wasn't really that concerned about what was taking place in Africa. Africa would be tended to later. That is why he may not have been too concerned who was assigned to Mozambique.

But in support of my candidacy, I had the backing of Win Lord and others because in addition to working on African issues, which was not a full time job, I had also been providing senior Department officers with staff support on general management issues, budget issues. OMB was pressing the Department to try to do more in linking resources to policy priorities. The Department sought to be responsive. The Policy Planning Staff was a logical place to turn for policy priorities. Since I was not fully occupied on African matters, I was asked to work with the Under Secretary for Management and the budget people on this matter.

I had worked earlier on various management projects for Larry Eagleburger, when Larry was Under Secretary for Management. One of the projects was a review of all State Department positions, the outcome of which was the elimination of some 400 to 500 positions if I recall. For the longest time the Department had far more positions than we had people to fill them, so a lot of positions just went vacant. Larry thought we should take a look at all our positions and eliminate those of low priority so our people and positions were more in balance. I was asked to chair this exercise. Every bureau told us that they would gladly give up from 3 to 5 percent of their positions, so long as we let them get rid of the people occupying those positions. Our big bureaus were carrying people nobody else wanted, people who were on the rolls but weren't really delivering. It was not a serious problem for Foreign Service positions, since Foreign Service people rotate every two or three years, but in the Civil Service people remained in their positions until they moved into another civil service position. Often this didn't happen. If the Department could have found a way to remove the deadwood from the roles, the bureaus would have been happy to give up 5 percent of their positions and the Department would have operated more effectively. But the Department couldn't make it happen.

Larry greatly strengthened the M office during his period as Under Secretary. One thing he did was to bring the Passport Office, which up to then had operated more or less as an independent fiefdom under Francis Knight, back under his control. Francis Knight had strong backing on the Hill because of the service she provided Congressmen. Congressmen could wake her up in the middle of the night to get a passport for a constituent. Because of her congressional backing she could, and did, operate quite independently of Departmental supervision. I think Eagleburger took the view that if Congress was to beholding to anyone, it should clearly be to the Department of State, not to whoever might at the time be head of the Passport Office. So, when Francis Knight left the scene, the passport function was brought more directly under M's control.

A second pocket of quasi-independent power at the time was the Bureau of Administrative Affairs, then under the direction of Assistant Secretary for Administration, John Thomas. John Thomas too worked closely with the Hill, in this case on appropriation matters, and he had established exceedingly close relations with key members of the Appropriation committees, especially with John Rooney, long-time chairman of our appropriations subcommittee. Also, because Under Secretary for Management often did not concern themselves with the nuts and bolts of the budget, the A Bureau often had a major say on allocation of A operating funds and positions. This

was power. Larry realized this and was determined to move the budget function out of the A Bureau under M. This gave M more clout than it had before.

Q: For somebody reading this we are really talking about the difference between M and A. A being really more of the housekeeping side, but at the same time they were making decisions that would have tremendous effects over policy. Whereas, Management stood one step higher and technically they were looking at the overall and were very much involved in policy considerations. Are we more interested in Latin America than we are in Africa?

DE PREE: That's it. Win asked me to work, as a member of the Policy Planning Staff, on this whole linkage between resources and policy priorities. Well, where do you start. I don't want to fault John Thomas, he may have made the right decisions, but he and his staff were making the decisions on the basis of their understanding of policy priorities. The A bureau did hold hearings with the assistant secretaries and the principals, and the budget reflected these hearings, but a lot of key decisions were made which had a significant bearing on policy matters that were made with little high level policy input.

But how does one get a handle on it for a seventh floor principal who doesn't have time to go through details of the budget, page after page? One way was to make sure that the Assistant Secretaries and Deputy Assistant Secretaries were brought more into the picture, and at an earlier stage. A second way was to make sure the Under Secretary was presented with major budget options, spelled out in policy terms. For example, with additional funding of 5 or 10 percent, what can be accomplished in policy terms. More economic reporting officers? Opening of new posts? More funding for refugees? etc. The Under Secretary for Management must also decide if policy needs are so important that the Department should appeal to OMB and the Congress for more money. Or can the Department live with OMB's budget mark? What are the trade-offs between funding for equipment and funding for people? Aggregating budget details into meaningful policy alternatives is no easy task. But we made a start and I think with some success. Dean Brown, who took over from Larry Eagleburger as Under Secretary, continued to look to Policy Planning for help in according policy priorities more importance in internal budget decisions and for developing a strategy, linked to these priorities, in dealing with OMB and the Congress on budget matters.

Q: Did you try to co-opt OMB and bring them into the process early on, or did they sort of let you do your own thing and then go up to OMB?

DE PREE: At that time OMB had a very low opinion of the Department's budget, and found much of our justification for additional funds or positions weak. So we did turn to OMB for suggestions. And to some extent they were helpful. But the linkage between resources and policy priorities was something we had to work out pretty much on our own.

Q: When you were dealing with this, did any of it get up to Henry Kissinger, or did he feel that this was something that you all take care of?

DE PREE: Pretty much. He was concerned about budget issues, but his budget problems were really outside the compass of the State Department's operating budget. The operating budget was something that he left to Larry Eagleburger or Dean Brown. His budget concerns were with funding for the larger international affairs budget, or what we call the 150 account. Offers of foreign assistance figured prominently in his foreign policy negotiations. OMB officials used to complain that the Secretary would commit the US to provide foreign assistance in the future (for example to Israel and Egypt) without assurances from Congress that funds would be available in years to come. But the Secretary did not concern himself with the State Department's operating budget so long as his personal support needs were met. Of course, everybody in the Department always takes care of the Secretary.

Q: A lot of these positions weren't filled even though they were on the books. Could you get rid of those?

DE PREE: Yes, we did remove those that hadn't been filled for a certain length of time. There had been a lot of artificiality in position creation. The Department would go to OMB and the Congress requesting that a position be established, Congress would appropriate money to support that position and then the Department would decide not to fill it and would use that money for another purpose. Unfilled positions generated money that permitted the Department to fund other activities. But in the long run this created problems for personnel, for Foreign Service people often bid on these lower priority positions, which the bureaus no longer had an interest in filling. Or if they were filled, they probably should not have been.

Q: So in 1976 you were off to Mozambique?

DE PREE: Yes. I had thought that I would get out there when Mozambique became independent in 1975, but the government of Mozambique just kept delaying action on a request for agrément. They took about nine or ten months before responding. Meanwhile I had to wait.

Q. Were you policy planning?

DE PREE: No, I was studying Portuguese. We had six kids by then and we packed off two of the children to Sweden to be with their grandmother. My wife and the rest of the children followed after a month. However, the agrément kept being delayed. To permit me to be with the family over Christmas, Larry Eagleburger, then Under Secretary for Management, had me carry out some special assignments for him in East Germany and Moscow.

Eventually the agrément came through at the beginning of 1976, nine or ten months after the original request. The Mozambicans were suspicious of the United States. They were unhappy with our support of the Portuguese during their liberation struggle, and they may have thought we were not to be trusted and might work to destabilize the government.

Before going out to Mozambique, there was a little episode that took place, Stu, that I must relate. I had, as I mentioned earlier, worked on Jerry Ford's behalf in the Fifth Congressional District of Western Michigan, and had stayed in touch with Ford for a number of years. At one stage he even asked me if I was interested in working on his staff, but I had said no. Although I had not been in touch with him for a number of years, I thought I would like to call on him before I went out. So I drafted a memo requesting such an appointment and sent it down to AF for clearance and forwarding to the White House. Apparently that raised a few chuckles in AF for I was told that the practice of ambassadors calling on the president had ended decades ago. I knew that, but thought that because of my past association with the President AF should have sent the memo. At least, let the White House turn me down. Fortunately, I knew Harold Horan who was a career officer working on the NSC staff and I called him and told him what AF had said, and asked if he would find out if a meeting might be possible. Hal agreed to see what he could do. He called back a few days later to say that the President had agreed to see me. I didn't really know what kind of reception I would get as it had been a few years since I had seen Ford. When I did have my meeting with him, I told him about the Department's reluctance to request the meeting. I also told him that I'd taken a few bets as to whether he would recognize me. "You can tell your friends that you've won the bet," he said. "I do remember you," adding that he had a very warm regard for Ottawa County, which is the county I came from, which "gave me 70 to 72 percent of the vote for my candidacy year after year." We had a nice chat talking more about Western Michigan, after which he asked me a few questions about Mozambique. So I did get in to see him.

Q: Shall we stop here at this point? I think it might be best to stop here and then we can continue next time with your going to Mozambique and I would like to spend some time on that.

DE PREE: Yes, good.

Q: We just want to add one little thing talking about Sierra Leone on Graham Greene, the author.

DE PREE: Stu, you mentioned Graham Greene. During World War II, the British stationed two intelligence officers in Africa, Graham Greene in Sierra Leone and Malcolm Muggeridge in Lourenco Marques -- two posts in which I have served. They were there I guess to report on what the Germans or Italians were up to in their respective areas. Freetown was important because it was a staging post for allied convoys out of Africa; Mozambique because both the Germans and Italians maintained a diplomatic presence in Lourenco Marques. Both have written about their experiences. In my opinion, Graham Greene's, The Heart of the Matter, is one of his best books.

Q: Today is March 9, 1994 and we are continuing with Bill De Pree. We were getting you set to go to Mozambique where you served from 1976-80. Before going to Mozambique you had been dealing with the matters in Africa anyway.

DE PREE: That is right, I was the Africa man on the Policy Planning Staff.

Q: So basically you didn't need to be brought up to speed before you went. Did you have any problems with confirmation or anything like that?

DE PREE: No. The problem was the delay in getting agrément from the government of Mozambique. We had to wait almost nine months. The Department hoped to get me out there by independence day which was to be in the summer of 1975. We had put in the request for agreement long before that, but the Mozambique Government dallied. The Mozambicans were unhappy with our policy of support for Portugal during their liberation wars; they were concerned that the United States might not view with favor its Marxist pro-leftist radical government; and they had some suspicion that the US might use the CIA to create problems. I think they deliberately kept us waiting. We didn't get agrément until early in 1976.

Q: Was this also designed to make sure that the United States would be fairly low on the totem pole as far as the diplomatic corps was concerned?

DE PREE: Yes, I think it was a signal to let us know that we were not the number one player on the local scene.

Q: Did Congress give you any problems?

DE PREE: Congress gave me no problems, but Congress had placed a ban on development aid to Mozambique. There were three countries in Africa where development assistance was proscribed: Ethiopia, Uganda and the government of Mozambique. This was a very clear signal of how the Congress felt about Mozambique. Nonetheless, the US decided to open an embassy since for the many, many years we have professed to be in favor of self-determination. If we meant what our rhetoric said, we should be prepared to enter into a relationship with the government, even if it didn't meet with the favor of many in the US

Q: What was the situation when you got to Mozambique? The capital of Mozambique is...?

DE PREE: Maputo. It used to be Lourenco Marques when it was Portuguese.

There had been some protocol problems right from the start. The US had a consulate for many years in Lourenco Marques. At independence, the consulate staff flew the flag over the consulate even though the US had not yet entered into formal diplomatic relations

with the Government of Mozambique. That made the government of Mozambique unhappy and they asked the Consul General, Peter Walter, to leave. The other Americans on the staff stayed on, as did most of the local employees, although over the next year or two many of the white Mozambicans on our staff left.

Relations with the government were decidedly cool. It was very difficult to get appointments with government officials. We had problems getting the government's OKAY on housing and a new chancery. There were plenty of houses available, as the Portuguese were departing, but the government denied our requests to rent or buy the properties. Clearly, the government was letting us know we were not on their list of favorites. We were not their "natural allies", which was how the government referred to the Soviets, Chinese and others who had supported them in their liberation struggle.

Q: What was the political situation there?

DE PREE: The Mozambique Frelimo government was made up almost exclusively of people who had been active in the liberation struggle. There were a dozen or so ministers or key government officials who were committed communists. Some of them didn't want the government to have anything to do with the US Moreover, the Congressional proscription against providing development aid to Mozambique did not make it any easier for us. It was certainly not an easy environment in which to work.

Q: What was the government structure like at that time?

DE PREE: It was made up largely of people who had engaged in the liberation struggle. The make-up was about 50 percent black, about 25 percent white and 25 percent mestizo. So racially it was a good mix. As a matter of fact, the Portuguese territories probably did better on that score than a number of British or French colonies. But the government was woefully inexperienced. The same was true outside the government. For example, there were very few doctors. I think there were two in the whole country when I arrived. So they were hurting for people with skills. The Portuguese were leaving. At independence, there were about 250,000, including military forces. A year later there were about 20 or 30 thousand. The departure of the Portuguese left the country desperate for people who could assist in the development process.

Q: Was it the typical Soviet type of government? Did they have elections that meant anything? Representative bodies?

DE PREE: There was an elected parliament, but there was only a single party slate of candidates one could vote for. It was a Marxist government. But very few of the people who came out of the liberation struggle were what one might call dedicated Marxists. However, there was a radical minority of ideologues in the government, many of them mestizos or white Mozambicans.

Q: Was the Soviet hand heavy there?

DE PREE: Yes, it was. They were there in numbers and were providing military and development assistance. Not only the Soviet Union, but China, Bulgaria, East Germany, Cuba, the Vietnamese. There were communist advisors in every government ministry.

Q: Who was the head of the government?

DE PREE: Samora Machel.

Q: What was his background?

DE PREE: He was a medical technician, one of the first to take up arms against the Portuguese, who assumed the leadership of the liberation struggle upon the assassination of Eduardo Moudlane, the founder of Frelimo. Machel was charismatic, forceful, bright, something of a born leader.

Q: Were you there to just keep the flag flying and wait developments, or there to try to open up a dialogue. This was the beginning of the Carter Administration.

DE PREE: Actually, I was sent out by the Ford Administration. In time, it was hoped we could open up a dialogue, but initially it was pretty much a holding operation. Judging by its votes in the UN, Mozambique was very much in the Soviet camp. Its press and media were caustic and shrill in their criticism of the US There wasn't much prospect of turning this around. There were many who didn't even think it worth the try. They were prepared to write off Mozambique from the start.

There were others however, who thought that there might be some areas where US and Mozambique interests overlapped and that the US should work to elicit Mozambique's cooperation in these limited areas. One of the areas where we thought that our interests might overlap was in seeking a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia. This would be important to us, for if Mozambique worked against a negotiated settlement it would be exceedingly difficult to halt the fighting, for Mozambique bordered on Rhodesia and could provide sanctuary and support for those intent on a military solution. It was also hoped that, in time, if the Mozambicans could prosper as an independent nation that its non-racial or multi-racial makeup might provide an alternative or model for the people of South Africa.

My approach was the later. To be patient, but to look for opportunities to demonstrate to the Mozambicans that a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia was as much in their interest as anyone else’s. It was tough going, for the suspicion and criticism of the West and the US was strong. But in time, the Mozambique government came around to acknowledge that there were areas where the US interest and Mozambique interest overlapped and we began to get their cooperation in seeking a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia. Machel's cooperation was very important. The British would not have achieved a settlement in Rhodesia when it did without his help.

Q: For the sake of somebody who is not familiar with this, could you go into the situation at that time in Rhodesia and what we were trying to do?

DE PREE: Yes. We were trying to work with the British to see if we could persuade the white government in Rhodesia, led by Ian Smith, to hold elections and agree that whoever won the elections would take over in an independent Rhodesia. There were various groups in Rhodesia who had taken up arms, two major factions. One, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), had its headquarters in Maputo and was led by Robert Mugabe. The second group, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was led by the long-time nationalist leader, Joshua Nkomo. They were rivals for power. ZANU was largely supported by the Shona, the largest tribal grouping in Rhodesia. ZAPU had its backing largely from the Ndelbele. Machel was supporting ZANU. Interestingly, the Soviet Union was supporting ZAPU. The British hoped to get ZANU and ZAPU and other political forces in Rhodesia, including the whites, around the table to see if they could agree on a cease-fire, a date for elections and a transition to independence. The contenders were not able to settle it on the battlefield. Meanwhile the war was spreading. Rhodesia began to carry out raids into Mozambique to go after the ZANU rebels. There was a lot of fighting along the border. In time, the Rhodesians began to stir up trouble inside Mozambique, creating a dissident movement within Mozambique. It was very costly to Mozambique.

Q: Where these white?

DE PREE: No, these were black Mozambicans many of whom had fought with the Portuguese military and had been suspect in the eyes of the Frelimo government. They didn't really have a future in Mozambique. They were recruited, trained, and armed by the Rhodesians to conduct insurgency within Mozambique. It didn't amount to much in the first few years but gradually grew in importance. With the dissidents receiving support from South Africa, the Frelimo government couldn't suppress it.

This was all going on while Mozambique's economy languished. Soviet and East European assistance was not proving all that successful. The state farms and communal villages were not producing the food that the government had thought they would. Trade with South Africa, which had been a major foreign exchange earner for Mozambique, was being cut. The two countries did continue to trade, but there was a UN embargo on Rhodesian chrome which used to transit through Mozambique, and the revenues of this transit trade all but dried up. The number of Mozambicans working in the South African mines also dropped. Clearly, the government was in trouble and realized that the economy was unlikely to pick up without an end to the fighting in Rhodesia. At the same time, Mozambicans were beginning to realize that state management of the economy was not the answer. Nor was Soviet and Communist assistance.

The humanitarian relief aid the US had been providing Mozambique, following floods and drought in the country also helped to overcome the suspicion that the United States

may have wanted to topple the government. All these factors helped persuade the government that it was in its interest to work with the British and the United States to seek a negotiated settlement.

By the second year of my tour in Mozambique, US relations with the government began to improve. Machel began to explore with the British and us a way to end the fighting in Rhodesia.

Q: Who would you talk to in the government?

DE PREE: Largely with President Machel himself. But the cooperation we got from the Mozambicans on Rhodesian matters was largely done behind the scenes. Machel did not want it known that he was working with us. He designated a couple of people in his government Fernando Honwana and Sergio Viera, as embassy contacts on these matters, but he was always available when I asked to see him. And he would always see our joint negotiating teams whenever they came to Mozambique.

Q: So this was with basically the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe thing, was that it?

DE PREE: Yes, although we also brought him into negotiations on Namibia. I think he appreciated that we sought his counsel and advice. With respect to Rhodesia, he was suspicious that the British were seeking a settlement that would exclude Mugabe and ZANU from power. I think he had reason to be suspicious. For a time, the British did seem to favor a coalition of whites and moderates, including Bishop Muzorewa, that would exclude Mugabe and ZANU. Machel thought this was a mistake. He pointed out that Mugabe had the support of the Tshone, the largest tribal group in Rhodesia, that ZANU was doing most of the fighting inside Rhodesia, and that in the end ZANU and Mugabe would come out on top. Mugabe was a difficult person to deal with. He refused to cooperate with the British and us when he didn't like what we were doing, but he was just as quick to thumb his nose at the Soviet Union and the East when he didn't like what they were doing. He kept reminding us that it was Nkoma and Zapu, not he and ZANU, that the Soviets were supporting. He was very much his own person. He had great integrity.

Q: Did we have any contact with Mugabe?

DE PREE: Yes, I was seeing Mugabe. He would come over to the residence occasionally with some of his people to discuss developments, or I would call on him at his office. At first we and the British were reluctant or hesitant to involve him in our efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. This may have been because Ian Smith and the whites didn't trust him and thought they could put together a majority coalition without his support. From the perspective of Maputo this seemed to be a mistake and I urged the Department to consult with him and include ZANU in the search for a negotiated settlement. At first the Department didn't appreciate this. Through official, informed channels, I was told that I might be pressing this point a little too hard. I was also hearing through the grapevine that

Secretary Kissinger was beginning to think that I, and some of my Foreign Service colleagues in the area, might not be as supportive of his and the British negotiating efforts as we should be. Clearly Kissinger wanted to keep a tight reign on these negotiations. It was at about this time that the Department instructed all the ambassadors in Southern Africa that when reporting on the negotiations we should send our cables only to Washington. The Department would decide what other posts in the area should receive copies of our reports.

I was miffed by what I was hearing. While no doubt some in Washington may have thought I and my staff may have had the wool pulled over our eyes by Mugabe, we were not doctoring our reporting. We were reporting things as we saw them. We may have accorded more weight to what Mugabe said than the other Rhodesian nationalists, but that was to be expected, given the fact that Mugabe's and ZANU's headquarters were in Maputo. I thought that was why I was out there. So we continued to report much as before. We didn't pull our punches. In time our reporting did seem to register in Washington, particularly after the change of Administration in January of 1977. Incidentally, one of the first cables we received after Vance became Secretary of State, was one encouraging us to share our reporting and views with neighboring posts. What a change.

Q: Why were people so set on Nkomo or Bishop Muzorewa?

DE PREE: Because for a long time people thought Mugabe was not to be trusted. They had the impression that either Mugabe or Bishop Muzorewa would be easier to work with, would be more willing to accommodate the interests of the whites. People were also put off by some of the firebrands within ZANU. Whatever the reason, this notion that Mugabe and ZANU were not to be trusted persisted for a long time. On the other hand, Machel and the Mozambicans did not fully trust Nkomo or Muzorewa, fearing that they might be prepared to agree to a cease fire before there was acceptance of the principal of majority rule. But, over time Machel came to take the British at their word, that they would conduct free and fair elections and turnover power to whomever won the election. From that point we and the British had his cooperation in seeking a negotiated settlement.

The cooperation, however, almost came undone when the British failed to let him know that they were urging President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia to meet privately with Joshua Nkomo. When he heard that this meeting had taken place and that the British and the US had known about it and hadn't told him about it, he was livid. He called the British Ambassador and me in and told us that if we were going to work behind his back with Nkomo, he would have to reconsider whether Mozambique and the front line states should continue to work with us. He felt terribly let down. I was instructed what to say, but the instructions were just not convincing. I decided it was better just to acknowledge we did know about the meeting, to regret that we had not consulted with him, and to live with the consequences, rather than to try to justify our actions. In time, Machel realized that he needed a settlement and that one couldn't be achieved without the British or us, and resumed cooperating with us.

Late in 1980, the British finally got everybody to agree to meet in London, at Lancaster House...Mugabe, Nkomo, Sithole, Bishop Muzorewa and Ian Smith all were there, as were representatives of the front line states, including Mozambique. The British hoped that everyone at the conference would agree on the modalities for a transition to majority rule and independence, and participate in elections. But Mugabe was holding out. We and the British feared the conference would break up without agreement. If so, it would be difficult to ever get them together again. At that point I received a cable from President Carter instructing me to request President Machel to use his influence with Mugabe to get Mugabe to agree. There wasn't much time, for some of the delegations had already purchased tickets to return home.

Q: You were all up in London at this time?

DE PREE: No, President Machel was in Maputo. I had about five or six hours in which to try to persuade him to weigh in with Mugabe.

I had a good working relationship with Machel. The chemistry was right. We were both candid and honest with each other. When I called for an appointment I was told that he was in a cabinet meeting, but that he would see him immediately afterwards and that they would call me just as soon as the meeting broke up. When the call didn't come through, I asked if I could come over to the President's office, where the cabinet was meeting so that I could see him as soon as he got out? It wasn't long after I got there that the meeting broke up. Machel and I went into a corner. I delivered President Carter's request as instructed, emphasizing that the US would work with the British to ensure free and fair elections. This is what the Zimbabweans and front line states had been fighting for. They had won. I told him that we believed he was the one person who could persuade Mugabe to agree. Would he do it? He looked me in the eye and said, "Yes, I will do it. Tell President Carter that I will try me best." I rushed back to send a cable. And then we waited. It wasn't long and we were informed that agreement had been reached. The British, who were monitoring telephone calls, later told us that Machel called Robert Mugabe. Machel told him that he had this appeal from President Carter, that we had assured him that there would be free and fair elections and that power would be turned over to whomever won the election. If Mugabe felt he had the support of the majority of Zimbabweans as he said he had, and Machel thought he had, then they were going to win the election and that would be the end of it. He urged Mugabe to sign. I got a nice cable from Washington thanking me for my efforts with Machel. Margaret Thatcher has since publicly acknowledged that it was Samora Machel's intervention that brought about the settlement.

Our decision back in 1976 to enter into diplomatic relations with Mozambique and to seek Mozambique's cooperation in those areas where US and Mozambique interests overlapped paid off.

Q: I think this points out an important element to diplomacy and that is often the idea is raised, "Why do you need an ambassador, the Secretary of State can pick up the phone and call somebody?" But it is true in business, it is true in personal relations and is true in foreign relations that the person on the spot if they can develop a relationship, it doesn't have to be a warm friendly relationship, but one of understanding and basic trust, that you can communicate through this. You can't do it with the great man back in Washington picking up the phone and saying to do this and do that. It just doesn't work.

DE PREE: No, it wouldn't have worked that way. During Kissinger's last year as Secretary of State he was very much engaged in African issues. He came out to Africa. He wanted to come to Mozambique. I was instructed to see which of two possible dates would be most convenient for President Machel. Machel saw me at once, but said he would have to think it over and would let me know the next day. I knew the answer was likely to be no. And it was. It was, I was told, "an inopportune time for the Secretary to visit Mozambique." This wasn't the easiest cable to send. With the Secretary being courted by almost everyone to visit their capitals, what kind of ambassador did the US have in Maputo, who couldn't even persuade the head of state to receive the Secretary. I could almost hear the Secretary's comments in Maputo. So Secretary Kissinger never visited Maputo.

A couple of years later, after Carter had won the election, Machel went to the UN and met with President Carter in New York. I attended the meeting. In the course of the discussion, Machel mentioned that he had turned down Secretary Kissinger's offer to visit Maputo. He said he wanted President Carter to know why. It was because "I didn't trust Secretary Kissinger then and I don't trust him now." With that attitude no ambassador could have persuaded Machel to receive Kissinger.

Machel had a great respect for President Carter. He believed President Carter's veto of Congressional action to rescind the embargo on Rhodesian chrome was crucial to the settlement. The veto persuaded Machel and Mugabe that President Carter and the US could be trusted. I can remember receiving the news of President Carter's veto. I had to go to the airport early in that morning because Machel was leaving on a trip, and it was customary for the diplomatic corps to see him off. Robert Mugabe was out there, as he was accorded diplomatic status by the Mozambicans. I took the occasion to break the news of President Carter's veto to him. He was very moved, embraced me, and said, "Now there is a chance to end the fighting."

I informed President Machel too of the veto, but did not have a chance to discuss it at any length because of his departure. He was off to some conference. He may even have been going to Cuba. Shortly after his return, he opened a new session of parliament. Afterwards, as was the practice in Maputo, members of the parliament, the cabinet, the diplomatic corps and party officials assembled in a circle to greet the President. He began to shake the hands of people around that circle. When he came to the diplomatic corps he spotted me, took my hand and walked me diagonally across the circle of all these people. We retreated to a corner, where he asked me to send a message to President Carter,

thanking him for his courageous act of vetoing the legislation. Then he walked me back arm in arm across that circle and got into his car. My diplomatic colleagues, the Cubans, the Russians, the Chinese must have wondered what this tete-a-tete was all about, for publicly Machel and the Mozambicans were still rather critical of the US, nor did they know how much cooperation we and the British were receiving from Machel behind the scenes. This was a moment in my diplomatic career that I savor.

Q: I take it Machel was almost atypical of many of leaders that he wasn't out to get political points but out to get something done.

DE PREE: Yes, I think he was genuinely interested in doing something for the people of his country. There was very little corruption in the government during the time I was there. It did not take Machel long to realize that state management of the economy was not the answer to Mozambique's problems. Nor was Mozambique's close relationship with the Soviets much help. In my third year in Maputo I got a call asking if I could come see him. He wanted to talk to me about agricultural production in the United States. Jimmy Kolker, who was a junior officer at the time, came along as a notetaker. Three or four cabinet ministers were with the President. He began by saying, "Look, you Americans know how to produce food. You are the world's major producer of food. And you know we are having problems with our production. The Bulgarians who are helping us with rice haven't had much luck. In fact their aid project is a disaster. Why don't you come in and prove your way is better. You and the East can compete here in Mozambique. We will let you have as much land as you need, good land. We will even let you have land in the Incomati basin, which is fertile and well watered. My minister of agriculture," who was at the meeting, "will see that the land will be made available at once."

It was the type of offer one would have liked to have accepted, but I told him there were two reasons why we just couldn't do it. I reminded him that there was still a Congressional proscription on development aid to Mozambique, which prohibited the Administration from providing any development assistance to Mozambique. I said that I hoped that proscription would soon be lifted [it was later]. But I said the second reason was even more important and that was because our approach to agricultural production was quite different from the approach adopted by the government of Mozambique. I said the US government did not try to manage the economy. We left that to the private sector, where the price of commodities and market forces encouraged the individual to produce, to make it worth his while to produce. I said that in my view Mozambique would have to change its whole approach to agriculture and the economy before Mozambique was going to have much success in turning its economy around. I would have loved to been able to proven that we could have done it better, but that just wasn't in the cards.

Q: Was he looking over his shoulder at Tanzania where Julius Nyerere had gone the socialist route and basically destroyed the economy? Was he looking around and seeing how these things didn't work?

DE PREE: He had his eyes open. He was bright and quite aware of the problems his friend Julius Nyerere had in Tanzania. He saw too what neighboring South Africa had accomplished with its approach to agriculture. He was a pragmatist. I am convinced that had he not been killed in the plane crash, you would have seen quite a change in Mozambique's approach to management of their economy.

Q: Did you put yourself in a position deliberately in competition with the Soviets by saying that you are doing it this way and it isn't working? Or did you not over emphasize the competitive aspects?

DE PREE: We didn't really have to. The Mozambicans had their eyes open and were quite aware of what was going on. The Soviets and the East had a big presence in Mozambique. The government wasn't getting as much out of their aid effort as they thought they should. For example, the Soviets were harvesting shrimp off the coast and shared their yield with Mozambique. But the Mozambicans believed they were being short changed. Moreover, the Mozambicans were being told that the Russians were applying fishing methods which were destroying the beds and endangering the future of the industry. Machel was aware of this. It wasn't necessary for us to keep reminding him. The communists' failures spoke for themselves.

Machel was very much a realist, not only on economic issues, but other matters as well, including South Africa. In 1977, Andy Young, then our Ambassador to the UN, came to Maputo to attend a UN conference, which had been called to show solidarity with the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia. On that occasion Andy Young met with President Machel. I accompanied Andy. They talked about the racial situation in South Africa. Andy Young drew on the experience of the Civil Rights movement in the United States to suggest that some of the lessons learned might be helpful in South Africa. Machel listened politely but kept reminding Andy Young that the numbers were different. Whereas in the US the percentage of blacks in the United States was about 15-20 percent, in South Africa it was the reverse. Machel thought the fundamental difference in numbers argued for a different approach. But he said that the whites had every right to be in South Africa. In fact they had as much right as the blacks since much of southern Africa was open country when the Bantus and Afrikaners moved in. Yet while the whites had every right to be there, they didn't have the right to suppress the blacks. That had to cease. I think over time Machel would have been helpful in bringing about a peaceful transition in South Africa.

Q: What about the CIA while you were there? You had two civil wars going on. One inside of Mozambique and one in Rhodesia. This seems like a place where you might say the CIA couldn't help but get involved. Was this a problem?

DE PREE: Yes, it was. Mozambique was obviously a country in which the CIA wanted to be present. There was a large Chinese and Soviet military and diplomatic presence. The Cubans, East Germans, and Vietnamese were also there. We did have CIA personnel in the embassy. They were not declared. For the first few years, it was a rather unproductive

station. This bothered headquarters officials in Washington, who thought they should be getting more out of the station than the station was able to deliver. Washington was putting a lot of pressure on the station to get moving. Because of that pressure the station became more lax in terms of the safeguards and professional standards that they applied. I was concerned because of the risk of being caught out.

I got myself into trouble with the agency when I turned down requests of senior CIA officials to visit Maputo. Even though the Government of Mozambique and the Soviets, Chinese and others were well aware there were Agency people on the mission staff, I did think it wise to call attention to this fact. I therefore turned down some very senior people. I was told later that they didn't particularly like it. But I was concerned that headquarters didn't appreciate the risk they were running of operating in Mozambique.

I left the country in the Fall of 1980. Shortly thereafter one of the station officers sought to recruit somebody in Maputo and got caught red-handed. As a result the entire station was kicked out. In my judgment this happened because we were amateurish, we were too impatient for results and took unacceptable risks. We were very critical of the government of Mozambique for expelling our people and asked for an apology. I thought we protested too much. After all, we had brought it on ourselves.

Q: It is always a problem because these operations have a life of their own. You have to produce...what we are really talking about is the recruitment of agents who will then send in reports and this is always a very tricky thing because if this effort gets publicized...we have a major case right now in the United States called the Ames Spy case, which has upset relations with Russia. These things not only have a life of their own, but have major political consequences, often far out weighing any results they get.

DE PREE: It was a long time before we assigned an ambassador to Mozambique because we didn't like the way they handled this incident. We didn't like being publicly exposed the way we were. Let me add here that the US government was not seeking in any way to topple or create problems for the government of Mozambique. We were interested in knowing what the Soviets, the Cubans and the other Communist players in Mozambique were up to. In my judgment, that was a legitimate objective. But we did it in such a way that we created problems for our bilateral relationship. This took time to heal.

Q: What about your relations with countries there with which we really didn't have relations with. The Vietnamese, Cubans, North Koreans, Soviets, Chinese, etc. How did you handle these?

DE PREE: Well you couldn't help but run into these people. Whenever the diplomatic corps assembled formally, the Mozambicans asked us to line up in order of our presentation of credentials. This put me next to the Cuban Ambassador, with whom of course we didn't have relations. I was civil. He was too. We would engage in small talk, but not much more. That was true of other communist diplomats with whom the US did not have diplomatic relations; except for the North Koreans. The North Korean

Ambassador refused to shake hands with me. He would just put his hand behind his back as Dulles did with Zhou En-lai.

Mozambique was a fascinating place to be. I stayed almost five years. I was scheduled to leave after three years but stayed on because of the good working relationship I had established with Machel and because of the on-going negotiations on Rhodesia and Namibia. I left a few months after the elections in Zimbabwe. It was a very satisfying tour.

Q: Well, then you left there in 1980 and came back to do what?

DE PREE: I was assigned to the Inspection Corps, which I thought might be a holding operation until something else developed, but no sooner had I arrived in Washington than they pulled me out of the Inspection Corps to work on a special project for Secretary Muskie. President Carter had asked Secretary of State Muskie to take a look at the budget requests of USAID, USIA, the Peace Corps, the Export-Import Bank, all the agencies funded out of what we call the 150 account, the international affairs funding account, to make sure that the allocation of resources was consistent with the policy priorities set by the Secretary of State. A small team was assembled under Ambassador Dean Brown to do this for Secretary Muskie. Deputy Secretary Christopher took a great interest in the project.

Despite the protests of some of the agencies, the team recommended some adjustments in the budget submissions of these agencies. In a few cases, funding for activities with a low policy priority were recommended be dropped. Agency heads were unhappy to have any outsider taking a close look at their budget requests after they had signed off on them. But Secretary Muskie accepted most of our teams recommendations. OMB, which had an officer participate in the review, was pleased with the review and the team's and Secretary's efforts to link funding in the 150 account more closely to policy priorities. But then the election came and President Carter's budget was replaced by the Reagan budget, so the exercise didn't bear fruit. But as an effort it was significant, and I understand Secretary Christopher is once again seeking to link resources in the 150 account more closely to policy priorities.

That assignment lasted about five months. Then I returned to Inspection Corps and had a year there. I headed some interesting inspections, London, Dublin, and our missions to NATO and the European Community. After a year of inspection work I was assigned as Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary for Management, who at that time was Dick Kennedy.

Q: Could we first hit on the inspection side a bit. How were inspections conducted at that time from your perspective and how effective were they? What was the status of inspections?

DE PREE: I was disappointed. In my opinion, our approach was too formalistic. It was essentially a report card on how the various operating units in an embassy were doing. There was a sameness to all the reports. Very few people read them. We sent them off to Congress where they were filed and that was it. The value came largely in the preparations made by the missions for the inspection. The mission would be told what we were going to look for and obviously would hurriedly take steps to get ready for us. That was useful. Oh, occasionally you would find something of significance that would enter into the report. But there was very little policy focus in the report. I thought that inspectors should focus far more on the policy. What was it? Did everyone at the post know what we were trying to accomplish? Did the staff participate in policy review? Were the post's resources appropriate to our policy objectives? We tried to do this in our inspection of the London embassy, with some success. Today's inspection reports are much better, thanks in large part to Sherman Funk, the current Inspector General.

Q: So, you were in the Inspection Corps for about one year?

DE PREE: About one year.

Q: This brings it to about 1982?

DE PREE: Early 1982, right.

Q: And then what?

DE PREE: Then I was invited to become Executive Assistant to Under Secretary for Management, Dick Kennedy.

Q: Could you talk about Dick Kennedy, because he had a reputation.

DE PREE: Yes, I was aware of the reputation. People warned me about working for Dick Kennedy, that he had a temper and had difficulty at times controlling it. But I was interested in management issues. I had worked, as I said earlier, worked on management issues while on the Policy Planning Staff. And, quite frankly I wasn't interested in staying any longer with the Inspection Corps. So I took the job.

Dick Kennedy did prove as difficult as people had said he was. He had many strengths, understood the Department quite well, kept on top of what was going on, and was very effective, I thought, in his budget appearances before our appropriations subcommittees. But he was often his own worst enemy when working with people. If things didn't go quite the way Dick Kennedy wanted them to go, he would from time to time rant and rave and scold people in front of other people, including very senior people in the Department. Obviously people don't like that. After I had worked for him about a year, Shultz came in to replace Haig as Secretary. Haig and Kennedy had a very close relationship.

Q: Could you explain Kennedy's background before he came in?

DE PREE: He was a former military officer. He had worked closely with Al Haig at the National Security Council and had a good relationship with the Secretary. Because of that relationship Kennedy's influence within the Department as Under Secretary during Haig's tenure as Secretary was considerable. During all that time, Dick Kennedy wore two hats. He was Under Secretary for Management and Ambassador-At-Large for nuclear matters. These were two active portfolios. He worked hard and had a quality staff on both sides. But at times the work got too much for him, I think, and he had difficulty...

Q: As his Executive Assistant, could you ever sit him down and say, "Now, cool down, stop this, you are not being effective?"

DE PREE: Yes, there were times when I would be embarrassed at meetings where he would take out after an individual and chew the officer out in front of others, and I would tell him that I didn't think it was helpful to him to do that. If he didn't like what someone was doing, I urged him to call the person in, shut the door and discuss the matter face to face, but not to berate the person in front of other people. But it didn't work. He just couldn't seem to control his temper.

When Shultz came in as Secretary of State, he called Dick Kennedy in and told him he thought it was too much for Kennedy to wear two hats and asked Kennedy which of the two jobs he would like to keep. Kennedy told me that he wanted to stay on as Under Secretary for Management. But meanwhile, people who Kennedy had offended, including some assistant secretaries and very senior officers got to Shultz and said, "Look, we're having trouble working with Dick Kennedy as Under Secretary and suggest you look for someone else to fill that position." When Kennedy went back and told Shultz that he wanted to remain as Under Secretary for Management Shultz told him that he was too valuable as Ambassador for Nuclear matters and that he was going to find somebody else to look after management. I think it was largely because of Dick Kennedy's style of operation....

Q: ...was notorious and I was far removed.

DE PREE: Yet his understanding of the job and the preparation for Congressional hearings, I thought was very good. But you don't succeed in that job unless you can work with people. And over time people just turned against him, worked around him or would avoid him at all costs.

Q: While you were working with Kennedy, what were some of the management issues?

DE PREE: Maybe, if I could jump ahead Stu, because I worked for three Under Secretaries and sometimes I get mixed up. After Kennedy left, George Shultz brought in a friend of his, Jerry Van Gorkom, a businessman, a CEO, from the Chicago area. Van Gorkom had no prior government experience. He was a quick learner but just found that he had too much to learn about the bureaucracy and the State Department. He also had a

different management style. He thought as Under Secretary for Management he should have authority to make the basic management decisions and that he would have the backing of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary on these matters. This was his undoing. The issue that triggered his departure was the allocation of space in the Department. Van Gorkom looked at the situation and concluded there wasn't enough space for everybody, somebody would have to move out. He thought since the State Department had moved some of its people out of the building, AID should likewise be asked to relocate some of its operations. He thought that as Under Secretary this was a decision that should have been left to him to decide. But Ken Dam, who was Deputy Secretary at the time, over-ruled him. If he was not going to be backed on what Van Gorkom thought was a fair and well-reasoned management decision, he would have to quit. Although Van Gorkom by that time was beginning to grow into the job and would have liked to stay on, it was too late.

Van Gorkom was followed by Ron Spiers. Ron, of course, was a product of the institution and knew the Department inside and out. I was Director of Management Operations and Ron's deputy until I left to go overseas in 1987. So I worked for three Under Secretaries.

I dealt with a good many management issues in my almost six years in M and M/MO . Probably the most troublesome was security. It was certainly the most urgent. While I was not directly responsible for security -- that was the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security -- as Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary and later as Director of management Operations I participated in numerous meetings on security. The bombing of our embassy in Beirut occurred when Van Gorkom was Under Secretary and he and I accompanied then Under Secretary Eagleburger to Beirut to escort the bodies back to Washington. That bombing was followed closely by the bombing of the marine barracks. These bombings shook Secretary Shultz who decided it could no longer be business as usual -- it was necessary to make Departmental personnel more conscious of the importance of security. The Department commissioned Admiral Bobby Inman to review the state of diplomatic security and to recommend measures to improve it. Inman recommended significant upgrading of security, including the hardening of embassies, additional security personnel and a lot of consciousness training for staff and dependents. The upgrade carried a steep price tag.

While Congress was sympathetic and appropriated millions more for security, budget considerations were always an issue. We in M were afraid that Congress might reduce funding for day-to-day Departmental operations in order to offset the additional money being appropriated on security. This did happen. But where should one draw the line? What was an acceptable risk? I can remember one discussion that came up over the proposed construction of a new embassy in Guinea-Bissau. With Secretary Shultz taking the position that today's low threat post might be tomorrow's high threat post, the security people proposed that the new embassy incorporate all the Inman Standards for a high threat post. But this brought the estimated cost of the embassy to more than $30 million, which someone pointed out was more than half the country's GNP. It simply didn't make sense to spend this much money on a new embassy in Guinea-Bissau. Something had to

give. In the end, it was decided that the new building would not have to meet all the Inman specifications. But common sense didn't always prevail. and I'm of the opinion that a lot of money -- hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on security, which in retrospect should have been better spent on something else, or not spent at all.

A second major management issue was staffing overseas. If the cost of protecting our personnel overseas was so costly, did we really have to have all these people overseas? As director of Management Operations I was asked by Secretary Shultz to undertake this review. We looked at not only State's staffing but AID's, CIA's, and the other agencies as well.

Q: The military too?

DE PREE: Defense attachés, yes. Any US personnel that came under the authority of the ambassador.

Q: The corridor folk tale in the Foreign Service is every time we go under one of these exercises, the State Department gives up people, but none of the other organizations do.

DE PREE: We started by asking the ambassador what size staff they thought they needed to effectively promote and pursue US interests in their country. Most were quite frank in their reports. As you might expect, a number of ambassadors thought that AID was larger than it should be, or that the station or Defense Attaché offices were larger than necessary. But reductions in State staffing were also recommended. We invited the agencies to comment on the ambassadors cables. The agencies and bureaus were not as forthcoming. This was to be expected I guess. We also talked to the agencies and bureaus about relocating some overseas operations, bringing their regional personnel back to Washington, moving our bookkeeping and financial management systems out of Mexico City to Miami, for example. When we completed our review we recommended cuts of somewhere between 700 to 800 if I remember correctly.

At that point, President Reagan chaired a meeting of agency representatives. It was agreed that some cuts would have to be made, but in the end the cuts fell far short of what we recommended. However, if nothing else, the review did slow growth of overseas staffing. The agencies were reluctant to ask for more overseas positions. When they wanted to increase at one post, they now agreed to reprogram positions from some other post which kept overall overseas staffing the same. At least this constraint operated for a year or so immediately following the review.

Closely associated with that review was a post closing exercise. This was undertaken when Ron Spiers was Under Secretary. Pressure for post closing arose when OMB and the Congress began to take bigger cuts in State's requests for operating funds. Rather than ask each bureau and post to take a 5 or 10 percent across the board cut, Ron Spiers decided we should be more selective and close some of our low priority posts. So we decided we would look, starting with consulates. We asked the Regional Bureaus to rank

order their consulates from the most important to the least important. We asked the Consular Affairs Bureau which were the most important with respect to consular operations. Then we went to the Agencies to get their opinions. We put all this information on spread sheets, with the highest ranking consulates at the top and the lowest ranking on the bottom. A number of posts were ranked low by everybody. There were about 20 posts that were on everybody's bottom of the list. We identified these for possible post closings.

Q: Turino was always one.

DE PREE: Yes, Turino was on the list. When the list surfaced Congress got involved. Somebody from Minnesota was upset that Goteborg was on the list. Senator Glenn for some reason didn't want to close Brisbane. Nice had it supporters. As a matter of fact, the American community in Nice actually paid the expenses of a three person delegation to come to Washington and pay a call on Secretary Shultz. They asked how much it cost to operate the consulate. They offered to contribute money so that we could keep Nice open. Incidentally, we kept Nice on the list, but Congress made it clear they were going to insist we keep it open, so we couldn't close...I think we ended up with 12 closures.

That was the type of thing that we in the management side of the house were doing. We also got involved in the polygraph issue. Remember, this was the period...

Q: Yes, the so-called lie detector.

DE PREE: The Reagan White House had insisted that people in certain agencies should be subjected to the polygraph as condition of employment. It is common practice in CIA, but not in the Department. Secretary Shultz had strong views against ordering polygraphs in the Department. He did not think it was a reliable instrument. People can beat the polygraph. That has been demonstrated in the Agency with the Ames case. Besides, it creates a false sense of security. So Shultz dug in. As Director of Management Operations, I had to go up on the Hill several times to testify on behalf of the Department.

Although the Reagan White House had ordered that the polygraph be applied widely, Shultz was determined that it wouldn't be done as a matter of course or as a condition of employment in the Department. He would not require any individual to take the test if the individual chose not to do so. The Secretary would not give any more ground on this issue. He even threatened to resign if he were overruled. The White House backed down. They needed George Shultz more than they needed the polygraphing. He was really determined on this one, and I think rightly so.

In M/MO I also got involved in a lot of personnel issues. These would come up in the Management Council, which Ron Spiers had set up as an advisory body on a wide range of management issues. In addition to the Director of Management Operations, the Director General of the Foreign Service, the Comptroller, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, the Inspector General, the

Director of the Foreign Service Institute and Ron's Executive Assistant participated in the Management Council. Ron was a marvelous Under Secretary. Everybody was encouraged to speak their mind. There was real give and take.

One of the most difficult personnel issues the Council considered was over the size of the Senior Foreign Service. The Department was under considerable pressure from the Congress and OMB to reduce the size of the senior Foreign Service. OMB even threatened to reduce funding for operations if we didn't do so. We tried hard and had some success. One way we did this was to reduce the number of limited career extensions we offered senior officers, who has served the maximum time in grade and would have to leave the service unless invited to stay on. More controversial, was the decision to reduce dramatically promotion into the senior foreign service, which caught unawares a lot of 01-officers, who had opened their promotion window, which gave them six or seven years to be promoted or be compelled to leave the Service. By reducing the promotion rate into the senior Foreign Service, we of course reduced an officers chances of ever making it across the senior threshold. The Department lost a good many fine officers as a result. I thought, when we changed the rate of promotion, that we should have given those officers who had opened their window more time to make it across the threshold, but I was in a minority.

The Office of Management Operations also got very much involved on budget issues, although it was the Comptroller, Roger Feldman, and his budget people who had primary responsibility for putting the budget together. M/MO provided staff support for the Policy Priorities Group (PPG), which had been set up by Larry Eagleburger when he had been Under Secretary for Management. The PPG brought together the Department's senior policy and budget managers to make certain the Department's budget adequately funded foreign policy and management priorities. We in M/MO tried to focus the discussion on the key issues and meaningful policy-related options or trade-offs. Could the Department accept the OMB mark? If not, how much funding above the OMB mark should the Department request? $5 million, $50 million? $100 million? What should it be used for? To purchase computers, to open posts, to add new positions?

I was never satisfied that we in M/MO ever did a very good job. We never seemed to have enough time. The budget is an exceedingly complicated document, yet it never seemed to be available for us to look at until a day or two before it had to be delivered to OMB. At that stage, the budget people did not want M/MO or anyone else to recommend changes, since a change of figures in one section would require changes throughout the budget package -- and that meant a lot of work for them. We in M/MO tried to interject ourselves earlier in the budget process, but with not much success.

M/MO had much more say and control over Department staffing. We monitored the allocation of positions. Requests to establish, abolish or reprogram any full-time position had to have M/MO approval. OMB imposed a position ceiling on the Department, which meant that we could not have more people on the payroll at the end of a fiscal year than authorized by our position ceiling. This did not seriously hamper operations since the

Department generally had a surplus of positions to people. Funding to support these positions was much more of a constraint. Shortly after I became Director of Management Operations, however, in an effort to reduce the federal workforce, OMB introduced a new way of monitoring and controlling the federal workforce, which it called "management by FTE." (FTE stands for full-time equivalent, with one FTE equal to one-person year or 2,040 hours of paid employment). We in M/MO liked the new method of monitoring employment, but thought that the FTE ceiling we were given did not reflect the true FTE needs of the Department. For example, we were given no FTE for short-term training or for home leave, even though the Department expended hundreds of FTE each year for these purposes. OMB was reluctant to raise our FTE ceiling, but we battled hard and in the end succeeded in getting the ceiling raised. To insure that the Department didn't exceed its ceiling, we had to monitor consumption on a biweekly basis. This was a major headache, given the deplorable state of the Department's personnel data base.

Q: You were looking at staffing, and something that has struck me. I am a retired Foreign Service Officer but have not been involved in as much political/economic reporting, however, it always has struck me that in many of the large countries we have rather large staffs looking in exquisite detail at the political life of the country where it seems that an ambassador with a good political officer could pretty well cover the major things. We don't have to know down to the county level. But then there is the other side of the coin where Congress and other Bureaus keep demanding reports and all. We want to have relations with a country but it doesn't really serve the republic to look in exquisite detail in France, up and down the place, outside of reporting what happens when it happens. Did you get into that?

DE PREE: Yes, we got into that in a couple of ways. As funding for operations tightened, the Department could no longer expect to receive additional positions and funding to perform new functions. We had to reprogram from within, stop doing something to be able to do something new. To find additional resources to do additional economic reporting or trade promotion work, we began to cut back to some extent on the political reporting.

The second way we got at it was through our review of consulates. In that review, we looked closely at what our consulates were actually doing. When we looked at Rotterdam, for example, the European Bureau said Rotterdam was the home district of some important members of the Dutch parliament, yet when we looked at reporting coming out of the consulate, we found very little reporting on these parliamentarians or local politics. In the end, we concluding that maybe this reporting wasn't important after all. Maybe we need as much detailed reporting from the hinterland as we thought we needed in the past. So you had this taking place.

My own view, looking at staffing changes over the years, is that political staffing is probably as low as it should go without giving up something of significance. If we cut even more, other agencies, CIA in particular, may move in feeling that there was

something there that they wanted to know about and if State wasn't going to do it, they would do it themselves.

Q: That is always a problem. Is there anything else on the management side? Did you get any feel while you were in management for the Reagan Administration? You had a President who was constantly stating that the trouble with government was government. He was always talking about government not doing its job, it is too expensive, etc. Did that reflect in your work?

DE PREE: The Reagan Administration did try to cut back on the Federal work force. But the cuts in state were really not serious. What was more serious was the preferential treatment of the CIA. The CIA expanded rapidly during the Reagan years, thanks to Bill Casey's aggressiveness. State did not do a very good job of arguing the importance of State's work as opposed to that of the CIA. As a result Bill Casey corralled resources that in my opinion should have been allocated to State, since much of the work of collecting intelligence can be done as effectively and cheaper by the Department of State than by the CIA. As a result of CIA's ample funding, it soon began to encroach on work that traditionally had been performed by State. It got into the business of collecting intelligence overtly, when that should have been left to State.

Q: Well, then we come to 1987.

DE PREE: Yes.

Q: And then what happened?

DE PREE: Well, it was time to move on. In 1982 or 83, when I was working as Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary for Management, I had been nominated by the State Department to go to Zimbabwe as ambassador. The nomination was approved by the White House and I was told to get ready to go. I thought it made good sense. I knew Mugabe and the issues. At that time the practice was for President Reagan to call people to invite them to be his ambassador-designate to country A, B or C. In due course, a number of people whose name went over to the White House about the same time as mine, began getting their calls. But I didn't. Initially I didn't worry too much about it, but after a time I began to wonder if something had happened to my nomination.

Then one day I was called in and told that the White House had changed its mind, that I was no longer the President's nominee for Zimbabwe. I thought I was being bumped for a political appointee, but this was not the case. The White House just didn't want De Pree as ambassador to Zimbabwe. State could nominate another career officer and that would be fine. My immediate reaction was, "What in the world have I done to incur the displeasure of the White House? What is behind this?" No one could give me a satisfactory answer. All I was told was that I should just be patient, that in time I would get another mission. The problem was that Zimbabwe was the mission I really wanted. It was the one where I thought I could be most effective.

After failing to get satisfaction from the Department, I finally went to the Hill, to my Congressman, Guy Vander Jagt, who I knew quite well. Guy was a Republican, well-regarded in the White House, and would I thought, find out for me why the White House had changed its mind. Guy did this for me. From what he reported, and I was able to pick up elsewhere, I learned that someone from the intelligence community working in the White House had intervened and persuaded the personnel people in the White House that I was the wrong choice. I don't want to mention names here. I know who it was. I think I mentioned before when we talked about Mozambique that I had a very good relationship with Robert Mugabe. I thought this was a mark in my favor, but it may not have been perceived as such by Bill Casey and the White House figures who were busy battling the "Evil Empire." To some in the Reagan Administration, Mugabe was "untrustworthy". If the Administration entertained thoughts of a covert operation in Zimbabwe -- and I think they did -- then it should have an ambassador in Zimbabwe who would be sympathetic or supportive of what they might have in mind. Given the relationship I had with Mugabe, I would have been perceived as an obstacle. Indeed, I would have been a problem for them. Thus, the White House was right to pull my nomination if they were looking for someone sympathetic to what I was told some people had in mind.

Q: What you are really saying is that we had an activist CIA at that time and it was seen this new country, Zimbabwe...we saw the Cubans everywhere an all this...they really wanted to have somebody with whom they could work with easier.

DE PREE: Yes. I certainly would have gone to Zimbabwe thinking that Mugabe was a person with whom we could work to promote our interests as well as the interests of the Zimbabweans. There were some in the Administration who read the situation differently. Of course, I was angry that the Department didn't really go to bat for me and insist on giving me my day in court. But by the time I discovered the reason why my name had been pulled, someone else had been appointed and in place in Harare.

Well, time passed and while Reagan was still President, I was told that the Department was prepared to submit my name again for an ambassadorial appointment. I was told what posts were coming up. Bangladesh was one. I was asked if I would serve in Bangladesh and I said, "Yes, I would." My nomination went through this time without difficulty.

Q: Why Bangladesh, isn't it sort of out of your area?

DE PREE: Yes, it is.

Q: And it is unflatteringly called a basket case, the armpit of Asia. It is a poor country with no real solution at hand, or at least that is the general feeling. What made you say you would do it?

DE PREE: I guess I didn't want to stay on much longer on the management side. I had been in Washington for seven years and I wanted another overseas assignment. There weren't many posts coming open at that time. None in Africa in which I was interested. But I agree with you Stu, I had not served in the subcontinent, although I had served in hardship posts with significant Moslem populations...Egypt, Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Mozambique. Also, I had voiced my view to Ron Spiers and others that, in selecting candidates for ambassadors, the Department should look for the best qualified officers. I recommended that when a post came open, we begin the search by asking, "All right, who are the ten best candidates for this post," and start from that point, instead of saying, "All right, who are the people who currently have to be taken care of or are due for an assignment" and then try to match a person to a post. As a matter of fact, for the post of Bangladesh, I was competing at that time with somebody who came out of the south Asian area and who, in my judgment, was better qualified than I was for that post. I told Ron Spiers that when queried about Bangladesh. I said that I was prepared to wait and take my chances on another posting, but Ron told me that there was nothing else coming up, and if I wanted another posting I should take this one. I did.

South Asia was a new area for me. Our major interest in Bangladesh was developmental. As you said, many consider it a basket case. 112 million people live in Bangladesh, in an area the size of Wisconsin, very densely populated, and subject to all types of natural disasters. Politically, it didn't engage the attention of the senior people in the NEA Bureau. As a matter of fact when I went out, Dick Murphy said that he hoped it would stay that way. For the most part, it did. We did have a major flood in 1988, the worst in Bangladesh's living history. Of course, the US government responded promptly, as we always do. But this was largely something USAID handled and the NEA bureau at the desk level. We had one or two political issues. Democracy in Bangladesh was one. Steve Solarz was chairman of the Asian Subcommittee and held annual hearings. Bangladesh was a military government, and we were trying to persuade the government to hold free and fair elections. They didn't come about while I was there. But it wasn't for lack of trying.

But the major issues were developmental. We had a big program, about $150 million of development aid and humanitarian relief a year. I had a very professional AID staff who wanted to be there because of the challenge. They were good at their job. I was very pleased with the aid effort that we made. I think we got good value for our $150 million.

Q: What type of aid were we giving?

DE PREE: Family planning was one major focus. We were trying to reduce the growth rate. That country doesn't stand much of a chance unless the birth rate goes down.

Q: How were we going about this? Certainly under the Reagan Administration they were opposed to abortion, etc.

DE PREE: Yes. At one time, the US assisted the government of Bangladesh in its vasectomy and sterilization program. We had to get out of that largely because of the opposition of Senator Helms. The government of Bangladesh had been giving a woman a little less than $5 when she came in to be sterilized. The money was intended to provide her with a clean sari once she had the operation and to reimburse her (and her escort) for the cost of transportation to and from the hospital or clinic. Senator Helms and critics thought this payment was an incentive to be sterilized. AID discontinued funding for this particular program rather than jeopardize funding for its other projects. But we continued to assist the Government in other aspects of its family planning effort. One was to help get condoms onto the local market. We had quite a success here, with more than a billion sold under the program. The US wasn't the only donor, but we were crucial to its success.

A second major area of assistance was in rural electrification, helping extend electricity into the villages to open up job opportunities and to improve the lot of the people. This was a very popular program with the Bangladeshis.

The third major area of our development assistance was in fertilizer distribution. We got into this work when USAID explored why crop yield and the use of fertilizer in Bangladesh lagged far behind that in neighboring India. The obstacle we found was the bureaucracy, which controlled fertilizer distribution. Bureaucrats at the fertilizer depots were insisting on under-the-table payments from the farmers. Rather than put up with this corruption and harassment, the farmers simply stopped buying fertilizer. USAID proposed to government that it privatize the sale of fertilizer. Despite strong opposition from the civil servants, the government agreed to let the private sector compete with the government in selling fertilizer. This took political courage, for the public section unions were strong. Private entrepreneurs were quick to get into the business. With this alternative available, the farmers began to go to the private sector to get their fertilizer. Usage went up as did crop yield and farmer income. It was quite a success story.

Throughout my tour in Bangladesh, the opposition parties kept urging us to withdraw our aid from the government, contending that it was US and other donor aid that was making it possible for a corrupt government to remain in power. "We will never have democracy in Bangladesh until you stop your aid," they said. After about a year in the country, I decided to address this matter head on in a speech I gave to the Dhaka Rotary Club. I reviewed the US aid effort, program by program. I asked the audience if they wanted us to cut off our support for family planning. "Oh no," they said, "we need your support for Family Planning." "Do you want us to continue our support for rural electrification?" "Oh, yes, this is one of your good programs. We can see the payoff. Keep it up." "Well, what about the fertilizer business?" Then I explained what and why we were active in this field. Here too, the audience thought the program made good sense, and that we should continue. "Well then," I said, "You've just asked me to continue almost everything we're doing." The speech was given prominent play in the Bangladesh media. The opposition didn't much like it at all. The communist press even urged the government to declare me persona non grata. But our large aid effort did get a lot of attention and a lot of praise.

I had some reservations about the opposition. Their rhetoric was good, but I wasn't so sure their performance would be much better then the government in power. One day, one of the leaders of one of the opposition parties came to me with a proposal. He said that he had come up with a formula to get free and fair elections in Bangladesh. The proposal was for me to persuade President Ershad to set a date for country-wide elections, then go on vacation, turn the government over to a caretaker administration and await the results. If Ershad won the election, the opposition would accept the result, and call off their street action. This particular opposition leader had put this proposal in writing. At the bottom of the proposal was the note, "To demonstrate the government's determination to carry through on this program, they should agree that the outcome of this election should be as follows:..." So much for champions of free and fair elections.

Yes, Dhaka was a fascinating assignment.

Q: How did you deal with the government?

DE PREE: I had excellent access, as did all my predecessors. Bangladeshis are favorably disposed to the US. We have a large AID presence and they appreciate it. They know we have no ulterior interest in the country. The government in office had come to power through a military takeover. The opposition, whose leaders I would see on a regular basis, were clamoring for elections, but set conditions that the government found unacceptable. I was using the residence to bring government and opposition together in hopes they could resolve their difference, but without success. As time went on, the opposition parties called national strikes (hartals) and took to street violence to force the government's hand.

These hartals created problems for our embassy's operations. Until we built a new embassy, which we occupied in 1989, our embassy was located in the middle of town. Because of the violence associated with the hartals, we closed the embassy to the public on hartal days. We kept a skeleton staff in the mission, the others stayed home, reporting by telephone. USIA's library was burnt down during one of the hartals. In one three month period, the embassy was closed to the public 28 working days.

I think no matter who is in power in Bangladesh, even a government of angels, there will be a strong built-in opposition, because no government in a country as desperately poor as Bangladesh is going to be able to bring about any rapid improvement in the lives of a large percentage of the population. The problems are just too horrendous for that.

But Bangladesh is here to stay, "viable" or not. There is no possibility of it rejoining India. Nor, after the bloodshed of 1971, is it likely to ever reunite with formerly West Pakistan. But bleak as its future may be, life for the Bangladeshis can be better than it has been. US and other donor aid has made a difference. In time, if they can keep the birth rate down, the Bangladeshis may even be able to feed themselves.

Q: Did you get involved with the role of India there? It looks as a practical matter that Bangladesh should really be amalgamated some how into India or something.

DE PREE: Yes, India was a major player on the local scene. Many Bangladeshis saw the government of India as the principal enemy, even though at the time Bangladesh took up arms against the West Pakistanis, it was India that came in and enabled the Bangladeshis to become independent. Much of this anti-India feeling is fanned by the Muslim fundamentalists.

Q: Did you get involved at all with the Indians, the Indian Ambassador?

DE PREE: Yes. There was no problem dealing with the Indians. I don't think the Indians perceived us as a threat to their interests in the area. Our focus was almost exclusively on development aid and quiet efforts, largely behind the scenes, with government to improve the human rights record and get on with the job of promoting democracy and a market economy.

There was some international media attention on human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill tracts along the border with Burma and India. The government had to bring in troops there to suppress an insurgency. We and others urged the government to exercise better controls over their troops in the area and to permit Amnesty International people to monitor developments. The government did respond to these appeals. The situation in the Hill Tracts had improved by the time I left Bangladesh.

In terms of the encouragement of the private sector, I think the government's record was reasonably good. Privatization of the state-run jute mills had slowed, but the government was moving away from state management of the economy and encouraging the private sector.

Q: At this time the Soviet Union was beginning to collapse. Were the Soviets or the Chinese playing any particular role there at the time?

DE PREE: No. China and the Soviet Union both had missions in Bangladesh, but the Western countries were the big donors: the World Bank, the US, the Nordics, the Dutch and others. Bangladesh professed to be non-aligned, but there was a decided pro-West bias. This was particularly true of the military. Bangladesh did send troops to the Persian Gulf during the war against Iraq.

Q: Iraq came in in 1989 and took over Kuwait.

DE PREE: Bangladesh openly backed Kuwait.

Q: Then you left there in 1990?

DE PREE: Yes, and for the last three years, Stu, I have been working as a Senior Inspector, heading inspection teams. I had three years of that before I retired in September of 1993.

Q: Was there a difference in the inspection business than when you were there before?

DE PREE: Yes, there was somewhat more focus on policy matters than there had been in the past. We looked at the mission's Program plan. What was the mission trying to accomplish? How well informed are the people at post with the policy? How much participation did they have with respect to policy formulation? We looked at whether there was a fit between policy objectives, what we were trying to accomplish, and the resources we had out there to achieve our policy. Were we trying to do more than the resources could hope to accomplish. We looked at program and personnel resources. If we as inspectors perceived there was an imbalance, that we might be trying to accomplish too much with too little, we would note that. Or if we were trying to accomplish something that in terms of our global interests was of low priority, we would report that too.

Let me give you an example of a significant policy issue where we as inspectors had something to say. We went to China, Hong Kong and Mongolia on one inspection cycle. This was just before Congress had to vote on Most Favored Nation treaty status for Mainland China. We noted the $14 billion imbalance of trade we had with Mainland China. We looked at what staffing we had in our Chinese posts and in Hong Kong to try to redress this imbalance. We observed that trade promotion officers could make a difference. In Guangzhou, for example, one officer accompanied a group of Chinese to a food processing fair in the United States and came back with close to $30 million worth of orders and another $60 million in joint investment. This could not have been accomplished without the participation of that one officer. We then went to Hong Kong, where again we observed the effectiveness of our trade promotion effort. We were convinced that the assignment of more trade promotion officers in China and Hong Kong would pay off. Where would they come from? We thought they might come from posts in the former Soviet Union, where our trade promotion officers were unable to generate as much additional trade as had originally been projected. For example, in just seven months, US exports to Hong Kong, much of which was destined for China, equaled all our exports to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union put together for an entire year. Yet the number of trade promotion officers we had in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was much greater than what we had in China. So we recommended that some of these trade promotion resources be reprogrammed to China or Hong Kong. That is the type of policy issue that we addressed.

As inspectors we also looked closely at a post's policy instruction and guidance. Were our policy objectives clearly spelled out in the mission's program plan or the letter of instruction to the ambassador? Before we went out to inspect our embassy in Yemen we were told that there could and should be no improvement in relations between the United States and Yemen so long as the government of Yemen continued to maintain its close

relationship with Saddam Hussein. We wanted to keep the pressure on the Yemen Government. Yet when we arrived at post, we observed that the post was actively working to improve relations. The Peace Corps wanted to get back in, USAID was stepping up its program activity, the embassy was exploring whether US military personnel could lecture at Yemen's Staff College. Since the Government of Yemen was still maintaining its close relationship with Saddam Hussein, it seemed to us as inspectors that the embassy, with the best of intentions, might be getting out ahead of what we had been told was our US policy interest not to improve relations until Yemen backed off in its support of Iraq. We reviewed this issue with policy makers in the Department and the National Security Council when we returned from our inspection.

Q: One of the impressions I have, and this is only an impression, going back to the State Department on the inspection side, is you are sending people out into some very dangerous countries, as the State Department does. There are bombings and all and you have posters saying "Report Waste, Fraud and Mismanagement." It seems like the thrust of the inspection corps had been to try to come up with scalps of people who have wasted, fraud or mismanaged. Did you have that feeling while you were in it or not?

DE PREE: I think that is a misperception, Stu. You must remember that OIG, the Office of Inspector General, has four components. The office of inspection is just one of these components. A security oversight unit looks at the state of security at our posts, the audit unit looks at how funds are being managed, and the third unit, the investigations unit, investigates specific allegations of malfeasance, theft, etc. We in the office of inspections were not trying to get anyone's scalp. Our purpose was to try to improve the management of our diplomatic posts and bureaus and offices in the Department of State. We were well aware that over the last ten/fifteen years the Department has been cutting administrative support. We cut funding for travel, we cut funding for post language training, we cut funding for maintenance. We have been cutting positions. We are also sending a lot of inexperienced people on assignment. This is particularly true of general services officers, who are in short supply. In Guinea Bissau, for example, clearly one of our most challenging posts for an administrative officer, we sent out a junior officer as GSO with no prior GSO experience. This wasn't fair to the post. If you do that, and at the same time cut maintenance funding, inevitably you are going to have deficiencies. I urged my inspection team to remember this when assessing how well the post was doing. While we did point out deficiencies, we were always careful to note that some of these deficiencies were inevitable, given the resources made available to the post. Often the fault was with the Department as much as it was with the post being inspected. I think most of the inspection teams took this approach.

Q: What about the Inspector General during that time? He has just retired, but made quite an impression, Sherman Funk. Could you talk a bit about your impression of him and how he operated?

DE PREE: He was a marvelous person to work for. When we returned from an inspection, we of course would meet with him to review our major findings and

recommendation. He would listen. He wouldn't always agree with us, but he would hear us out. If we could convince him that our findings were valid and our recommendations made sense, he would fight hard to see our recommendations carried out.

For example, my last overseas inspection was to Poland. I think there were 12 junior consular officers in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznan. That cost the Department a lot of money. Each officer had to receive language training, housing, and his or her allowances. It probably cost the Department $150 or $200 thousand a year to support each officer. Our inspection team believed that the work of three of these consular officers could be accomplished by a qualified spouse. There was one qualified spouse at post, for example, who spoke fluent Polish, had received consular training at Consulate General Rosslyn, and had actually had previous consular experience. We learned that some of the spouses of officers coming out to post that summer were interested in doing consular work. So our inspection team recommended that three positions be filled by qualified spouses; saving the government perhaps $500 thousand per year.

When we got back we were told that the Department was prepared to employ spouses in lieu of officers, but not in Warsaw. They didn't want to do it for Poland, they said, because junior officers are eager to go to Poland. They would test the program instead in London, even though the cost saving for the Department in London would be appreciably less than in Poland. This doesn't make sense when the Department claims to be strapped for funds. Once again, the Department is hostage to its permissive bidding system.

Q: One of the things as I do these interviews, those of our generation when asked why did you go to a certain post respond, "Well, I was told to go there." You made your bid but if you were assigned elsewhere you kind of gritted your teeth and said, "Okay, I'll go." Whereas I get the feeling that now you almost go into the assignment process with your attorney. Unfortunately the system also contributes to this in that if you don't get a certain type of job this can have a major affect on your future career, whereas before everybody knew you had not the greatest jobs and other good jobs and it all averaged out.

DE PREE: I think the Department's assignment system needs a major overhaul. The needs of the Service, not the wishes of the officer, must prevail. Let me cite another example. We saw it in Bratislava. The post needed another general service officer. We had opened an embassy, we were getting a new residence, we had a new team coming in, and housing was hard to come by. So the inspection team recommended another GSO position, at least for the next two years. We had already found a position offset, having recommended the abolishment of half a dozen positions in Poland. We came back and talked to the assignment people. They said they couldn't support the recommendation because nobody will bid on Bratislava. They said they could put a new support position in Vienna because officers will bid on Vienna. I said, "But the need is in Bratislava. If you put someone in Vienna, that officer is going to spend at least half, if not more, of his or her time in Vienna. If you assign an officer to Bratislava, and he or she wouldn't go, sack the officer." But that's not likely to happen.

Q: We did that to people who wouldn't go to Vietnam.

DE PREE: Yes.

Q: Okay. I thank you very much.

End of interview