

Interview with Donald B. Easum

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

AMBASSADOR DONALD B. EASUM

Interviewed by: Arthur Day

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Q: Donald would you spell your name so we can have a mike check?

EASUM: Donald Easum.

Q: Thank you. Don, we want eventually to concentrate on your senior years, in the Kissinger era, and the Carter administration, but you might start with an account of your experience with the security people at the time of entering the Foreign Service. It seemed to me that it sheds a revealing light on the state of mind in Washington at that time, and might be interesting of itself.

EASUM: When I left Madison, Wisconsin to go to Washington to enter the Foreign Service in the spring of 1953, I didn't really recognize that there was a Senator from that state, Joe McCarthy, who was going to, in a sense, very definitely complicate my entry into the Foreign Service. I had taken the career exam and was asked to report to Washington to what is still called, I think, the Junior Officers Training Course—Basic Officers Training Course, something of that nature—March, 1953. There were some 20 of us, and we embarked upon the training with zeal and I think a certain amount of idealism, eagerness. And all went well until some six weeks into the course which, I think, in those days was a three-month course. We went to Ellis Island for an immigration hearing. We attended

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that hearing where a judge grilled a young Czech student who was, he said, on his way to Chicago to visit a sick mother, and was then returning to Prague. In the course of the questioning, he had to admit that he was a member of the Communist Student League, that he couldn't go to the university if he hadn't joined the League. He had to speak in Czech. He didn't speak German, and the interpreter who was supplied for the hearing, we sensed, was a much better speaker of German than Czech. And so there was some difficulty in his making himself understood to the judge. The judge became increasingly impatient, and in effect said, "You are inadmissible to this country. We're sending you back." He treated him with such disdain, at one point castigating him for smoking a cigarette. The young man was nervous, frightened. So after the interview several of us went up to the judge and said, in effect, "We didn't understand your ruling. We thought it was arbitrary and we believed him. He was simply going to see his sick mother, and is the mere fact that he had a student League card to get admission to the university sufficient reason to deny him entry to Chicago to see his mother, and then go home again?" We got into a bit of an argument with the judge and the key person leading our argument was one of our colleagues, Chadwick Johnson, who wouldn't mind my mentioning his name. We got back to Washington and a week or so after that Chadwick was suspended from our class, and none of us understood why. He stayed suspended for weeks. He wasn't told why, and about three weeks after that, as part of our scheduled activity as young trainees for the Foreign Service, we were over at the Foreign Service Institute, which I seem to recall was in some temporary building. At any rate we came over to New State for a meeting organized by the Personnel Department of the State Department, to give us a chance to talk with Scott McLeod. Scott McLeod was the director of the security division of the State Department, and was a plant, in effect, of Joe McCarthy. We didn't really realize that. And he gave us a lecture in which he said, "I know that you young men and women are worried about the security provisions that we are putting into effect here. You have to realize that there is a crisis in our country, but if you keep your noses clean—that was his phrase, which I thought was vulgar—you don't have to worry. The security provisions of the State Department need not concern you." And later, at the end of his speech, he

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made a really gross remark, which I'm sure all of us will always remember. He said, "Look, don't worry. If you're going to go down on the General's daughter, just don't do it at the flag pole." Well, that was his final line, and then he said, "Are there any questions?" Well, there were some, and I was among those getting up the courage to stand up and identify myself and ask him a question. And my question was, in effect, "Mr. McLeod, you say we have nothing to worry about. But I think some of us do. I think a lot of us do because of the way in which terminology is being used carelessly around this city these days, and I notice a speech that you made to the American Legion in Kansas City. You noted in that speech that it was Norman Thomas' birthday and you had very cruel things to say about Mr. Thomas simply because he was a socialist. I was a student—I've just come recently from studying in Britain. There is a labor government (I was continuing to McLeod) there was a labor government in power. I wrote an article, indicating I thought that labor government made a certain amount of sense, a socialist government. Now I put to you, sir, this issue: the careless use of terminology, and particularly the term 'socialism', and I think we do have something to worry about." And I sat down, quivering. He didn't give me much of an answer. He managed to avoid the real issue, and we went on to other questions.

And about two weeks after that, I was summoned to an oral interview by two young SY officers.

Q: Excuse me. SY is the security branch of the Department of State.

EASUM: That's right, of which McLeod was the chief. And they went through a whole series of questions that were really inane, such as, "Do you think the communists do anything better than we do? And what do you think of General Marshall's mission to China? And do you think the Smith Act is constitutional, or unconstitutional? What do you think about the issue of communists serving in the US Government? How about communists teaching in our schools?" That was the line of their questioning. And I was young and idealistic, and very angry at this point, and answered somewhat flippantly. To the issue of communists teaching in the schools I said—and somewhere in the

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security files there is a record of this—I asked that they keep it there—I said, “I think it would probably be a good thing if there were a communist teaching in every high school, because if there were, the level of the teaching would rise considerably, the youngsters would see the alternatives, they would argue and discuss, and they would learn a lot about different kinds of system of government.” And it was when I said that that he said, “How about in the US Government?” And I said, “The Bureau of Fish and Wildlife is a good place for them.” And we went on in that vein.

Shortly after that, our Foreign Service class graduated. I was still confused and puzzled by this weird interview, and didn't know whether it had any meaning or not. And it made me so angry, I wrote it up, and submitted it to my file. The process of assigning us overseas began to start, and all of us got assigned except me, some to overseas posts and some to the Department as is normal, as you know. And I couldn't find out why I wasn't being assigned. Before our class actually went out to their posts, we became FSO-6s instead of FSR-6s. For whatever reason we were all brought in as FSRs. Maybe there wasn't any budget or whatever. They all became FSO-6s, and I didn't. So I began to question, “What's going on? Why is this?” And I couldn't find anybody who would really talk to me. Earl Sohm was then Under Secretary for Management, he was pleasant, but he said, “Don, you know these are hard times and I can't tell you anything.” I never tried to go the Congressional route, but neither did I lie back and give up. I felt, “Well, I'm going to wait this out because I can't believe what's happening, whatever it is.”

Meanwhile there were all kinds of bizarre things happening to other Foreign Service Officers. A Foreign Service Officer, who subsequently went reasonably high in the Service, named Hal Josephs, had written a Ph.D. thesis at Georgetown on the only communist government in a province, I think, of India to come to power through elections, Kerala. And he, in fact, was assigned to that part of the world. He was brought back from there, and grilled by SY people. His promotion was denied. There are other cases we could think about if we had more time, and, of course, we know many of them. A number of them have now been chronicled. So I waited around, and waited around, and finally Bob Ryan, who

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subsequently became Ambassador to Niger and then, I think, Administrative Ambassador—whatever it's called—at our embassy in Paris, was chief of Foreign Service Personnel and he, in effect, took me under his wing and said, “Don, these are hard times.” He didn't really know what was happening either, and he didn't say, “I'll try to find out.” But he did say, “I'll give you a job.” He put me to work in Foreign Service Personnel, and my job was to review the files of Foreign Service Officers who were coming up for placement. We had Panel A, in those days, and Panel B. Panel A was the Officers, Panel B were the clerks and secretaries, and so on. I was assigned to Panel A, and eventually we had three or four other young Foreign Service Officers—not in the same trouble that I was in, working under my supervision, reviewing these files. And we developed a form to permit the people serving on the panel to quickly get the jest of an officer's career from one form. I think I was given a \$75 performance award for that brilliant form. Somebody had a lot of courage to give me that money while I was still in dire straits with the security processes.

I'll come to the end of the story. This went on for about a year. It was something like 16 months after I'd entered the Foreign Service that I got a call from Cromwell Riches, who was the Executive Secretary of BEX, the Board of Foreign Service Examiners. He said, “Don, you've been through a hard time, I respect the fact that you stayed with this and didn't quit like a number of people did. What happened was that that interview, that question you put to Scott McLeod, prompted him right after that meeting to call - -I think it was Ben Brown, who went on to greater things, who, I think, had organized the meeting—he called Ben in immediately after our session broke up and he said, 'Who is that man? Give me his name.'” And that started it. It was because of that that I was grilled. Riches explained this to me, and he said, “Your entire security investigation had to be redone. We had to send people to Argentina again, to London again, everywhere you've been, and look over your career, and then bring your file back up for another vote.” And the vote was—I seem to remember—something like 6 to 3 in your favor. Riches told me that several Board members said, this is just the kind of independent thinking we need in the Foreign Service. Others said, this man should not be in the Foreign Service.” Riches said, “I told

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them that if you were rejected, I would resign from the Board. So now you can put all that behind you, the paperwork is in process, you will be appointed FSO-6, and you'll be back in the stream." So I got back in the stream roughly 18 months after all of my colleagues.

Q: What year was that? I think you mentioned it.

EASUM: That was the spring and summer of 1953 when it started, and in fact it was not until January of 1955 that it all got cleared up and I went to my first post, which was Managua.

Q: From then on you served in a number of posts in Latin America, and in Africa, but I think we could jump ahead, if you agree, to your tour as Ambassador in Upper Volta at which point, in a sense, commenced your association with Henry Kissinger and that leads us into the most interesting part of the story of your career. Why don't you begin with that, how Kissinger picked you up, and what happened to you at that point.

EASUM: This takes us to 1971, '72 and '73. I was appointed in early '71 as Ambassador to Ouagadougou, then it was Upper Volta and now it's Burkina Faso, a small and insignificant country in so many ways, in the Sahelian zone subject to incredible drought, incredible poverty, and all of the attendant difficulties. But we found it a very interesting post, partly because the personality of the Voltaic was gentle and friendly and interested. Partly also because we had a tremendous Peace Corps establishment there, 90 volunteers. And in those days we had no AID program at all. AID was regional, as opposed to bilateral, or country-specific, and we had virtually no AID program to play with. So the Peace Corps was really our presence, and in effect, I felt sometimes I was more the director of the Peace Corps than I was the Ambassador because that was really our lifestyle. I got to know virtually every volunteer; the alleged separation between the Peace Corps on the one hand, and the State Department on the other, meant absolutely nothing out there. And my relationships with the Peace Corps director was splendid.

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In the second year, it was '72, the drought hit all of the Sahelian zone of Africa—Sahelian meaning, border of the desert, just to the south of the desert. So that drought struck from Senegal on the west all the way across to Ethiopia—Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, on the east, and there was incredible starvation and hardship all through the area. The United States had the extreme good fortune of having available tremendous amounts of a very serviceable grain, sorghum. The sorghum which is fed in the US to livestock is extremely nutritious and not unlike the millet and sorghum that is commonly grown across the Sahelian zone of Africa. So some wise heads decided to see whether massive shipments of American sorghum might not serve to alleviate hardship, hold off starvation. And these deliveries began—50 kilo bags packed in plastic—began arriving at the various ports of West Africa and we all got to work figuring out how to get them from the ports into the interior where we were. Some of them came up from Ghana, many of them did by truck, others came in in other ways. Some came in by air, and we soon were in a position to put together a reasonable drought relief effort in those emergency circumstances.

One day when we were busy getting another shipment of this sorghum coming in, and trying to figure out how to assist the government to deliver it because roads had been broken by early rains, and the starving populations could no longer receive these shipments by road and truck—I got a message from somebody saying, “The American airplanes have arrived at the airport. You must go out.” I went out to the airport, which was about five minutes from downtown Ouagadougou, and here were two C-130s Hercules airplanes flown by—I thought Americans as I saw these fellows coming walking toward me in their green fatigues—it turned out they were Belgian pilots. The Belgian Minister of Economic Development, I guess it was, had just sort of sent these guys south, and said to them, “Go to Upper Volta. They'll need you there, and contact the Belgium ambassador.” Well, the Belgian ambassador lived in Abidjan, which was about 1500 miles away—the Ivory Coast, on the sea—and I was the next best. So they said, “What can we do? We're here.” I said, “Well, we can do something, I'm sure. We've got all this sorghum and we're trying to figure out how to deliver it. What can we figure out? Meanwhile I'm glad to let

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you use my cable facilities. We'll talk to your ambassador in Abidjan. We'll tell him you are here, and if he has any other instructions for you, fine. But there is a lot to be done here if we can figure out what to do.”

And I had been through one of these unique circumstances where a training program that is provided for you really pays off. I'd been in the so-called Senior Seminar, and we'd gone to Fort Bragg and we had seen C-130s flying low, dropping...called the LAPES technique, Low Altitude Parachute Ejection System. We'd seen stuff being slid out the back end of these C-130s as they would fly low over an airfield, and a parachute would pull the stuff out and it would land these pellets, skid along, and you'd have a delivery.

It happened that these planes had in them paratroopers, a paratroop brigade, not to jump, but to do other kinds of things, and these fellows said, “We're not trained in that, but that's an idea. We think maybe we could fly one of these planes back to Belgium and pick up a lot of extra parachutes that are outdated, and maybe we can figure out a way to tie those on pallets, if we can get pallets. We can put your bags of sorghum on the pallets, we can take them up, and drop them down and they will float down to the populations that need them.” We had no pallets. We figured out how to find some—I can't even remember now how we found the pallets—and we commenced loading these things with these brigades of paratroopers doing most of the work. And that worked quite well, until we ran out of parachutes and they couldn't get any more. They went back several times to get more [from Brussels].

So then we decided, why not try the LAPES system. Without parachutes maybe we can just fly over a field and drop the stuff out. We tried that right on the airfield in Ouagadougou, and I was then made, by the local government, the coordinator for all drought relief. So we had other governments involved, and we had, of course, some Voltaic who were working with us. And we found that pushing this stuff out, it would burst. We put it in jute sacks, and it still burst. And we kept experimenting with it until we found that if we wrapped it in three jute sacks, it would not burst. We could just push it out the

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back end of the plane. How rapid? Well, the GSO of the embassy devised a scheme for building a kind of a chute. We built five or six chutes, we got a lot of Peace Corps volunteers, and local Red Cross youngsters together. The government gave us a hangar. We went one Sunday morning and we just pushed out all the airplanes that were in the hangar, most of them belonging to French private citizens. I had the Minister of Interior with me, so I thought we could do this. So the Peace Corps volunteers were pushing these airplanes out in the sunshine, and the heat and the dust. We took over the hangar, and then our problem was jute bags because we'd sent an emissary down to the local market where I'd seen the tailors making these things. And the tailor, in fact, was the one who first came out and made the samples for us but, of course, we didn't have enough quantity. So we found that in Kumasi, in Ghana, which was about 400 miles away, there was a jute bag factory. We sent some trucks off to get big quantities. And first of all, we were tying these bags, using the volunteers, both Peace Corps and Red Cross, and wrapping wire around them and that became obviously onerous. And our assembly line just wasn't moving very fast, so the Belgium pilot said, "Oh, well, we'll just fly back to Brussels. We'll be back tomorrow, and we'll bring some little hand sewing machines that just go burr." And so they did.

And that worked really well. We found we could drop a lot of sorghum. I've forgotten what our figure was. It was something like, I think, 20,000 tons. That seems like a lot but one pallet, with ten of these bags, I think was a ton. At any rate, we dropped a lot and saved a lot of lives. And by that time in Chad, and in Mali, our system was being copied. One day we were out at the airport loading, and I'm out there trying to keep vigorous and young, and I'm pushing a pallet with a bunch of others onto a fork lift, which in turn then takes it into the belly of the C-130, and here comes David Ottaway, the correspondent of the Washington Post, who had arrived by highway. I didn't know he was coming, no problem, but he was just a surprise. He was somebody I'd known, and he walks out on the strip and says, "Hey Don, since when did you join the Peace Corps?" And he had a camera and took my picture, and he wrote a big story that appeared on the front page of the second

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section of the Washington Post, with a big picture, and the headlines saying, "You're seeing our shirtsleeve American Ambassador pushing sorghum," something like that. That story was the beginning of my demise, in a sense, and it was the beginning of my life with Henry because we're now mid-'73, the fall of '73. He is still the National Security Adviser for President Nixon at the White House, but he is about to be named Secretary of State. And it was, I think, in October of that year, '73, that he officially moved his office and came over to the State Department. He told me later, and we'll get to that, that he was looking for, he said, young, innovative, unorthodox, Foreign Service Officers. He felt the Foreign Service was filled with a bunch of effete intellectual non- hard hitting, non-pragmatic, idealistic, missionary zealots, for whatever causes, and he just had no patience with the Foreign Service, and he wanted to just run it himself with new type thinking. That was what was in his mind. He later told me that.

So in December of that year suddenly I got a message from the Secretary of State saying, "I want to see you in New York in my apartment at the Pierre Hotel, day after tomorrow." And that's where the other story begins. We can catch our breath here. You wanted to know about Ouagadougou. I've told you a little bit about Ouagadougou, and I didn't tell you about the softball games, and the fact that I was successful in keeping both the Marine Corps and the CIA out of Ouagadougou. I said I didn't need either one of them. I didn't need the Marines because the best thing they do is play softball and we had such good Peace Corps volunteers, and also some of the embassy, that we didn't need them.

Q: These were Marines as the standard security detail for the embassy?

EASUM: That's right. And I think I was right. Of course, we can't translate that to today. Today's security problem is indeed greater, and I've had good experience with Marine Guards, and did later in Nigeria where I was ambassador and we had mobs in the street and I was comforted by the fact that the Marines were there although I had to tell them not to throw the tear gas, and if they had, we'd been in deep trouble. So they were controllable, but they are a mixed blessing, and in Ouagadougou they would have gone

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crazy, especially when they would have found that they couldn't dominate the softball team. So we managed to have that little success, in addition to drought relief. And as far as a CIA presence was concerned, I didn't think they were necessary either and I succeeded in keeping them away, and every time we came back to Washington I did not get pressure on the Marines but I got a lot of pressure on the CIA. I'd be invited across the river to Langley, and they would give me a pleasant lunch, and I would be gently remonstrated for not appreciating the importance of CIA persons even in such a strange, out-of-the-way environment as Ouagadougou. They would tell me tall stories about how you can track a Soviet diplomat, who is lonely in a place like Ouagadougou, who has nothing to do except play volley ball, who has had to send his wife home because none of the Soviet wives can hack it in a place like that, and that's just the place where you can find, where our people can find—this is CIA talking to me—where our people can find weaknesses, bad habits, we can build a profile of some of these people who don't speak French, and certainly don't speak Djerma or any of the indigenous Voltaic languages. “ And later on, Mr. Ambassador, you should realize that they are useful to all of us. You may say you don't need them, but we as a country find that tracking our Soviet colleagues is very useful to us in the long run. And who knows, somebody we could identify in Ouagadougou may someday become a key adviser in the Soviet military establishment, and can tell us things that we really need to know.” At any rate, that's Ouagadougou, and that represents the beginning of my life with Henry when I went back to the Pierre Hotel and then had my first conversation with him.

Q: Why don't we break there while I change the tape, and you can start with a fresh tape on the other side.

So, we have you coming back from Ouagadougou to begin your association with Henry Kissinger, and your first talk, I guess, at the Pierre Hotel in New York.

EASUM: That's the first stop, and I was nervous. I wasn't nervous when I had that SY interview that I told you about 21 years earlier. But I was surely nervous this time. His suite

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was up on—I don't know which floor—and I went up there, and he received me in a very obviously elite setting, and I think he offered me a drink, or coffee, or something. And I sat down in a soft chair, and he was seated in another one, and before we really got started in comes this little black Pekinese, scrambling all over and jumping up and down on me and on him, and I couldn't concentrate on what was happening. Then I think it was his mother who came in, who was charming, and he introduced her and that was pleasant, and she left, and we were just about ready to start when his wife came in from a shopping tour, and there was conversation about that. And eventually he had me unencumbered, so to speak, and he asked me a little bit about what I was doing in Ouagadougou, but all in a sort of typically Kissingerian way, as if to say what are you doing out there (machine noise) for the United States, but not hostile, just making sure he was in charge of the interview.

And then he said, “You know I want to do some new things. Some innovative things, and I'm beginning to get my team in order—by the way, how old are you?” And I said, “I'm your age, Mr. Secretary,” which was then 50 for both of us. And he asked a little bit about Africa, but relatively little. And then he said, “Well, look, I have several jobs to fill. I'm looking for an Executive Secretary to run the Executive Secretariat. I'm looking for a new head of INR, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. I'm looking for an Assistant Secretary for Latin America, and an Assistant Secretary for Africa.” What else did he need? There were 4 or 5, maybe 6 or 7, I've forgotten the others. And he said, “You've mentioned to me someone who might be qualified for one of these posts, and I'd like you to give me your views.” Well, that was all pretty sudden. I realized that only one of those assignments filled my experience, and that would be the Executive Secretary assignment. You and I, Pete, have both been in that routine— you, I think, at a higher level of eminence than I. But no matter where you are in the Secretariat, I think that you learn it well, do it well, and have a feeling of respect for what that job entails. I had always liked that work once I got to the point where I understood what I was doing, and I had then moved across to be the Executive Secretary of AID, Deputy first for a year, and then the Executive Secretary of AID. First under Fowler Hamilton, and then under David Bell. So I'd had some

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experience that was relevant. But I said, “Mr. Secretary, I don't want to do that. I think maybe I could do a passable job, but I don't want to do it. It just doesn't suit my thinking about what I want to do in the Foreign Service, and I think you'll find other people who will be able to do it just as well, and probably a lot better. The Latin American job, I'm flattered that you would think of me for that, but I wouldn't do that well enough. I've had only one tour in Latin America, I did a Ph.D. in Buenos Aires, and I was Staff Director of the Inter-Departmental Group for Latin American Affairs, but [the Assistant Secretary position needs] somebody who knows a lot more about Latin America than I do. So I would say 'no' to that. The Intelligence and Research job—I'm not, I think, cut out for that. The only job I think that I might like to do, that I would be willing maybe to take a stab at, if you really want me, would be the African Assistant Secretary position.” And he said, “What's your experience in Africa?” And I explained to him that it was limited to West Africa—first it was Senegal which also took me to Gambia, and to Portuguese Guinea—what was then called Portuguese Guinea. For me it was a fascinating assignment, it was an assignment to three different colonial areas, three different European language areas of Africa, but it was limited in so many ways. Then I'd had two years as Deputy Chief of Mission in Niamey, Niger, which is the Sahel again. And then two years as Ambassador in Ouagadougou. That's a pretty limited experience for somebody whose being asked to be an Assistant Secretary of State. And I said this to him. I said, “I know nothing about North Africa. I've no Arabic. I don't know anything about The Horn of Africa, East and southern Africa I, of course, know what's going on as any Ambassador should wherever he is in Africa, but I can't tell you you'd be getting anybody with any particular expertise in those areas.” He said, “All right. Go on back to whatever that place is—Ouagadougou—and I'll call you if I need you.”

So I hustled out of there, and felt, “Wow, I got through that without any disasters and clearly he's not going to ask me to do anything, so I'm home safe.” And I went back to Ouagadougou. In about three weeks, maybe later, I got another message saying, “I want to see you in my office day after tomorrow.” And now he was in the State Department. He

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was in his own office, the new office. And I went back to Washington on time and then I sat around cooling my heels in the African Bureau for four or five days until Larry Eagleburger called me. Larry was...what was he? Special Assistant, wasn't he? Senior Executive Assistant to the Secretary, I think. And Larry said, "Don, the Secretary wants you to go see Brent Scowcroft at the White House." Scowcroft has always been close to Kissinger, was close then, the two of them had worked very closely together in the White House. So I guess I made the appointment myself, and I went over there to the Executive Office Building, and I saw Scowcroft, and I liked him, and we had a good talk about Africa, other things. I was candid again about what I didn't know about the continent. But Scowcroft apparently got an upbeat view of me, and reported back to Kissinger. At any rate I got a call from Larry telling me the Secretary wanted me for the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. I didn't see Kissinger. I said, "All right, I'll do my best. When should I report back for duty?" I don't remember quite what Larry said, but in effect I think he said, "Well, you go on back to post, clear the post as well as you can, and as soon as you can, and come on back and we'll start the new job."

I often thought afterwards that I made a really big error in not somehow insisting that I see Kissinger then, and ask him what he thought of our policy toward Africa. How did he want to approach the continent? What were his ideas on apartheid, and decolonialization, the continuation of Portuguese rule, the problems of economic development, the problems of national unity? What is the US national interest in Africa? The role of the Soviets? All those kinds of things that later, of course, I was dealing with all the time. I never knew anything about what he felt about Africa. I'd been, in a sense, too frightened and too put off by the bizarre interview at the Pierre Hotel to ask him any decent questions. And he didn't ask me anything very serious there. That was a just a kind of get acquainted session, I figured. And the second time, I should have probably pushed Scowcroft because I know he'd have spoken to me wisely, and intelligently. We could have had a serious conversation. I didn't do that, I guess, because I felt probably I'd be invited and have a meeting with Kissinger. And when I wasn't invited, maybe I should have insisted. At any rate, I didn't.

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I went back to Ouagadougou, cleared the post in a sensible way, and I came back—it must have been February or March of 1974—started work right away, although I was not yet confirmed. So in a sense I was not there, I was a non-person, but I was reading, and I was talking with all the members of the Bureau. I think it was Tony Ross—Claude Ross—who was Acting prior to my taking over officially, and he had taken over from David Newsom who, I think, was being sent out to be Ambassador in Indonesia. So there was an inter-regnum there during a certain time when we had the deputies in place from David's bureau, and Tony, the senior of them, was the Acting Assistant Secretary. And he was going to the staff meetings, and I was not because I wasn't yet confirmed. Eventually, when I was confirmed, I think it was Eagleburger who said, "The Secretary is sure glad to get Tony Ross out of his hair. He doesn't want to see Tony Ross come up here anymore." Now Tony Ross, with whom I just spoke today, is a wonderful Foreign Service Officer. And typical of the way Kissinger approaches the people relationships with which he has to deal—for some reason, he just didn't like this man. He thought Tony was the quintessential, careful, clipped speech, stripe pants, Foreign Service Officer. I think he felt Tony wasn't decisive enough—that when he asked Tony a question, Tony would try to explain the pros and the cons, and the various options, and for whatever reason, Kissinger didn't want that. He was impatient. He wanted to have an answer and not a series of comments. And I never told Tony that. If he listens to this tape, he'll hear it for the first time. I've never told him what Kissinger apparently thought of him, although maybe Tony knows it directly, for all I know.

Q: I suspect another reason he didn't care for Tony was that Tony came to talk about Africa.

EASUM: That's probably true, definitely true. And David Newsom had told me essentially this. David was marvelous, and is marvelous. He wrote up a briefing book for me himself. He typed it himself. He's an old journalist and he still has the habit of sitting down at a...well, I don't know whether he still uses a mechanical typewriter, but he did then, and

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he pounds away at a great rate, and it's absolutely pure gold stuff. And he did this briefing book for me and I remember one line in it. It said, in effect, that Kissinger wants to make you think, make all of us think, that he thought of everything before you did. And if you take something to him new, be sure to be ready for the game he's going to play so that he eventually gives it back to you as his, and not as yours. And he also had something to say about the overriding concern of this man for the east-west prism through which he, Kissinger, would view developing world problems.

So that takes us maybe, Peter, to April when I'm in my first or second official staff meeting and I'm hearing Kissinger talk to Bob McCloskey, who was Assistant Secretary, I think, for Public Affairs at that point, about the position papers being prepared for the expected renegotiation of the Azores bases. Those bases, in the control of Portugal, had been leased to us for our use and they had been incredibly useful to our airplanes and military forces in staging materiel and equipment moving into the Middle East in the early '70s. And the lease was up for renegotiation. Nixon had been in Lisbon, had talked with the Portuguese government, and had apparently—and we're getting this from Kissinger as he's talking to us—had apparently let the Portuguese believe that we would be very forthcoming in these negotiations because we needed those bases, and we didn't want to have to hassle, we didn't want to run the risk that we couldn't continue to use them, and we were prepared to be generous.

And one day, for reasons that I didn't fully understand because I wasn't involved in preparing these position papers, Kissinger became very angry, and said, in effect, "You guys don't realize that the President of the United States has taken a position on this. Do I have to be more clear? These position papers you're doing are simply not sufficiently forthcoming." I didn't know what it meant. A few days—maybe a week or two after that—I got a call from Wil De Pree, a wonderful Africanist, who subsequently became Ambassador to Mozambique and he's done important things in M, in Management, and I think he's now Ambassador in Pakistan—maybe not Pakistan- -but he has an important position. Wil was then in the Policy Planning Office, I think it was called SP,

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as an Africanist, and he called me and said, “Don, I've got to tell you something, but I shouldn't, but I will because we're friends and because I think it's important that you know this. You've heard these things Kissinger has been saying in the staff meeting about how we ought to be forthcoming to the Portuguese. Let me tell you how forthcoming we're going to be. We're going to provide them with sophisticated ground-to-air missiles, and with jet aircraft. And not only are we going to provide them, but we're going to permit the Portuguese to say so publicly and that they are receiving these for use in Africa.”

Well, up until that time any military assistance given to European countries...it was firmly agreed between them and us the military equipment could not be used south of a certain line that went...I don't know where, across Gibraltar or some place. You could certainly not use it against the PAIGC in Guinea Bissau, against the MPLA in Angola, against Frelimo in Mozambique. In other words he was saying, “You can now use our military equipment to bomb villages in Africa in support of your campaign to stay in Africa.” At this particular time, in those three countries, the African independence movements probably controlled anywhere from 40 to 60% of the territory. There were 30,000 Portuguese army troops in Guinea Bissau alone, and that is a tiny little country just south of Senegal where there is no Portuguese national interest other than pride at stake, and no national interest on the part of the United States, or France, or anybody else. It's just a little independent struggling country—and in those days, it was still under the Portuguese control. It meant very little for Portugal except as part of the empire that they didn't want to release. It had been clear to me eight years earlier in my tour in Dakar, that the US was probably permitting the use of F-86s in Guinea Bissau. It was denied forthrightly by the United States, and by Portugal, but I managed in '64, in December, to sneak in there and spend a week, and I saw these airplanes on the airstrip, and I took pictures of them. And I sent those pictures to Washington, and I see now secret traffic that's no longer secret, top secret stuff as well, from McNamara to Kennedy, and others who were involved, that indicate clearly that my pictures produced a message from the State Department to Portugal saying, “We know you've got our planes down there. Get them out. And if you don't, our MAP program, our

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Military Assistance Program, is going to be jeopardized.” So that did happen. They did get them out. I went back a year later and I didn't see them anywhere.

So here was this issue again coming up eleven years later with Kissinger saying, “All right, we're going to let you, our Portuguese friends, use our jet aircraft against blacks in Africa, and indeed, we're going to let you even say so publicly.” And Wil De Pree is saying to me, “Don, you and your buddies in the African Bureau have a real problem on your hands.” And he said, “A lot of us share what we know is your concern as well.” Well! I didn't know what to do about that. That was a real bummer for me just starting as the Assistant Secretary of State, and having to foresee this kind of a huge horrible problem facing me.

The word began to move around a little bit in the course of the coming weeks and there were vigils that were being threatened. There were people saying, “We're going to walk around the corridors of the State Department with candles if indeed this happens.” It was still very secret. Nobody knew. Charlie Diggs, who was chairman of the House Subcommittee for Africa, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State which did not get replied to forthrightly at all, which said, “I hear rumors that you're going to permit the Portuguese to use our jet aircraft against black Africans.”

I decided that I couldn't just sit still on this anymore, so I sent a memorandum to the Secretary...saying, in effect—I don't remember what I said, but I know what I wanted to achieve- -saying...I couldn't admit that I knew what was happening because Wil De Pree had sworn me to silence...I probably simply said, “There may well be implications for our relationships with Africa growing out of the Azores base negotiations.” And, of course, I had heard about the negotiations in the staff meetings, but I never heard any specifics about aircraft or missiles. I believe I said in this memo, “The African Bureau ought to contribute to the formation of the papers at least in indicating the African dimension of the US-Portuguese issue,” something fuzzy like that. With Larry Eagleburger I was able to be a little franker. He and I are both from Wisconsin, and I always felt that I could trust him

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in a circumstance like this. And I think I must have said, “Larry, there's something going on, I know what it is, I'm not going to articulate it, but there's some major implications in these base negotiations for our relationships with black Africa, and you've got to let me in on this. You've got to cut your African Bureau in. That's what we're here for.” And he kept saying, “Don, the Secretary won't permit it.” I kept after him, and one night at six or seven, I get a call from Larry and he said, “Don, you've made it. The Secretary has said that he will entertain from you a memorandum on the African implications of our position on the Portuguese renegotiations. But, and listen to this Don, he doesn't want you to talk to anybody. You're not to consult anybody in your Bureau. You're not even to let your secretary type your memorandum. You do this all by yourself.” And I thought to myself, “What kind of a bizarre place is this?” Because obviously we had superb Foreign Service talent in our Bureau, in the African Bureau, people who knew a lot more about all of this than I did. And obviously I wanted to use them in building up my concerns for the Secretary. But anyway, as a disciplined Foreign Service Officer, I did what I was told. I didn't tell anybody, and I sat there at night, and on my own typewriter, in two or three days, pounded out a list of some—I think there were 18 or 19...I made it short—repercussions, or implications, in Africa, that would affect the United States if these negotiations went through on this position. And I sent that to the Secretary. I carried it up myself. I probably gave it to Larry—I don't remember—and very shortly after that, several days after that in a staff meeting, typical of the way Kissinger dealt with me...he used to say, when I'd come into those meetings, “Well, here comes Mr. Guinea Bissau. Easum, what revolution are you running today in those jungles?” It was almost precisely the kind of thing he would say.

Q: I remember when I was in Middle East affairs dealing with him, I would walk in—I was working a lot on Arab-Israel at the time—and he would say, “Well, here comes the PLO representative.” And on one occasion he said that to the Israeli Ambassador who was in the room. And the Israeli Ambassador was quite embarrassed because he knew me, and he began to explain to Kissinger that I wasn't at all the PLO point of view. I was a good friend of Israel. But that's typical of Kissinger.

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EASUM: I think a lot of us have had experiences like that with him. And after we got to know him, we knew how to interpret that kind of humor. But you're quite right. Many times the foreign diplomats with him were stunned, and never really understood his humor. I know you shared this. We never appreciated how he would denigrate the Foreign Service in front of foreigners, or in front of other Americans who weren't in the Foreign Service.

Well, at any rate, I did what I thought I had to do. I took the memorandum to him, and a few days later, after going through some of his jocular fun poking at me, he said, "Easum has come up with a list of enormous profundity..."—he used to have a phrase something like that which was a way of poking fun at anything anybody ever did for him. He said, "Easum has prepared this toast of incredible profundity. He knows I never use his toasts." And then he would go off on his own. I mean, how does that make you feel when you're sitting there in front of, let's say, the whole African diplomatic corps? So anyway, he said, "Easum, why don't you tell everybody here all of these dire consequences that you foresee?" Well, of course, I didn't have my memorandum in front of me, but that didn't matter. I remembered it pretty well. So I started mentioning some of them, and when I came to the statement that the Peace Corps will be thrown out of six countries, and I estimated which countries they would be, Kissinger said, "And you're telling me that's bad?" That's just an example.

It was no more than two or three days after that, that a wonderful event happened in Lisbon. It was the revolution, April 15th, or 13th, 1975 [actually the 25th?]. And, of course, part of the basis of the revolution was that the communist cadre, that pushed that revolution, were absolutely fed to the teeth with the war in Africa. It was milking the Portuguese treasury. I think it was something like 30 or 40% of the Portuguese budget was going into maintaining this war. And the army was disaffected because they felt this was the craziest thing they'd ever been asked to do. And I had a little insight on that when I went into Bissau the first time— into Guinea Bissau. I was flown out to a detachment of Portuguese soldiers and they had about 20 tents there, two or three jeeps, and they had

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their water purification equipment, and these guys were so miserable. It was in this sort of thorny scrub country that is no fun at all. A lot of Africa is just tremendous fun, but that thorny scrub stuff is a little bit arduous, especially if you're a soldier. And the group was commanded by a lieutenant named Azevedo, and I didn't speak very good Portuguese, so we spoke in French. And he said that he had been a medical student at the University of Coimbra, he was gung-ho to get his medical degree, and suddenly he had been impressed into the army. And here he was sitting out in this horrible place. He said, "You know, we don't know what we're doing here. This is sheer idiocy. We're being given these rifles, and we're supposed to train these Guineans in how to shoot. And they're supposed to be protecting this border, and protecting us against invasion from other Guineans of the same tribe who are just across the border, and who are fighting for the rebels." He said, "We don't know one Guinean from another, and we're afraid they're going to shoot us, and not their brothers." "In fact," he said, "that might make more sense if they did that. And we don't want to be here at all." Now that was in 1964, and here we are now in 1975, eleven years afterwards, and these poor bastards have still been out there in the jungle fighting for FRELIMO and the PAIGC, and the MPLA. Really idiocy.

So that's really the end of that story. The Azores base negotiations were postponed. There was no deal made at all. The discussion of providing—obviously providing jet aircraft to the Portuguese to fight in Africa, forget it, because the Portuguese were forgetting they're fighting Africa themselves. They were pulling out.

But that taught me an incredible lesson. That was the beginning of my real life with Kissinger, which lasted just about one year. That beginning was very dusty, and it should have told me that the remainder of the year would be equally dusty, as it was.

There's another amusing story about this. In early April, or end of March, I was finally approved by the Senate. I'd gone up there and testified, and that went well. And then you have the usual ceremony on the seventh floor of the State Department, the swearing-in ceremony. And Kissinger didn't—I don't know why he did—he was there. I'm not sure

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why he was there. There was a tremendous turnout of Africans for that ceremony. I've always thought partly because they knew me, and I think they felt they were getting a friend in this position. Also, they were very antipathetic to Kissinger because it was then public in the press that he had written the famous National Security memorandum No. 39 for Nixon. In the preceding months it had been leaked to the press. It was a policy memo on policy toward Africa. It said, "White minority rule is here to stay." And it also said, "No permanent change will be produced by violence." Those two lines stood out in a lot of the press commentary, and many Americans were turned off by this, and there were a lot of groups pushing for a far different kind of approach to the independence movements in Africa, primarily those in Portuguese speaking Africa. There was a lot of sentiment against the way in which the Nixon administration had been handling its approach to those issues. And, of course, as we know, the problem of Rhodesia was then very much up front. And many Americans believed that the US was inadequately responsive to the demands of the black majority in Rhodesia. They felt that we were not sufficiently responsive to United Nations calls for sanctions against Rhodesia—that we were, in effect, in bed with the Pretoria government in South Africa. So that was the spirit of the times. But for whatever reason, there was a tremendous group of Africans there, and Kissinger played his role as usual. I had a beard at that point, and he made a little speech introducing me saying, "For the first time since 1862 we have a bearded Assistant Secretary, and I'm pleased to swear him in."

We were talking about the swearing in ceremony and Kissinger introducing me as a bearded Assistant Secretary, and so when I got my chance I said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm going to give you the real reason for this beard. I haven't given it ever before, and this, I think, is the appropriate moment. I grew this beard to cover an old dueling scar." I was told later, when he fired me, it was clear to a lot of my friends he would eventually have to because of that interchange.

At any rate, it was after that that we had this problem of the Portuguese, and the airplanes, and from then on it was one problem after another. Why were these problems confronting

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me this way? I think the real issue was that Kissinger didn't understand Africa, or Africans, and didn't want to, and didn't want to be bothered, and thought that somehow I could just keep everything quiet, and wouldn't bug him. But the issues were of sufficient importance, I felt, over the ensuing year that I had to try to get his attention. And by my so doing he became impatient, and annoyed, because to his credit he didn't like to take anybody else's guidance. He always liked to feel he understood exactly what he was doing. And he didn't want to do anything if he didn't feel he understood, and he didn't have time to understand, to take me as a mentor, because he was in the Middle East, and he was all over the place doing things that probably were much more important. But I kept pushing, and let me give you an example.

He had a system—I mean, in a way he asked for this. He had a system called 'the big brother reports'. Do you remember that? Was that something that you all had to do?

Q: I don't remember the name, no.

EASUM: 'The big brother report' was a nightly, one page memo, that SS, the Secretariat, required of all Assistant Secretaries and above, including the Deputy Secretary of State, including Joe Sisco who was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. All of us from the Assistant Secretary level up had to get this report up to the Secretary's office by 6:30 every night. And if the Secretary was traveling, it didn't matter. The Secretariat would put these things into telegraphic form and the Secretary, wherever he was, would get these 'big brother reports' every 24 hours whether he was in Mexico, or Southeast Asia, or Moscow, or on an airplane, or wherever. And you couldn't tell him what your Bureau did. He also didn't want to know what had happened that was important in your area. For example, we could have a coup in Kenya. He didn't want to know that. He wanted to know, "Easum, what did you do for me today." It had to be purely personal. I couldn't say, "One of our officers testified on the Hill on the question of sanctions against Rhodesia." No, no. If I had testified on the Hill, fine, but he didn't want to hear about anybody else.

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And one day Eagleburger, in a staff meeting or something while Kissinger, I think was gone, said to me—no, it was Joe Sisco. He said, “Don, I've got to tell you something. You would not believe how carefully the Secretary reads what you send him every night.” I think that was because he was becoming increasingly frightened. It wasn't because he was becoming increasingly interested in Africa. It was because Africa was beginning to scare him, and his African Bureau, he began to think, was headed by—he used the term—a missionary zealot who was out there leading troops in the jungles, and tilting with official policy. I think he began to feel that way.

So at any rate, the first real issue we had in that regard was testimony that he presented on the Hill with regard to sanctions against Rhodesia. President Johnson had signed an Executive Order that made it US law to apply those sanctions. That meant that we could not trade with Rhodesia. We had to stop chromium imports—oh, no, that was the exception, that's right. But we couldn't bring tobacco to this country. We couldn't ship things. We couldn't accompany...a travel agent could not advertise a tour to the Rhodesian waterfalls because that meant supporting the economy of Rhodesia. It was pretty tough stuff.

At about this time President Bongo of Gabon put forward a request to the US to buy a couple of US airplanes, cargo airplanes. That request came through our Bureau. I don't remember whether it was munitions control, or some other people who had to pass on that. But at just the time that Bongo told us he wanted to buy some airplanes, it had become apparent that an American soldier of fortune with a small aircraft charter company established in Gabon was running a leased DC-3 back and forth between Gabon and Rhodesia carrying...I don't know what into Rhodesia, but bringing back Rhodesian beef and Rhodesian wine and peddling it in Gabon. And we had some very activist officers, one wonderful young woman named Alison Palmer, who I think since become an Episcopal priest—bishop, or whatever. She was my Gabonese desk officer, and she was all over the place with her concerns that the US in effect, was sitting back and permitting this

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American company to violate sanctions. The company happened to be based in Gabon, but that didn't matter from Alison's point of view. She probably was quite right. And she was actually active out on the street in getting petitions moving, and talking to the press, but quite in line with US policy. Kissinger became aware that there were these kinds of firebands working for Easum. And when Bongo asked to buy airplanes we decided, in the African Bureau, that we had a real problem on our hands—selling him those planes, that if he at the same time was consenting to some sanction busting by American planes based in his country. And then we began to learn he was involved with that operation too, because he wanted the beef, and he wanted the wines, so we decided we couldn't do this. And we, of course, consulted legal advice and L, the Legal Office, or our Bureau's part of the Legal Office, said, “You're quite right. You've got to be very careful about selling those airplanes because none of us trust Bongo as to what he's going to do with them.” So I got involved with communicating with President Bongo, saying to him...I developed some kind of a scheme. I developed with Alison very elaborate language that we thought we could hold him to, and we obliged him to write to the President of the United States, the White House, and virtually promise that if we sold him these airplanes, they would be used for his own personal transport use, or they would be used for Air Gabon or whatever, but they, of course, wouldn't be used for anything as naughty as flying in and out of Rhodesia.

Kissinger couldn't understand this. He said, in effect, “If that bloody president wants to buy our airplanes, sell them. What's all this mess? This African Bureau is spending all this time on this crazy stupid issue.” And about that time he went up on the Hill to testify on something. And in the testimony he was asked his view of sanctions against Rhodesia. And he said, in effect, “I don't believe in sanctions.” Now, when we got the text from Congress—as you know you get those, you've had them many times, and people have reviewed what you've said up there. You get them in double or triple space, and your staff is permitted—the staff of the person who did the testimony—is permitted to go through them, make sure that the language is clear, and you can amend within certain limits. You can change the testimony a little bit if you don't completely alter the sense of it.

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In a staff meeting Kissinger had talked about his testimony on the Hill and asked for comments, and I said, “Mr. Secretary, when you spoke about sanctions against Rhodesia, you're leaving yourself open to some pretty heavy weather because the way what you said will be interpreted is, that you don't accept the US law on this. And if you permit us to, we're in the process of modifying that language for your review.” Well, the staff meeting went on, and I got back to my office and the minute I got back the phone was ringing, and it was Joe Sisco saying, “Get up here right away.” So I got up to Joe Sisco's office—he doesn't even ask me to sit down—I virtually get just inside the door, and he says, “Don't you ever criticize this Secretary of State—don't you ever tell him he made a mistake in front of other people.”

This was the spirit. This was the environment, and if you're kind of a soft-skinned person who likes to have fun with people, and doesn't like confrontation, as I am, that effects your work habits. It effects your efficiency. I tried to make sure it didn't affect my relationships with my staff. Every time I had one of these experiences, and there were lots of them, and every time I came back from a staff meeting with him, we would have our own staff meeting—our entire Bureau, though not everybody, I mean we couldn't get them all in our conference room. But we had 20 or 30 of our people, and instead of dumping on them the same kind of stuff that I got dumped on me, or like Sisco, he gets dumped on by Kissinger, so he dumps on somebody else, I didn't. I said, “Hey, here's how I suffered today. Now how are we going to work our way around this one?” And I think the Bureau respected that. And, of course, that was my only defense. I could never get anywhere by pounding on those wonderful people. We just had to take all this together. This was our Secretary of State and we had to somehow make the best of it.

So that was the kind of difficult circumstance that I dealt with, not really understanding why it was that he didn't want to hear these things. Why it was that he seemed so uninterested, and above all, why it was that he wasn't looking at Southern Africa, and saying to himself, as we were, “Things are now happening there very fast. Angola is now independent.

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Mozambique is now independent. That means (we all knew this, but we had a hard time telling him) that means that the nationalists in Rhodesia have access, not just to Zambia, but now on the other side they have access to Mozambique, they can go across that border, they can pick up support whereas before they couldn't because it was Portuguese. This means that Smith's days are numbered, and if his days are numbered, what's that going to mean for South Africa?" And we felt that Kissinger surely understood South Africa. In fact, there's been a lot of suspicion all along the line that he had friends and connections, and that he permitted certain information to flow independently of official State Department channels to Vorster. I don't know this for a fact, but when the South Africans invaded Angola massively in what I think was called the Proteus invasion in October of 1975, there are many people who believe that he let—was it then Botha? He let Botha know through business contacts, or whatever, that Botha would be supported if he did that. And when Botha didn't get that kind of US military support, Botha was downcast, and said he'd been betrayed by the Americans. And many of us think that Kissinger, for whatever reason, couldn't follow through on pledges he had made.

At any rate, we couldn't understand why he wasn't interested in this. I decided that whole Southern African scene was so important, and I also knew that I knew so little about it, that near the end of that year, in October of '74, I had to get out there. I'd been to Africa several times during this eight months in office, but not to the south or the east. I'd been twice to West Africa. I still didn't really well understand what was going on in the southern area, and obviously that's the place where the US national interest was most at stake, and where we felt that Kissinger would be most interested.

So I planned a trip there. I informed the seventh floor, as we were supposed to, and the night before I was to leave— well, I planned a trip that would take me to Lusaka; and in October I'd been invited personally by the President—President Kaunda—for the tenth anniversary of Zambian independence. And I had figured out a way of having a subregional Chief of Mission meeting. We brought in seven, or eight, or nine of our Ambassadors and Charges from that area to Lusaka and we met for four days. I explained

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in a memorandum to the seventh floor what I was going to do, and the night before I left, Joe Sisco called me and said, "Don, what's this trip you're going on?" And I said, "It's a trip to Southern Africa. I'm invited by Kaunda, and we're going to link a Chief of Mission meeting with that, and then I'm going to visit the capitals of six or seven countries, and I'm going to finish off in South Africa." And he said, "Does the Secretary know about this?" And I said, "Joe, I don't know. I followed the rules. I sent you up my..." And then he said, "Did you send us your concept memo..."—that's not quite what it's called. Maybe you can remember? There's a memorandum that an Assistant Secretary has to send up—it's got a name on it—if you're going on a trip, you have to let the big guys know what your objectives are, and how you will achieve those objectives, etc. I had sent that. I said, "Joe, yes, I sent that." He said, "I didn't see any memo like that. Does Kissinger know?" And I said, "I don't know whether he saw that memo. but I think I mentioned it in a staff meeting." And he hung up, but I felt he was in a quandary. He realized that I probably, by going out there, was putting him on the spot. He probably knew that three or four days later, or who knows, two or three weeks later, Kissinger was going to say, "What in the hell is Easum doing out there? Get him back." So I went.

And sure enough, I had an absolutely fascinating trip. I went to see Samora Machel in Dar es Salaam. He'd not yet moved south to the newly independent Mozambique, but he had a cabinet in place that was allegedly supervised by a Portuguese admiral who was head of a transitional government, but the current president of Mozambique, Chissano, was in charge of Samora Machel's government there. Machel authorized me to go to Mozambique, and I spent a morning there with the cabinet, and proposed to them a new approach toward our relationship with Mozambique which up to that point had been terrible because they were viewed as Marxists and communists, and they were fighting our Portuguese allies and so on. Samora Machel had said to me, "I'm prepared to let bygones be bygones, if you are." And I said, "I can only speak for my Bureau, and my colleagues, but we are." He said, "Okay. Go to Maputo and see what you can work out." And I worked out a scheme for a study team that would come out to look at the development needs of

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Mozambique, and there was already \$5 million dollars of Congressional money that Teddy Kennedy got into the legislation, and we would try to start a modest AID program.

I was in Angola, and Zaire, and I saw Holden Roberto, and I saw the people of UNITA, and I saw Neto. I saw the whole panoply of groups there, and, of course, I saw Nyerere, and I saw Seretse Khama in Botswana, and I saw Kaunda. I saw all the presidents and heads of state in the region, and then I went on to South Africa and I saw Vorster. There was a lot of press all over Africa, and quite a bit in the United States, about that trip. Africans were saying, "Is Easum bringing the long awaited new policy of the US government now that Secretary Kissinger is the Secretary of State? At last are we going to see something different?" And they really hung on the things I said when they would ask me questions like, "What is your new policy towards South Africa?" And I would have to say, "I have no new policy at all, I'm simply here to learn." And they'd say, "Well, what do you think of apartheid?" And I would say, in effect, "I think it stinks." And I was quoted in the Dar es Salaam airport as saying, "One man, one vote, as being my own personal feeling—that that's the way one ought to move."

And I went to South Africa, and I saw Vorster, and there were big headlines such as, 'S.A. must change.' That's one particular one I recall. And after that week in South Africa, I went to Gaborone in Botswana, and I telephoned Ed Mulcahy, who was acting in my absence, and said, "Ed, I'm on my way back now." And he said, "Well, it's about time buddy, you're going to have an interesting time when you get here. The knives are out."

So I got back in November, or maybe it was December, of '74, and Ed had said on the phone, "You're getting back on a Sunday, we're all going to be at the office. Come on in to the office before you see anybody else." So I went into the office, and there were six or seven of my colleagues and they said, "Don, we think, based on the scuttlebutt, that you're going to be moved and there's going to be some other changes." And indeed there were.

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It wasn't the Secretary who called me, it was Ingersoll, who was Number Two, his Deputy. Right? And he put it very nicely, and it's very interesting. I'm not sure— I've never discussed this with Mr. Kissinger, and I have no desire to do it—but I wonder how he would respond to my interpretation of the reasons behind what I was told he wanted to do. Here's what he said. Ingersoll said, "There are some personnel changes that the Secretary thinks he should make. He wants to bring John Reinhardt—Ambassador to Nigeria—he wants to bring John back and make him Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. Right now, in that job, is Carol Laise, who was Ambassador to Pakistan, I think?"

Q: I think it was Nepal.

EASUM: Ingersoll said, "He's going to appoint Carol as Director General of the Foreign Service. In that job now is Nathaniel Davis, and he's going to put Nathaniel Davis in your job, and he's going to send you to Nigeria because you've always been talking to him about how important that country is." Now this was something I'm sure that Kissinger cooked up. I'm sure he had some help, but I think the concepts were his. The motivations were his, and he asked Dean Brown, and Larry Eagleburger, and others, to work it out. What were the motivations? Number one, and I think the most important probably in his mind was, "get Easum out of here." He had called Dean Brown in, Dean told me this, after I'd had a press conference or something, and he said to Dean, "Dean, get that son of a bitch out of here."

Q: Dean was Director General of the Foreign Service at that time?

EASUM: That's right, unless he was the Under Secretary for Administration. But I think you're right. This was '74 now. Dean told me that story after he'd left the Service.

So, that was one, get Easum out of here. He's a trouble maker, he's got all those missionaries there working with him, and he wouldn't recognize the US national interest if it came around the corner and hit him in the face, he wouldn't know what the US

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national interest was. He's always hobnobbing with his black friends. I have a feeling that was the main thing. But he had some other major concerns. He had been widely criticized by women as being chauvinist, and he'd been widely criticized by minorities as being insufficiently attentive to the concern of minorities for a stronger role in the State Department's high positions. So he brings Reinhardt back, and makes him Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, obviously a very visible position, and one that made a lot of sense given John's tremendous abilities. And as you know, John later went on to become Director of USIA, so that appointment made a lot of sense.

Nathaniel Davis, he couldn't stand. I had seen poor Nat suffering in staff meetings almost as badly as I suffered. Nat is in a sense—I don't think any of the people I'm mentioning would mind this—he's in a sense like Tony Ross. He's polite, he's bright, he's smart, he's intellectual, he's super careful, cautious, and goes a little slowly, and Kissinger just lost patience with him time and time again. And, of course, Kissinger didn't want to know about all the labyrinthine problems of Foreign Service administration, and personnel policies.

Q: Actually I think Nat was the Director General at that time, and I think you're right about Brown.

EASUM: Of course, that's right.

Q: Brown was administration.

EASUM: That's right. Oh, I didn't tell you about Carol. Okay, he puts Davis in my spot because he feels, I think, he can keep Davis quiet. Davis is very different from Easum. Kissinger is saying to himself, "And I get Easum out of here, and we'll see how we work out with Nat." By clearing that slot of Director General, he found a wonderful place for Carol Laise because he could move a woman up to that terrifically important position. These are genius type moves, and it's like his brightness to pull something like that off. And so, of course, I took it, and off I go. But the press landed on it, and the Africans landed

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on it, because they didn't like Nat Davis. He'd been Ambassador to Chile. He didn't know Africa. He didn't speak French, and they saw him as an inadequately experienced person.

Q: Well, they also saw you as an adequate person having been canned, and here is this man who was down in Chile plotting with the CIA, and ITT against Allende. I've read some of those articles too looking forward to this interview, and it was immense, the uproar from the Africans themselves, and also on the Hill.

EASUM: That's right. It was less an affection for me although they liked me. It was much more their concern about Nat and Chile.

Q: ...and what it meant having the change take place.

EASUM: Exactly. The Africans protested at the OAU. This now must have been maybe January of 1975. There was an OAU meeting and Bill Eteki, a Cameroonian who was the Secretary General of the OAU, gave a press conference after a meeting in which he said, "We Africans are very disturbed to learn that Don Easum is being replaced by Nathaniel Davis. Nathaniel Davis..." and he went on to explain the alleged evils of Davis, and Kissinger blew his stack. I have seen the circular telegram that he sent immediately after that to all of our Chiefs of Mission, dressed up, as you well know, with the traditional 'Eyes Only', 'Chief of Mission only', etc. And the message was, and personal from the Secretary, "I want you to go to the highest authority, to the head of state, and inform him that I make the personnel decisions in the State Department, and that they have nothing to do with these decisions, and particularly this one with regard to Davis as Assistant Secretary for Africa."

At some time after that I was in Dar es Salaam with our Ambassador there, Bev Carter who had his own difficulties with Kissinger. And Bev showed me his copy of that text, and he said, "Do you know how I handled this, Don?" And I said, "Well, I can guess." He said, "I didn't go across to the Foreign Ministry. I didn't even give it to a Second Secretary to

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carry over there.” And he said, “They knew how to handle it. They probably threw it away.” So that's really the next sort of big landmark in my life with Secretary Kissinger.

Q: Actually, breaking in a bit to finish off on the Assistant Secretary, Davis didn't last very long in that job, did he? That was quite quick and then Bill Schaufele came in and the whole scene during that year of the shuffling of the Assistant Secretary slot really kind of reflected badly, I think, on Kissinger's interest in Africa, and on the US ability to cope with it.

EASUM: I agree. I think that's a good way to put it. I would only add to that, that it showed, I think, a demeaning kind of attitude toward Africa, and in the minds of Africans. It was demeaning to them that these kinds of things happened on their beat.

So I went off to Lagos and we can talk some more about this perhaps another time, but I can just tell you that the story didn't end because for the next year before the change of administration, I was dealing with Kissinger from afar, and my concerns about Africa, and his approach to Africa, were very much echoed by Nigerians. I didn't have to suggest anything to the Nigerians. They came up with their own analysis of US policy toward Africa. They were incredibly critical of it, and every time I would submit their criticisms to Washington, I'm sure that the Secretary felt I had egged them on to do this. So much so that one time he called me back. He called me back with a telegram from, I think, Khartoum, or maybe Nairobi, where he'd been to a UN meeting. Bill Schaufele was with him, and Schaufele drafted the telegram of Kissinger's instruction, and it said, “I want to see you in my office as soon as I get back to Washington day after tomorrow. Why is it that every place I go, my African policy is maligned by the Nigerians, and they seem to have got there first. Now is the time to be more assertive on behalf of US policy, and less considerate of your clients.” It was a message that said virtually that. I've joked with Bill Schaufele about that since. I said, “Bill, I don't want to think you wrote it.” And Bill has said sort of, “Well, I knew what I had to say.”

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So I went back to Washington, went in to see Bill, and said, "Bill, it's time for the appointment. Let's go." And he said, "Don, this is your meeting with the Secretary." I said, "Bill, you've got to be kidding. I'm your Ambassador in Lagos, and I don't think it's right that I should go up there and face whatever this music is. It affects the whole Bureau, and it affects our relationships with Nigeria and, of course, those are important to us. You can't bug out on me." And he said, "Well, do you really want me to go?" And I said, "I sure do." So we both went up.

Interview continues: March 12, 1970.

Q: Don, the last time we ended the interview roughly with your return as Ambassador to Lagos. Perhaps we should start, in general, from that point today although it might at times lead to some repetition. I think it's a logical starting point for us. Why don't you just pick up the scenario at that point, and continue.

EASUM: Okay. I had had a most fascinating year as Assistant Secretary from April of '74 until April of '75, exactly 12 months. And in April of '75 I went off to what I think Henry Kissinger figured was some kind of an exile, to Lagos, Nigeria, and arrived virtually in time for the deposing of the then current head of state, General Gowon. A remarkable individual, but he had not been able adequately to handle the incredible oil boom that had hit Nigeria in the early '70s. Thus, when we arrived, the economy was in a state of full bloom, but absolutely out of control with 800 ships hanging outside the port of Lagos. It was said one-eighth of the entire world merchant fleet was there. There were highways, airports, schools, skyscrapers being built and he was deposed while out of the country at an OAU meeting. There was no blood shed, and I think as people look back, they consider it one of the smoothest transitions to take place in Africa, except those that take place by election, which aren't too many, and many of them aren't very smooth.

So I arrived there in April. The change of guard took place at the end of June, and a new military administration took over in Nigeria headed by a very progressive, radical, pan-

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Africanist kind of colonel named Murtala Muhammed. The story that I want to continue to tell really is, the way in which our Ambassador in Nigeria, namely myself, related to the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, during the ensuing year, an election year back home. A year during which Kissinger was the Secretary of State until January of the following year, 1977.

So, Kissinger was, in fact, in office for two years during the time I was there, and those were most interesting two years because of what was happening in Nigeria, and what was happening in Southern Africa, and what the US policy was in Southern Africa, and particularly in Angola.

The first five or six months of my tenure there were largely uneventful. Murtala was a real hustler. He wanted to deal with the United States. He wanted to have the representatives of American companies come out and talk with him personally, not with any of his associates, and contracts were being signed right and left with American companies. I can remember that Mack Truck signed one of the largest contracts they'd ever signed anywhere abroad. Ford Motor Company came out, talked directly with Murtala and sold an incredible number of trucks and other vehicles to the Nigerian army. Another company, Genesco, from St. Louis, made a major contract to produce and send to Nigeria all the shoes and the uniforms for the Nigerian army. It was a very exciting time in many ways for us although in a sense it was a false prosperity, and a false feeling of confidence that we had.

The first major change took place in October. In October of that year the South African military forces invaded Angola for maybe the first of about 14 subsequent invasions over the next ten years, or 15 years. And I was summoned to the Foreign Ministry, then headed by Joe Garba—in fact, he's here right now as the Nigerian High Commissioner, or Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Joe Garba was the Foreign Minister. He'd been the person who had announced the deposition of General Gowon because he'd been commander of the palace guards. He said, "Donald, I need something from Henry

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Kissinger in a hurry. You've got to get for me a denial from him that the US is supporting South Africa in Angola. We understand the reports are that thousands of South African armored troops have entered Angola." At that time there were three contending forces. There were the FNLA from the north supported by Mobutu. There was Savimbi in the South, UNITA. And there was the MPLA government which had been recognized by many countries, but the issue was still in dispute. The South Africans sided with UNITA, and as we know, they continued to do so for some 15 years. He said, "Get a denial that the US is supporting South Africa and UNITA. Because if you can't, I have to tell you that something is going to happen here that's going to be very important. I can't tell you what it is, and I don't want you to imply that I've said this to you, but its going to be difficult for the United States and Nigeria if you can't get a denial." This, by the way, is reported in his book that he published two or three years ago.

I, of course, sent a message back to the State Department explaining what he had said to me, and I got virtually no response. I got nothing within the 24 hours that Garba had asked for, and what I eventually got was something that was not useful and not very informative. As a result of that failure on my part, a few days after that the government of Nigeria announced that, instead of being neutral with regard to the Angolan struggle, and instead of trying to use their own best offices to bring the three groups together—in fact, Joe Garba had invited the three of them to Lagos, was in the process of organizing a conversation between the three—instead of that the government of Nigeria said, "We're going to opt for the MPLA. It is clear that the MPLA is defending itself against the racist South Africans, and there is no way we can continue to be neutral. And the US is evidently assisting the South Africans." So the Nigerians did precisely that. They sent a high level emissary, who was in fact the chief of the secret police—I don't remember his name, it will come to me—as the personal representative of Murtala Muhammed to Augustino Neto in Luanda, and arrangements were made to ship massive amounts of surplus Nigerian military equipment to the MPLA, and the die was cast. I was instructed—the MPLA is the current ruling party—I was instructed by the Department to protest this. I did the best I

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could to explain the US position to the Nigerians, but they were impatient with me, not wanting to understand what the US policy was, and I had some problems understanding it myself, but I did what I was told to do without great success.

In December the South African military forces were still moving hard in Angola but were coming up against some very stiff Cuban resistance. In December I learned that at the upcoming meeting of the OAU, which would take place in January of '76, I think in either Nairobi or Addis, I can't remember, the Nigerian head of state was going to deliver a very tough speech, insisting that all of Africa opt for the MPLA; that it was clear that that was the only way to withstand South African aggression. And that speech, it was clear to us, was going to give the United States a lot of heartburn. I received a personal message from the Secretary of State asking me to go, at the highest level, to the Nigerian government—on a weekend it was—and try to do what I could to moderate what we thought was clearly going to be a very tough speech to be made by Murtala.

Subsequent to that...and I did that, again without great success. I did not go to head of state. I went to the Number Two, General Obasanjo who was chief of staff of the army, and subsequently, as I will tell you, became the head of state, and is now a retired senior statesman. A few weeks after that the West African Ambassadors, that is, the American Ambassadors in West Africa, were summoned to Abidjan by Bill Schauffele who was then the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, where we had a special meeting with Bill at the residence of our Ambassador. And he said, "The situation in Angola is getting very dicey, and we're very much concerned about the upcoming meeting of the OAU, Organization of African Unity, and we want all of you to deliver a letter from President Ford, which you will be getting in a few days. You must deliver it to your head of state, and it will put forward our concerns about what is now happening in Angola. The letter will in essence put forward the thesis that, whereas the Angolan government has a security concern with regard to South African military incursions in the south, the South African government has

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a counterpart, or analogous security concern, because of the presence of the Cubans in Angola.”

As I thought about that letter in our residence in Abidjan, it seemed to me that given the tenure of opinion in Lagos, and given the personality of the head of state, Murtala, that letter was not going to be received in a friendly fashion. I knew from what I'd learned about Murtala that he was not at all ready to be patient with the concerns of South Africa with regard to anything in Angola even if it was the presence of Cuban, communist, Marxist troops. I knew that Murtala would argue that that was the concern of the Angolan government alone, that they invited the Cubans to come because they felt threatened by the South Africans. I knew that was the way Murtala would respond, and I felt that delivering that letter might well be counterproductive for us. And I explained my concerns to Bill who, of course, listened to them sympathetically without agreeing that they were proper concerns on the part of the Nigerian government. And I can remember his reply. He said, “Don, you've got to deliver it. After all, how many times in our careers do we get a personal letter from our President to deliver to the host country president?” I said, “Well, Bill, I'll deliver it but I just have to repeat that I can't predict the response.”

I did not deliver the letter personally. I knew Murtala would not receive me. I simply sent it. And the very next day, in all of the Lagos newspapers...and this must have been maybe the first week of December, maybe the second week of December, 1975...the very next day headlines appeared in all of the major Nigerian newspapers. Now I mean that's a lot of press. The Daily Times alone printed something like half a million copies a day—that's the size of what I think the Philadelphia Inquirer turns out—and this is a city of five million, and I'm speaking just about what happened in Lagos. In the other cities of the country there were, I'm sure, similar printings of the full text of President Ford's personal note to the Nigerian head of state. The headlines read as follows...one of them I can remember said, 'Insult to Black Dignity'. Another one said, 'American President Lectures'. That was the tone. And there's a humorous aside. The text was printed perfectly, and it was within quotes, but every time the term 'Prime Minister Vorster' or 'the Pretoria Government',

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or the 'South African Regime', anytime that kind of terminology appeared in the text of Ford's letter, the word 'racist' was put in front of it because that was the habit, if not the instruction, of all Nigerian press people in those days. Whenever they referred to South Africa, it was always Racist South Africa, the Racist Prime Minister, the Racist Regime of Pretoria, and so we had President Ford being quoted as using the word 'racist' something like a dozen or 15 times in one letter.

That letter provoked demonstrations the next day in front of our embassy. And they were not trivial demonstrations.

Q: Excuse me, Donald. Would these have been genuinely provoked by the letter? Or would they have been organized by the government in Lagos?

EASUM: I do not think that the military government organized those demonstrations. That's a good question, and I've thought about that a lot. The reason I don't is, that as best we could tell the bulk of the demonstrators were students, and young intellectuals. They were not labor union people. They were not the kinds of people to whom one might expect the military regime would go and attempt to crank up something. I don't think, given the independence of the Nigerian students, and the Nigerian intellectual community—not all of whom had great love for Murtala, some of them thought he was a really crazy, wild, radical, violent kind of fellow, and he had that reputation. I think it was not turned on. However, it was not prevented. It might have been because it took some organization for them to get themselves together and march down, and they were not harassed by police on the way, or accompanied by police.

The Marines behaved with moderation under our instruction, and locked the place. And the only real damage was a lot of windows were broken by rocks and bricks that were thrown through the windows. The next week or two went by without too much new event. Of course, I had to report all of this to Washington, and I explained the reasons behind this growing Nigerian attitude of hostility toward the US, now being picked up by the

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intellectual community, and the students, based on the feeling that the US was in effect siding with racist South Africa against the legitimate government of Angola. [The US was now providing military assistance to UNITA.]

Murtala went to the OAU meeting, and I told you of the instruction I had received which had been designed to try to get him to be moderate. That, plus the Ford letter, obviously did nothing, if not maybe fortify his determination to give a tough speech, and he did provide the leadership for his African colleagues to opt, all of them, for the MPLA at the time when Portugal was still trying very hard to bring the three groups together, and many other people were too. But the situation in Angola was fast deteriorating with warfare that was on a rising scale. More Cubans arriving with Russian military and logistic support, and more South Africans arriving. And therefore the possibility of bringing three groups together was pretty much lost. Murtala's speech was...the thrust of it was, "Let us all opt for the MPLA and give them all assistance and support on behalf of the OAU." That, in fact, yes, was a very close vote. There were others who felt that there were ways still. More moderate African countries—Senegal, I think, was the leader of the group trying to bring the more moderate African countries together in an attempt to stop the fighting, and to bring the three groups together in some kind of national unity coalition. It was a vote nonetheless that was a great disappointment to the United States, and Murtala was the reason for it.

He came back and was assassinated. It wasn't quite that simple, but indeed a month later, just on a street about three blocks from where I lived, he was shot down in an ambush prepared for him by an army major named Dimka, and some of his young military associates. They shot him in his car, moved off to the radio station where they had already prepared a tape, and the tape was broadcast saying, "We've got rid of the tyrant. Revolution is all over the country. There will be a curfew from dawn to dusk." This was not a very bright major. "There will be a dawn to dusk curfew"... in fact he was speaking in pigeon English and his broadcast said, "We have now taken over and it is all over the thirteen states." Now, nobody knew quite what he meant. We think, in retrospect,

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he meant that he had people and his fellow plotters, planted in each of the capitals of the thirteen states, and that they were going to assassinate the heads of government in those individual Nigerian states. That didn't work. It was not “all over” the thirteen states, although they had made a faint attempt, there were some killings, maybe a half dozen or so, in two or three other states. The revolution hardly caught hold. But the country went into a state of really serious mourning partly because of his tough personality, and what he had done at the OAU, had developed in a very short time, a very fanatic devotion on the part of Nigerians, young and old.

And interestingly enough, we were hosting, at that point, the first major international tennis tournament that Nigeria had ever organized, and I'd been very much involved in assisting eight or ten American professionals in getting there. I was involved in the planning for the tournament. It was sanctioned by the ATP, the Association of Tennis Professionals, and it was the first time a Nigerian tennis tournament would permit participants to win points on the world computer in the sky. Arthur Ashe came, Stan Smith, Tom Okker of Holland, Karl Meiler of Germany, El Shafei of Egypt, Dibbs and Stockton, and Solomon from the US, Fibak—he was then from the US. We had a tremendous international tournament, which that very morning of the assassination was supposed to pick up its third day. Ashe didn't have to play that day, so he was on the golf course, which was right next to the place where the assassination took place, and he heard shooting. The tournament of course, and all sports events, were canceled while preparations were made for the traditional Muslim burial of Murtala in an open, unmarked, grave in a field in the north of Nigeria. So for four days all activities of that sort were suspended. No one knew where the assassin was. He fled from the radio station. The army managed to get back in charge during the day of the shooting. And it was clear that the revolution did not succeed, and that the government was back in control. But during that first day things were pretty dicey. We had tennis players in one hotel, and the army came in and went all through the hotel rooms, and some of these kids had never had this kind of experience before, and they got scared and we managed to send transportation through the roadblocks, and so on, and

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get everybody out to my house where we had about 15 professional tennis players. We had British journalists, and we had all kinds of people hanging around for two or three days until we were able to house them, not in hotels anymore, but in the homes of Americans and others. Nobody could get out of the country for a week. Even Pele, who was supposed to give demonstrations in the national stadium, couldn't move. He was stuck at the home of the Brazilian ambassador. All that is just a little local color and not really very significant. The key point is...well, I can tell the story, it will move to the key point.

We were finally, after about a week, instructed to resume the tournament. Instructed by the government, and we did. Ashe was serving to Borowiak at one-all in the second set after taking the first set 7-6, when troops came into the tennis stadium with guns, yelling, "Get out! Get out!" We didn't know what was happening. There was panic. Fortunately nobody was killed, but a few people were beaten up by the police. We managed to get people in their cars, send them home, and I walked from there, with a young Marine guard, a corporal in civilian clothes, who was scared to death. He didn't know what to do. He knew he was supposed to protect the American Ambassador, but he had never had an experience like that. We started walking toward our embassy, which was only five blocks away, and we suddenly saw this demonstration coming toward us, and the crowds were such that we couldn't get out of the street. And so we just had to stand there. And this parade walked right through us. They didn't harm us at all, but the big signs...the first one we saw was, "Down with the CIA." The next one said, "Hang Dimka"—he was the assassin, and he was on the run. "Yankee, go home." This was fairly heavy duty stuff.

And the next thing that happened was, within a day, another demonstration at our embassy. And this time they went to chase the Brits first. The British High Commissioner was just next door to ours, and the assassin had made a major mistake. He had gone, after securing his radio station, and putting his tape on the radio, he had gone to the British High Commission—just walked in in his military uniform, with three other soldiers, all of them with guns, walked right into the office of the British High Commissioner—and somehow it wasn't very well protected that day by his staff—and said, "Sir, do you know

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who I am?" And the British High Commissioner, who was a very starchy, formal kind of fellow, said, "No. Not only that, I don't know what you're doing here." And Dimka said, "Well, I'm surprised you don't know who I am. I was just on the radio. I'm the person who assassinated the head of state." And the High Commissioner talked with him for something like 15 minutes. Dimka then said, "Well, I've got to go back to the radio station." So Dimka left, and the High Commissioner made a serious mistake. He did not notify the government that he had just talked to the assassin. Instead, he sent his— I've forgotten what they call them in the British system. We would call them our SRF types. He sent his intelligence people out to try to find their police counterparts, and their counterparts in the local FBI— I've forgotten what it's called, CID maybe, something like that. And they scurried around and couldn't find out very much. Lunch time came. The High Commissioner went home to lunch, and on his way home he encountered the Reuters correspondent, and he said, "Hey, Bill, you know what happened this morning? Dimka came into my office and talked with me, and he asked me to contact General Gowon (who was in exile studying in Britain) to tell General Gowon that the deed's been done, and he was waiting for instructions." And Reuters put that on the wire, and by the afternoon the Nigerian government was hearing on the radio that the assassin had talked with the British High Commissioner, who was asked by the assassin to contact Gowon in London—outside London, Suffolk, or some place, for instructions.

Well, you can imagine what happened to the High Commissioner. He was thrown out within about three days after that.

Q: I'm surprised he wasn't yanked out.

EASUM: Well, he probably should have been for protection. He should have been yanked, but he was thrown out but not before we had the second demonstration. And this one was a lot tougher. First, they went after his place. It was on a Saturday, and they got inside, and they just ripped it up. They threw over the typewriters, and ripped up the counters. They didn't, I guess, get any secret information but they really tore up the downstairs.

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Then they came to us, and we were right next door, and it was a lot tougher this time. We hadn't yet repaired most of our windows and so those windows were fair game for people to get in but fortunately...I guess they must have been barred, I can't remember now, because they didn't try to get in the windows, but they broke all the other windows. And then they went after the flag pole which the Marines had greased with lard because the first time around the youngsters had managed to climb up the flag pole and get the flag—and you know how the Marines feel about the flag. This time they had greased the flag pole, and the youngsters couldn't climb it. But they managed to figure out a way to yank on it, and they managed to bend it somehow. But they didn't get the flag. The Marines still view this as their great triumph. But they almost got inside. They were pounding on the door, and the Marines asked me to throw tear gas, and I refused saying, “No way. If any Nigerian is hurt out here, we're in real trouble, and I think the police are coming.” The sergeant called me. I was at home and my telephone didn't work, of course, but I did have a radio, and the sergeant told me on the radio, “Sir, the police didn't come.” I said, “Well, give them another ten minutes.” And I know he thought that I was a useless pacifist. He wanted to throw that tear gas so badly. I had instructed them to lock up their weapons. So at any rate, the police did come. They threw tear gas and the crowd was dispersed.

Now, to get back to Henry. That's the environment of early 1976 when he, back in Washington, finally decided Africa was important. Mind you, all throughout 1974, as we told in the other tape, I had been laboring valiantly to try to get him to pay some attention to Southern Africa, and he hadn't been interested. Now he was, and he decided somehow he could be useful with his own particular snake oil, and genius, in bringing some kind of resolution to the Rhodesian problem. In Rhodesia we had unilateral declaration of independence which was viewed as illegal by the British, and so you had a white minority regime headed by Ian Smith. Meanwhile you had Zanu and Zapu, those were two independence movements, nationalist movements, “terrorist” groups in the minds of some.

Q: Don, why don't you just pick up where you left off at the end of the previous tape.

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EASUM: Okay. We're now at the beginning of 1976, and I've just recounted the deep trouble in which the US found itself then, all to be attributed to the policies of the US in Southern Africa, and particularly in Angola as perceived by the Nigerians.

The purpose of this little chronology has been to come back to Henry Kissinger who, during the previous year when I was his Assistant Secretary, refused to take Africa seriously. People used to say to him, "You don't have any Africa policy. What are your people doing in Africa? Why don't you come up with an Africa policy? You've got a Middle East policy, you've got this policy, that,..." And he used to say, rather proudly, "How can I have an Africa policy when there are 51 countries out there? It's impossible." And I would, from time to time, try to say things to him, and once I wrote a memorandum to say, "It is simple to have an Africa policy. We don't have to agonize over this. It can be based simply on two things, and they're valid for every country, and every situation. One, is respect for, and concern about human rights. And the other is concern for the economic development future of Africa, and the role that the US can play in assisting that economic development. It's easy. We can construct a policy for you along those lines." He didn't want to. He was afraid of the human rights one, and he was also all bottled up by his previous belief that minority white regimes were here to stay in Africa. He'd been quoted on that before when he was National Security Adviser to Nixon. And he also had a thing about populist revolution when it became violent. He could handle the revolutions of Germany in the middle part of the nineteenth century, but he could not handle the nationalist movements fighting against the Portuguese in the five territories. He couldn't handle that. Nor could he handle what was happening in Rhodesia.

However, to his credit, belatedly he came to recognize it was important. And I think Bill Schaufele deserves some credit for this. Bill took my place after the unfortunate three or four months of Nat Davis. Bill, or somebody, persuaded Kissinger to take a look at Southern Africa, and he did. He decided that he could play a role with regard to the independence struggle—call it independence struggle—in Rhodesia. And he went to

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Lusaka, just next door, the capital of Zambia, and made a major speech. The first time he'd ever made a policy speech on Africa. And in that speech he said some very brave things, brave for him. A lot of us had been saying them for a long time, but for him this was quite revolutionary when he said that he thought that the future of Rhodesia depended on majority rule. And he managed to persuade Smith to fall back from where Smith had been before. Smith had previously insisted stubbornly, "There will be no majority rule in my lifetime." And Smith made a statement when Kissinger was there indicating some flexibility—I wish I could remember the exact statement—I don't. It was a good speech [Kissinger]. It sounded a lot like a speech that I had made a year previously. And Don Peterson, bless his heart, or maybe it was Wil De Pree, at any rate one of our fellow Africanists, told me that in fact his speech writers had borrowed from that speech I'd made a year earlier. At any rate, I don't want to insist on that because I'm not sure it's true. I haven't checked out the text.

So Kissinger made that speech, and he sent me a telegram saying, "I would like to come to Nigeria and explain to your Nigerian colleagues our new policy toward Africa, and particularly towards Southern Africa." I couldn't even get to first base with that request. Of course, I tried valiantly, but the Nigerians were no way going to receive him. The excuse that they used was, that if he came there would be student protests, and the military regime did not want to use military force against the students in Lagos. That was the argument they used. The real reason was, there was no way they wanted him to come because they were persuaded...first of all, they weren't all that excited about the speech which for Kissinger was a very liberal speech, but for the Nigerians, not at all. It certainly did not opt for the MPLA in Nigeria. It did not pledge undying opposition to apartheid, except in ritual terms, and it did not speak about the independence struggle in Rhodesia in a fashion that most Africans considered adequate. It was very conservative in that regard even though Smith viewed it as a pretty dangerous speech. So I had to tell him "no".

However, before sending that message back, in the meeting I had with General Obasanjo, who had taken the place of Murtala, when Murtala was assassinated and Obasanjo was

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the head of state for the ensuing four years, I asked Obasanjo were there someone else who could bring the Kissinger message if they would not accept Kissinger. And they said, of course, which made it clear it wasn't so much the message they were worried about, it was their personal antipathy to Henry Kissinger that kept them. And I said, "For example, he has with him John Reinhardt." John Reinhardt had been the US Ambassador to Nigeria prior to my arrival. He had been a splendid ambassador. He was in Lagos for something like three years, and he was part of the intricate switch that Kissinger orchestrated in sending me to Lagos. He sent me to Lagos to take John's place. John Reinhardt was brought back and made Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, and Kissinger had the wit to put John Reinhardt on his team when he went to Lusaka. So I sent the message back to the Secretary saying, "They would prefer John Reinhardt." And he sent John Reinhardt. I wonder what went through his mind when he did that.

John came, and John and I went to see General Obasanjo and talked about the new approach by Kissinger to African policy, and Obasanjo found it unimpressive, but interesting.

That's the first time that I had to say "no" to a Kissinger request to come to Lagos. In June of '76, Kissinger was visiting Europe. He was already clearly sensitive to the Nigerian attitudes because he sent me a message saying, "I'm going to be in Europe anyway, do you think that you might be able to get me in? Do you think the Nigerians would receive me if we could, in effect, say, 'Well he's in Europe anyway, and he'd just like to drop down'". Well, that didn't sound to me as if it paid much attention to the Nigerians. And I was on the point of sending back...I waited a day or so, and I was on the point of sending back to him a message suggesting there might be some other way to couch this request, when he, maybe by telepathy, canceled. He sent me back a message saying, "Never mind." If I'd been able to go back quickly and say, "Come ahead," I'm sure he'd have come. But the delay, I think, made him think, "Oh, oh. I'm going to get another negative" and he didn't want to have that on his record. So he said, "Never mind. I can't make it."

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Meanwhile, our situation in Lagos was moving reasonably well. The British ambassador had been thrown out. Our contacts, and my personal contacts, were excellent. I think because the Nigerians recognized that, although I was a faithful supporter of US policy in my official contacts, I had a lot of personal concerns with it. So I had excellent access, and the British, in fact, were saying, "How come Easum has all this access when our guy got thrown out?" Well, for whatever reason, we were beginning to be able to build some new US economic relationships, and some new cultural exchanges, and I felt we were getting somewhere even though there was this grave, grave difference of view with regard to US policy in Angola where we were still assisting UNITA, and with regard to an inadequate—in the Nigerian view—an inadequate adoption of the African National Congress in South Africa which we, in those days, didn't really talk with very much. They felt we were essentially much too friendly with, and concerned about, the problems of the Pretoria government—notice I did not say, "The racist Pretoria government," although they are.

This takes us now to September, and this was a fun adventure. This was the third request of Henry to come to Nigeria. He and Bill Schaufele were at a UNCTAD meeting October '76, in Nairobi—or in Khartoum or Addis just before our election. I think it was Nairobi. Nairobi is more logical. He put a third request to me, and for a third time the Nigerians said "no". Now I understood, and was not unsympathetic with the first two refusals, but I was a little annoyed at the third. I thought the Nigerians were pushing their luck pretty hard. Mind you, the first time in April the Nigerians managed to persuade the Ghanaians not to take him either. And Shirley Temple Black was our Ambassador to Accra, and she just loved Henry Kissinger, and he just thought she was the greatest thing in the world. And he had sent his request there, as well as to Lagos. And Joe Garba, the Foreign Minister of Nigeria, went to Accra shortly after sending his own negative response back, and talked to Acheampong, who was the head of state...talked to Acheampong, and in effect, I think, I don't have fact for this, put some economic leverage on the Ghanaians who were then importing a lot of oil from Nigeria. And Garba said in effect, "We don't think

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any of us should see this person, and if you do, it's not going to look very good." And so Acheampong sent back, through Shirley Black, the most asinine excuse. He said he had a boil on his neck, and he would have been very uncomfortable, given his physical pain, to receive the Secretary of State. Can you imagine?

So, of course, Henry Kissinger never saw Foreign Ministers except in European countries, and I guess even there not all that often. Never would he go to a developing world country and see anybody other than the head of state. Of course, that tended to gravel some of our developing world people, too, and in particular such proud ones as Nigerians who felt, "He's your Secretary of State, why can't our Secretary of State see him? Why does it have to be that he insists on seeing our head of state?"

Okay, so the third time, refusal. And I sent back a message to Kissinger in Nairobi doing my best to explain the reasons. I got an immediate rocket back, which Bill Schaufele admits to have drafted, but under instruction from Kissinger, which said something like, "It is time for us to be less concerned about the sensitivities of our host governments, and more concerned about insisting on the US national interest." Some such message. And it ended up, "I want to see you in my office day after tomorrow in Washington." Ha-ha! So Easum thinks he's going to be fired for the second time. So I dutifully go back and the first person I go to see when I get back, to check up on the appointment, is Larry Eagleburger. And I say, "Larry, what's this all about?" And Larry says, "Don, I don't have to tell you. You've been a thorn in Kissinger's side for the last two years. He just doesn't understand why the Nigerians are so nasty to him, and he's going to tell you that." And I said, "Well, are you going to be in there with me?" And he said, "No way. This is your scene, buddy." So I go down to Bill Schaufele, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, and I said, "Bill, what's going on?" And he said essentially the same thing. And I said, "Well, you're going to go with me, aren't you?" And he said, "I don't want to go with you. Why should I?" I said, "Bill, come on. You're the Assistant Secretary of State, this is not a personal thing. I'm out there doing my best, and Nigeria is an important place. They're sending us half of our imported oil..." and that meant 25% of our total consumption..."You know how important

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Nigeria is. I'm out there doing what I can do. This is not an issue of...even if the Secretary may think it is...this can't be permitted to be an issue of personal animosity. It's got to be looked at in terms of US interests with regard to Nigeria. As long as I'm there, as the Ambassador, I have things to say about that country and you are my Assistant Secretary, and I think you should go with me." And so Bill said, "All right."

So we had our meeting with Henry. And the first thing he said is, "Don, you tell me. Why is it that every place I go in Africa, trying to explain my new policies, the Nigerians have been there first bad mouthing me?" And I said, "Mr. Secretary, I've tried to explain in my despatches and so on, why they feel the way they do. I'm doing my best to explain our policies, but they're not ready to listen." So he said, "What can we do about this? We've got to do something about this. What can we do?"

Now, Bill and I had anticipated that, and we decided that Bill and I would go up to New York where Joe Garba, the Foreign Minister, happened to be at some kind of UN affair. And we would meet directly with him, and try to present to him some of our concerns, and some of the Secretary's concerns. And so Bill said, "Mr. Secretary, Don and I have a plan to go to New York in a couple of days and see Joe Garba." Immediately the Secretary interrupted, and he said, "Joe Garba in this country? And I can't go to his country? Can't we keep that son of a bitch out of here?" Of course, we said, "Mr. Secretary, he's the Ambassador to the United Nations. You can't keep him out of the UN. It's a different scene." He said, "Why won't he let me into Nigeria?" And I said, "I've tried to explain, but for one thing he doesn't want to have riots in the street." And Kissinger said, "I didn't know I was that important." And immediately we're beginning to see a little bit of his wit, and his egocentricity, and he's beginning to cool down a little bit. Somewhere I've got some notes on that conversation. But that was the tenor of it, and he then began to soften up considerably, and he said, "You know I've just got to succeed with this new policy on Southern African." That was an interesting statement because there was no way he could succeed with the policy as he'd put it together. It didn't have any substance to it, and the main problem with it was, in my view, he had no credibility with Frelimo which was the

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independence movement in Mozambique, then in charge of the new independent country. He had no credibility with Mugabe and his Zanu part of the patriotic front in Zimbabwe. He had no credibility with the more radical Africans, or with the Nigerians. And he hadn't talked with any of them. He had talked with no Africans about his idea for some kind of negotiated solution of the Rhodesian problem. He'd had no conversations with anybody except Smith, essentially. And I indicated something like that to him, putting it as nicely as I could. And then he said, "Well, what I need is a Sadat. I'm looking for a Sadat." He said, "Do you think maybe Nyerere could play that role?" And, Pete, you would understand this better than I would. He was using his Middle East—obviously his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East—as his model.

I think he was beginning to think that he could do something like he'd done in the Middle East in Rhodesia. And that statement, "I'm looking for a Sadat, could Nyerere be that person?" was so indicative of his mind-set. I don't remember much more about that conversation. He did not fire me again. It was actually the best conversation I had ever had with him on Africa.

Q: This was after the election? At this point he knew...

EASUM: No. It must have been just about at election time. He was still thinking that maybe under the next administration, if Republican, that he would be able to really go to work on some kind of shuttle diplomacy between Washington and Harare, which was still called Salisbury. Fascinating. And then shortly after that, of course, we had the election and that starts a whole new story, and in a sense it's a real watershed when he left. A real watershed with regard to US relations with Africa, and particularly with Southern Africa. It was like night and day when the Carter administration came in.

Q: How did this come to you first in Nigeria? How did you first detect the shift? You were certainly anticipating it, but what was the grass roots look of it?

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EASUM: Well, I can tell you a quick story about that, that I think answers the question very directly. In December of that year, the election having taken place, but Carter not yet having been inaugurated, Dick Clark, Democratic Senator from Iowa who had been, and was at that time, the splendid chairman of the Senate Subcommittee for Africa—the Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations. He had taken a trip to East Africa, to Tanzania, maybe South Africa—I'm not sure—and he was now in December visiting me in Lagos on his way back to the US. We sat around my swimming pool one evening just talking, the two of us, about ways in which the Carter administration might sketch out a different approach to Africa. Mind you, Andy Young had been to Lagos by then already a couple of times under my regime. I'd been there almost two years. Andy had been there a couple of times, and had put forward his own particular views of how he thought a Carter administration, if elected, would approach Africa. And it was already clear that there would be a human rights flavor, or thrust, or foundation, to the policy that would be very, very different from the previous Nixon-Ford-Kissinger approach. Dick Clark put forward the same kind of prediction as to the way the administration would move, and he paid tribute to Andy Young, and to the role Andy had played as a personal associate of President Carter's in talking about civil rights, and human rights, and so on, in the United States, but also alerting him a bit to the African scene. And Clark said, "Don, I think what we really need to do is get the President very quickly face to face with one of these wonderful African heads of state so he can hear directly about some of these concerns, and what would you think about Nyerere coming as one of the first heads of state to visit President Carter in the new year, 1977, the first year of the administration?" And he said, "I've just talked with Nyerere and he's just an absolutely incredible person." Clark, of course, knew Nyerere already. Clark had traveled widely in Africa and knew a lot about it, and had as his staff aide Dick Moose, who soon became the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. And Moose had been with Clark on this trip but had left from Lagos, had not been able to stay for the Lagos part. I said I thought that was a great idea. I said, "But let's talk about this again after we've seen General Obasanjo." We were scheduled to see the Nigerian head of state, General Obasanjo, the next day. "Because you'll see there a

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person who's the antithesis of Nyerere, and yet who in many ways represents the same kind of approach to human rights, and development, in Africa that Nyerere does, but from a completely different philosophical standpoint. Nyerere is an ideologue. He's a convinced egalitarian. He's a socialist. He's a school teacher by training and trade. He impresses you as being unable to swat a fly with a flyswatter. Not only because he isn't strong enough, but because he is just a complete pacifist in his approach to problems. Smiles constantly. Witty conversationalist. Obasanjo on the other hand outweighs him three times, physically. Has arms the size of tree trunks. Is a general in the army who accepted, if not produced, the surrender of the Biafran troops. Not an ideologue at all. He doesn't like ideology, and philosophy. He's a pragmatist, hard-nosed soldier, who wants results. Let's think after you've seen Obasanjo tomorrow, whether we could get both of them, at different times of course, in to see Carter during the first year, and see what kind of results that might have in helping President Carter shape his new approach to Africa." And I remember Clark's answer after we saw Obasanjo. As Clark left the meeting, he said to me, "This would be terrific if we could get both of them together." He said, "I'll talk to Fritz about it," Fritz Mondale, of course, being the Vice President. He did talk to Fritz, and I wish...you know memories are faulty...I can't remember whether Nyerere went before Obasanjo went, or after, but indeed the strategy played out. It worked.

I had the challenge, once I heard back from Washington that the idea was worth exploring with Obasanjo...we, of course, didn't want to put the official request to him before we knew he'd say yes. You don't want to say, "Our President wants you to come," and then get yourself up against a negative answer.

And so I played it out with the Foreign Minister with whom by then I had a really good relationship. This was Joe Garba, the one I mentioned to you before, whom I first got to know on a basketball court. Sports keeps coming into my career. He had been the captain of the Nigerian National Basketball Team before he announced the deposition of General Gowon, and the first thing that happened to me in Nigeria when I arrived several years earlier, was to be invited to a basketball game where the national team,

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captained by Colonel Joe Garba, whom I didn't know, was to play a young team of American missionaries who not only played basketball, but brought their guitars and sort of evangelized the crowd during half time. And forgive me that I digress again, but it's fun. I'm seated there on the bench with the young Americans, and I'm watching this first half of the basketball game, which is played out-of-doors on a cement court—miserable circumstances, but it's the National Basketball Stadium, so called. And I see this tall dude out there, whose launching these shots from mid-court, a kind of combination of overarm baseball throw and a push shot. And they never go in, and he's stepping out of bounds all the time, and the referee is not blowing the whistle but he's clearly in charge. And I find out as the game goes on, that that's Colonel Joe Garba, the commander of the palace guards, and he's the captain of the team, and he's an inveterate optimist. He always thinks these shots from mid court are going in. They never do, but he keeps thinking some day they will, and nobody dares blow the whistle on him when he steps out of bounds—that was Joe Garba. And his team was completely exhausted by first half time. These are the best players they had in those days. I don't know where Olajuwon was. He wasn't around obviously, and the score was something like 40 to 20 in favor of the young American missionaries, who then take over at half time—breathing quite normally—playing their guitars, singing songs, and then they go out and clobber the poor Nigerians the second half. The final score—they tried to keep it down, of course—was something like 80 to 50. And we had a reception at our house afterwards, and Garba comes to the reception, and I meet him. And a few weeks later he takes the radio and says, “We've just overthrown General Gowon.” So it shows you how sports can introduce you to key people. You never know how they're going to be important later on.

At any rate, where are we now? We've got to bring us back to the visits. I worked out with Garba this idea. I said, “Joe, if we were to put a request to Obasanjo (this is late '77 now, the summer of '77), if we were to put a request to him, what do you think the response would be? Is it too soon for him.” The heritage of our difficult times was still very much in all of our minds, of course. And he said, “I don't know, but let me try, and I'll come back

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to you.” And after a while, a period of weeks, he said, “Don, I think it will work. Let's try it.” So, of course, I communicated with Dick Moose, the Assistant Secretary, and he got the necessary authorizations. And I'm then authorized, still informally, to go to Joe Garba and say, “Yes, we will invite Obasanjo to the White House if you can assure me he'll say yes.” So after a day or so Garba says, “Yes. He'll say yes.”

So then back to Moose over in the White House. I'm sure Moose goes one way or another, or through the Secretary, and we get a letter from President Carter inviting General Obasanjo to make a state visit. And he does. I go back, of course, as is the practice, and the visit went awfully well. Obasanjo recognized in Carter somebody who was really committed to work for change in South Africa, not just talk about it, and to pull out our assistance from UNITA, as did happen under the Clark amendment. No more assistance to any military groups in Angola. He also saw, he sensed...Obasanjo did, that under Carter the US might really push Britain to push Ian Smith to sit down with the Nationalists, and work out some kind of majority rule scheme for Rhodesia. So the visit went beautifully. And we sensed that probably Obasanjo would then invite Carter. So this was all dramatic change—black and white from what I'd experienced under the previous administration.

Q: All right, Don. Pick up where you left off.

EASUM: Fine. We left off with the Obasanjo visit to Washington. Very successful. Obasanjo's return to Nigeria, and our orchestration then of the return visit with Obasanjo calling me over, I don't know, I suppose a month or so after he returned, and talking to me about his desire to bring Jimmy Carter to Nigeria. Mind you, no American President had ever visited independent black Africa in history. We knew a visit, if we could arrange one, would be historic. So, of course, we went back, our embassy did, to Washington and indicated there were very promising signs, that Obasanjo would invite Carter if Carter could give us a tentative response indicating he'd be willing to consider an invitation. He did that. And to make a long story short, President Carter visited two African countries, Liberia and Nigeria, in late March and early April of 1978. And those were historic visits.

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We were very uneasy about the visit to Nigeria. Nigeria is a country with great proclivity for sudden violence, for breakdown of public order. Mind you, a city of five or six million crammed in to a very small geographic area. An infrastructure that doesn't work. Telephones don't work. Just to get messages around the city you have to send them on a motorcycle, or you have a whole elaborate system of walkie-talkies and radios. The power system still—but at that time even worse—is very undependable. So that every home, or residence, of any standing has its own private stand-by generators. The Central Bank of Nigeria had a whole floor of car batteries hooked up together to provide emergency power to the computers of the bank, and the car batteries would heat up so much that they had something like 127 electric fans hooked up to blow air on the car batteries. No elevators work. You're constantly tramping up anywhere from five to thirty-five stories. So we were very much worried about this visit. And, as you know, for visits like that the US government sends out a team in advance, and they walk through every single thing that the President of the United States is supposed to do. And they do this about six weeks in advance, or two months in advance. And that team came out, and they were horrified. Absolutely horrified by everything they saw in spite of the fact that we were doing our very best to assure that it was going to work. And we felt it would work.

Reluctantly they...I don't know what kind of agonies they went through, but they said, "All right. We'll try this." But we were scared to death until it was over. Well, to make a long story short, it went absolutely to perfection. It was absolutely splendid. The streets were blocked off when necessary. We had, for the first and probably the last time in history, we had, we felt, control of the Nigerian police. Our people did. They were talking to them through their little microphones in their wrists, and the Nigerian police were absolutely fascinated because they were all given all this equipment. And for the first time in their memory, they all had telephones, they all had walkie-talkies. We used to take Nigerian Ministers for fun, up to the top floor of one of the hotels where all the communication gear had been set up, and we'd give them a tour of the gear, and then we'd say, "Do you want to telephone anybody?" And they'd say, "What do you mean anybody? Anywhere?" "Yes,

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anywhere.” I can remember the Minister of Economics, three times he wanted to telephone some relative in Texas, and we were able, of course, to put him through just like that.

And I had my own exciting experiences because I had telephones in the house that worked for a change. I even had a phone call from Jody Powell when the advance team left Rio and he called me on the telephone when they were airborne from Rio, and talked to me in my residence in Lagos. Well, today, of course, all that stuff is normal but when you're in—as you well know—when you're in the developing world, and you can do something like that, and mind you this was thirteen years ago, that's pretty exciting stuff. Well, anyway, the visit went absolutely splendidly. And to show you how a powerful country can be turned around in a year and a half from riots in the street, death threats to me, jailings—I didn't mention this—jailings of American businessmen without our knowing it. And they'd spend the night sleeping on a table in a security chief's office with one bare light bulb up there, and be questioned about what they were doing where. If you wore a camera around your neck, you were immediately arrested. American companies were being just automatically rejected on contracts. And you know, it's heavy duty stuff. And to have this kind of change take place so fast. Why? Well, because a different policy on human rights. It's as simple as that. That's the simplest way to put it. Make it a little more complicated and explain it a little better, a different policy with regard to racism in South Africa.

And then the personality. Who could be more different than Kissinger on the one hand, and Carter on the other? Or Carter and Vance on the other? Here were two decent, humane individuals, willing to listen. On the other side, I won't use adjectives, but you had somebody unwilling to listen, only interested in pushing his own particular brand of policy which he would argue was in the service of the US I won't argue about that. With a style that was seen as manipulative and untrustworthy, and a style that Nigerians felt, and many Africans felt, was derogatory to them as people. So much for that.

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We had a meeting that was an extraordinary meeting. Obasanjo talked with Carter about the need to support the Patriotic Front in Rhodesia. The Patriotic Front was the alliance between Mugabe and his Zanu on the one hand, and Nkomo and his Zapu on the other. They were now fighting from safe havens in Mozambique, which was now independent, and from Zambia. And they were putting terrible pressure on the Rhodesians, and the Rhodesians in turn were escalating the level of their warfare, and you had a terrible situation. And Britain had not yet come down hard in favor of getting everybody together, and talking over for a new future based on majority rule. That was the situation at the time.

Obasanjo said to Carter, "I like very much what I hear you saying about the Rhodesian situation." "As you know," he said, "at the moment we're at a stalemate. We can't get the Zanu and Zapu people, the Patriotic Front people, to talk with the Smith people, and we can't get the Smith people to talk with them. What we're pushing for is All Parties Talks. That is the big issue and nobody can seem to produce it."

The Foreign Minister and I had arranged that in Lagos at that very same time would be the Foreign Ministers of the Front Line countries [Southern Africa]. We didn't tell Washington in advance. In fact, Garba really confronted me with a fait accompli. He simply said, about the day before Carter was going to arrive—and this was very clever of him—"Donald, I've arranged for all of the Front Line Foreign Ministers to be here. And I hope you can get Cy Vance to talk with them." Well, it was a genius move on his part, because that's exactly what Vance wanted to do. And after Obasanjo and Carter had sort of agreed together on the approach to the Rhodesian freedom struggle issue, it was the natural thing for Garba to say to Carter, "Well, sir, we've got the Front Line Foreign Ministers here, why not let Cy Vance talk with them while you and General Obasanjo do some other things?" And that's exactly what we did. We had side conversations that included Andy Young and Don McHenry, and Brzezinski, who wasn't really on the team philosophically. I didn't sense he was really with it. And, of course, Dick Moose, and myself, and Tony Lake, and one or two others.

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We had those conversations, and based on an agreement Carter and Obasanjo made, we agreed a team would go to Dar es Salaam as quickly as possible [to talk with the Patriotic Front if the Front Line Foreign Ministers could arrange it]. That we would persuade David Owen from London to come down, and we would try to get the All Parties Talks resuscitated. This all was as a result of the fact that Obasanjo found Carter attractive, philosophically speaking. And, indeed, that's what happened. I'll tell you about that in a minute.

The other thing we agreed was on Namibia where Carter explained what the Group of Five was trying to produce a democratically elected government in Namibia, withdrawal of South African control, and the UN's sponsoring this in resolution which finally became Resolution 435. Obasanjo liked that, and he said, "Have you put it to the UN Security Council yet?" And Carter said, "No. We're planning to, we're worried about the Russians." And Obasanjo said, "I will lean on them not to veto." And he did. He called in the Russian Ambassador, and he told him, "Don't you people veto." And he sent the Nigerian Ambassador in Moscow in to see his counterpart to say, "We, the Nigerians, do not believe you, the Russians, should veto this which is sponsored by the major five allied powers. We think this makes sense." And they didn't veto.

That was a really interesting example of how a powerful Third World country—much more powerful than it is now for economic reasons—a powerful Third World country, Nigeria, could play our game, in a sense. But it was also their game. So it was a tremendously successful visit. The British High Commissioner from my telephone, which again worked—well, yes, it was working then because the US telecommunications people had insisted that it work—we telephoned David Owen in London and woke him up. I didn't wake him up. I was standing there and the British High Commissioner, Sir Sam Fowle, woke him up, and said, "David, can you show up in Dar es Salaam three weeks from now to talk to Mugabe, and Nkomo, and Chikerema, and Tongarara, and the other Patriotic Front leaders?" And David Owen said, "It sounds useful but they haven't been willing

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to talk to us. Who's guaranteeing they'll be there?" And Sir Sam Fowle was able to say, "General Obasanjo, and President Jimmy Carter, because they're right here, and we just met with all the Foreign Ministers of the Front Line states, and they guarantee that they will deliver these people. The only quid pro quo is, that we deliver Smith and Muzorewa subsequently in Salisbury." And so it happened. And I was asked by Vance to go.

So I went. Dick Moose was there, Andy Young was there again, Cy Vance, McHenry, David Owen, and all of the Patriotic Front people that I've mentioned. And we sat for three days under Nyerere's hostship and talked about the All Parties Talks. What would the Nationalists need to have to really come to Salisbury and sit down with Smith? After we got that more or less sorted out, we went to Salisbury and we met with Smith, Muzorewa and some of his people, and talked with them about what they would need. And we then went to Johannesburg, and talked with the South Africans about the arrangements. All that just because we had cooked up—I like to put it this way, but it's much too egocentric—Dick Clark and I sitting beside my swimming pool, and saying to ourselves, "The way to get Jimmy Carter started right, is to get him to talk to some African leaders," and Nyerere and Obasanjo were the first two. So here's this wonderful sort of bringing that wheel full circle. That's really the story, Pete.

We could talk about other things at some other time perhaps, but I think this is essentially a story that connects an American Ambassador with his Secretary of State—with two of them really. First of all Henry Kissinger, and then secondly, Cy Vance, who was a tremendous colleague in all of this, who took a great and sympathetic interest in Africa, and with Dick Moose, and Don McHenry, and Andy Young, and above all, President Carter who managed to fashion some policies that I felt were very wise, and that proved very productive. Unfortunately the Angolan-Namibia part of it was frustrated when the Reagan administration came to power and took eight more years to spin out.

Q: How long were you in Lagos then after this visit?

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EASUM: After the Carter visit to Lagos, which was in the spring of '78, I was there until October of '79. And I chose my time of departure to coincide with the handing over of power by the military regime, headed for one year by Murtala, and for three years by Obasanjo—the handing over of power to a civilian elected regime. Murtala had pledged, “In four years we're leaving. We're going to spend this four years setting up a new constitution, a new system for the country patterned somewhat on the US with bicameral legislatures in the states, a unicameral legislature in the federal capital.” And that worked itself out all the time I was there. And in October the election took place. Shehu Shagari, a civilian from the north, who had been a Minister of Finance in previous governments, was elected president. The military regime stepped down, a civilian regime was elected, and I was then offered the presidency of the African American Institute. So I retired then the Foreign Service and came back to New York, and I've been here ever since.

Q: That was really a very interesting period that you were in Nigeria, but also that your Nigerian and Washington times spanned, because you did cover this tremendous earth shift in American policy which unfortunately shifted back again to some extent after that, as I'm sure then you saw reflected from your non-profit post in New York. But that's another story too for another time.

EASUM: That's another story. Probably not for these tapes because it has to do not with my diplomatic career, but with my civilian career.

Q: Well, thanks very much, Don. This will certainly be a very useful addition to the record on this whole range of subjects.

EASUM: Well, I hope that as time goes by one doesn't distort in any way the way one remembers things. I'm always worried about that, and as I retell some of these stories, sometimes I'm wondering if they sound better than they...more clear, and less confused, than they maybe were when they happened.

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Q: I'm sure they do but that's the benefit of talking about something after the passage of time.

End of interview