

Interview with William B. Edmondson

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

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM B. EDMONDSON

Interviewed by: Arthur Tienken and Thomas J. Dunnigan

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[Covering entry into Foreign Service, tours in Zambia and Tanganyika, and participation in FSI's first Africa Seminar]

Note: The following interview transcript has been edited with a number of amendments and additions by Ambassador Edmondson as of November 25, 1988. (Also, see Addendum)

Q: Today is April 5, 1988. I am Arthur Tienken, on behalf of the Foreign Service History Center of George Washington University, and I shall be interviewing Ambassador William B. Edmondson principally on his experiences in the early days of our embassy in Zambia in 1965 and a little later than that. If time permits, I shall ask Bill if he might want to comment a little bit on his earlier experiences in both Tanganyika and Ghana.

Mr. Ambassador, may I first ask you something about what motivated you originally to become interested in the Foreign Service?

EDMONDSON: Well, my first academic interest was in law, and I had assumed during High School that I would probably have to take an undergraduate degree in education and then do some teaching to earn the money to get to law school. World War II intervened,

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however, and I spent about four years in the Army, including two years as an officer in the occupation forces in Germany. While serving in the occupation, I did a lot of reading about international affairs; and I can still remember spending a lot of time on a USAFE textbook by Sharp and Kirk, entitled Contemporary International Politics. Increasingly, my original interest in law turned toward an interest in international law, international affairs, and foreign relations. I was impressed, I think, by the causes and effects of World War II, by the bombed-out cities and buildings, and the hungry kids with spindly legs. As an idealistic young man, I wanted to do something to help prevent things like that occurring again. It was this that made me think of studying for a career in international affairs.

I received some college training during my first months in the army as a member of the ASTRP—the Army Specialized Training Reserve Program—doing pre-engineering studies at the University of Wyoming. When I got out of the army, I returned to Nebraska to go to college on the GI Bill. First, I attended a short summer school session at Peru State Teachers College, then entered the University of Nebraska in the Fall of 1948. I still considered going into law school, perhaps with a concentration on international law, but for a variety of reasons, I became more interested in the political science side of international law and enrolled in a newly organized “international affairs group major.”

My original intention was not particularly to go into the Foreign Service, but to get into some kind of international work such as with the United Nations. Much of my early academic work was in international organization affairs. I got an A.B. with High Distinction from the University of Nebraska in 1950, then did a year of graduate work at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and got my M.A. degree in 1951. During that same year I took and passed both the Foreign Service exams and the “Junior Management Assistant/ Junior Social Science Assistant” Civil Service exams.

In June, 1951 I began work as a Department of State Intern on a one year program of rotational assignments. I began in the Bureau of UN Affairs, then worked for the UN Affairs

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Adviser in the Far Eastern Bureau, and finished the year in the Trusteeship Division of the Office of Dependent Area Affairs.

During this period, I learned that I had passed the oral exams for the Foreign Service, so I had to decide whether to go ahead with the kind of civil service work I was doing or whether I should enter the Foreign Service. An important element in the decision was the fact that I had been married in 1951, so I consulted with my wife, and we decided to give the Foreign Service a try. That led to a long career.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, after entering the Foreign Service, it wasn't too long before you became what I might call rather deeply interested in Africa. Was there some special motivation for this or did it just happen to be a Foreign Service career pattern that started out by your being assigned to Africa?

EDMONDSON: Well, I think it was largely an accident. My original regional interest, if I had any, was perhaps in Southeast Asia. I had taken a multi-disciplinary seminar on Southeast Asia at the University of Nebraska, and continued to follow that interest along with my specialization in International Organization Affairs and International Law at the Fletcher School. As things happened, these interests were quite relevant to my rotational assignments as an intern. Before the end of my assignment as an intern, I was promoted into a regular Civil Service position in the Office of Dependent Area Affairs and stayed there until I entered the Foreign Service in September, 1952. During that time I worked on UN trusteeship affairs, served a couple weeks as an adviser on the US delegation to the Trusteeship Council in New York, and dealt with a number of problems involving some of the African trust territories.

As a result, my last civil service supervisor (Vernon McKay, who later left the Service and had a distinguished academic career teaching African affairs), unbeknownst to me, recommended when I entered the Foreign Service and began my Foreign Service training, that I be assigned to a post in Africa because he thought I would be a good candidate.

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So, when the list of posts came out, I found that I had been assigned to Dar-es-Salaam. And, although most of my classmates expressed sympathy to me on getting such an assignment, I was really very delighted, because I had done enough work on the area to know that it was interesting, and I thought going to a trust territory would be especially interesting.

That started the long career. There's a longer story to it than that, but—

Q: All right, well, let me take you now to Zambia. You arrived in Zambia in—

EDMONDSON: 1965. It was in April, 1965.

Q: April 1965, in the capacity of Deputy Chief of Mission. Is that correct?

EDMONDSON: That's correct, yes.

Q: When you arrived there, what did the staff consist of?

EDMONDSON: There was the Ambassador, myself as DCM replacing Bob Foulon (who had been DCM only a short time, as he was Principal Officer of the consulate that preceded the Embassy and then served as the first Charg# d'Affaires ad interim until the Ambassador arrived), an economic officer (Larry Williamson, who had been number two in the former consulate), a political officer (Eugene Jeffers), a political-consular officer (Temple Cole, who gave special attention to the political refugees from Southern Rhodesia and South Africa), and two administrative officers in what was called the Combined Administrative Management Office, or CAMO. There was an ambassadorial secretary, a DCM secretary who also helped the Economic Officer, and one communicator. I'm not sure that we had any other non-AID American staff at that time, although we later added another communicator whom we shared with the AID mission.

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Q: That staff must have been built up fairly rapidly given the fact that until independence Lusaka served as a kind of outpost of the Consul General in Salisbury. Is that a fair statement?

EDMONDSON: Yes, generally speaking, that's true.

Q: So that in the months before you arrived, all these other people were in the process of arriving as well?

EDMONDSON: Yes. In addition, of course, there were AID officers and I don't recall when they had come, but there were already at least several AID officers on board.

Q: So you had AID officers, that is, staff from the Agency for International Development, and USIA, the information service. Were there other agencies as well?

EDMONDSON: No, that was it.

Q: Okay. The Ambassador was Robert Good, if I remember right, and he was a non-career ambassador.

EDMONDSON: That's correct. He was a non-career ambassador, but he had served for at least two or three, perhaps nearly four, years as the Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for Africa in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). With experience as an academic in political science and as a research specialist, as well as in managing an office of the Department of State, he was quite familiar with the reporting processes of the service; he was certainly not a complete outsider.

Q: He probably expected you, as his Deputy, to fill a particular role in the embassy. Can you tell me a little bit about what he expected of you?

EDMONDSON: Well, he did want me to act as an alter ego for him, which made the job far more interesting. He made it clear to everyone that on many matters they were to

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come first to me and that in such cases my decision would be his decision. Obviously we consulted very, very closely. But he gave me full discretion on signing off on some of the economic and political cables. I used my own judgment as to those which I knew he would want to see. We kept a reading file and, because he was extremely active and interested in substantive matters, himself, I showed quite a large proportion of cables to him. It was only the reporting cables that didn't have extensive interpretation or that sort of thing that I signed off myself.

Q: I take it from what you just said that relations between you and the Ambassador were very favorable.

EDMONDSON: Excellent, in fact. I was extremely fortunate. I was his choice as a Deputy Chief of Mission probably because of reporting that I had done in Ghana. When I returned from Ghana in 1964, he was still the Director of INR's Africa Office—known as INR/RAF then—and had just called a conference at Airlie House of his analysts plus a few selected outsiders, either Foreign Service people or academics. As a former INR analyst, I was one of the FSO's invited to participate. He said then that another reason I was invited was that he had liked the reporting I had done from Ghana. So I think that may also have been an influential factor in his choosing me as a Deputy Chief of Mission (to my surprise) some months later. I had been back in the Department for less than a year when I went to Zambia.

Q: How did you find the quality of the rest of the staff, and did they work together well as a team?

EDMONDSON: By and large, I think the quality was very good and the cooperation was good. We had difficulties with the CAMO, the Combined Administrative Management Office, simply because of the nature of an organization having to serve both the embassy—the new embassy—and the AID staff. Of course, the AID director wanted certain things from the organization, as did the embassy, and there were difficulties from time to time.

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There were extremely difficult administrative problems that CAMO had to deal with, and it had a very small staff. It had a CAMO director and a deputy.

The first CAMO director was an AID officer who had served as an AID executive officer—in Addis Ababa, I believe it was—and was used to running a much larger organization. The deputy was an officer who I think had been a General Services Officer with some limited consular experience at another post. Anyway, both officers found it difficult to cope with an organization that had more demands than it had facilities to meet those demands.

Q: When you arrived there, what was your understanding of what the Department of State in Washington expected the Ambassador and by derivation you to consider to be your principal mission, or his principal mission?

EDMONDSON: Well, in those days, the instructions to ambassadors, to new ambassadors, were far less explicit than they are today. And we didn't have a Mission Statement or country-specific set of instructions to follow. But clearly one of the priority concerns that we had was to help prepare for the possibility of a unilateral declaration of independence in Southern Rhodesia, UDI, as it was called. Before I left for Zambia I was invited to participate in a number of meetings that were being held in the Eastern and Southern African Division of the Africa Bureau (AF) on the matter of preparations to help Zambia in the case of sanctions being applied against Southern Rhodesia. This was still a very academic problem at that time, but already there was a UN official, an economist named Gordon Goundry, who had been assigned to help Zambia lead its own preparations. Goundry had come to Washington to hold meetings with various officials in the Department of State and other agencies to consider what conceivably could be done. It was, as I said, very much still an academic exercise, but it was a very good introduction for me to the kinds of problems that we would be much occupied with when I arrived in Zambia. So I would give that the highest priority.

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The embassy had already explored ideas as to how we could keep or strengthen the western connection of Zambia and other countries in a similar situation if indeed the Ian Smith government in Southern Rhodesia did decide illegally to declare independence.

Q: We'll come back in a bit to talk about your experiences with the UDI process. I think you mentioned an AID mission there, which suggests also that there were some what I might call more bilateral interests in Zambia on the part of the United States. Is that a fair statement?

EDMONDSON: Oh, indeed. There were strong bilateral interests, because of American participation in the copper mining industry in what was then called the Copperbelt, now referred to as the Western Province. There were two major copper companies, the Anglo American group and Roan Selection Trust, the latter of which had strong American participation through American Metals Climax.

Sir Ronald Prain was the Chairman of Roan Selection Trust, known generally as RST, and we kept fairly close contact with both RST and Anglo American concerning copper production, because at that time Zambia vied with Chile for first place in copper production in the world.

Q: How was the AID program focused? Can you recall?

EDMONDSON: Well, the AID program was a very small one, and a very significant part of it was in AID participant training. There was an AID training officer on the AID staff whose name was Bill Weems. The overall program was probably in the range of \$2 million (project funds) annually, and much of its initial emphasis, if I remember correctly, was in the fields of African agriculture and education, including curriculum development. There had been considerable thought given to ways of helping Zambia in the transport field. Even before I arrived, there was some discussion of Zambia's desire for assistance in building a Tanzam Railway. The Zambians, probably with some encouragement from

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the British, I believe, wanted very much to have a rail connection from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to the northern part of the railway that ran through the central part of Zambia from what was then still Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, up to the Katanga area (now the Shaba province) of Zaire (formerly the Congo). The Zambians had no rail connection to any of the ports on East Africa except through Southern Rhodesia and either Mozambique or South Africa.

The US was not particularly eager to involve itself in such a large project and was uncertain as to the economic soundness of the idea, but eventually did agree to finance a study of different projects. This was taken on by the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) and in time produced a series of, I think, some eight volumes or more of separate studies: one concerning the railway, and one the possibility of a Tanzam road connection, which indeed was the one finally chosen for support by AID. Another suggested further study of an oil pipeline, which was undertaken and later done with other assistance. The remaining volumes covered various other aspects of the transport connection.

Q: That road, if I remember right, was eventually called Hell Run when it was built. Yes?

EDMONDSON: That was the one that was known as Hell Run during the period when truckers were bringing oil and petroleum products in from Dar es Salaam by road, yes.

Q: And if I remember right, because in my own time in Zambia it was often mentioned, we did turn down the building of the Tanzam Railway. It was eventually built by the Chinese. Does that go back to your time?

EDMONDSON: Yes. I think the US was inclined to discourage the project even before this study, but I believe it was President Johnson who was reluctant to become involved in such a major project, perhaps because of other distractions at the time, such as Vietnam. But the Stanford Research Institute study did question the economic viability of the railway, noting the need for a great deal of upgrading at the Port of Dar es Salaam and arguing that on strict economic terms it still seemed economically more viable to route exports and

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imports through Beira, Lourenco Marques (now Maputo), and other ports in the south. There were many of us who felt that this failed to take into account important political factors that later did come into play. The SRI report did suggest that an improved road and an oil pipeline were likely to be viable.

Q: If I may ask one question on the Washington end of the line before I switch over to the political-economic situation, who was most concerned and from whom did the embassy more or less expect to get instructions in the Washington hierarchy at the time?

EDMONDSON: Basically, it was from the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. There had been some interest by the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, George Ball, though in fact it was the Bureau that was most important in terms of our instructions. And of course at the time I went out, the office director for the area, then known as AFE, was Jesse McKnight, and we had quite regular communication

Q: Okay, Mr. Ambassador, let's switch over to something more about the political-economic situation that you found when you arrived there. You have already mentioned copper. To what extent was Zambia dependent upon the south, namely Southern Rhodesia at the time, and South Africa, for its economy?

EDMONDSON: Well, one has to go back in history a bit and recognize that Northern Rhodesia had been in effect discovered and developed from the south. It was part of Cecil Rhodes' expansions. Essentially, the mineral discoveries, mines, and the mining industry, were all developed from the south. Also a considerable number of emigrants came up from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Many of the South Africans were in fact Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Zambia's major economic ties, therefore, were with the south, both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. The Anglo American Corporation, despite its name (which came from a major loan raised in the US many years ago, was and still is a South African company with no American connection. Roan Selection Trust or RST, which does have an American connection, was known originally

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as the Rhodesian Selection Trust and was essentially concerned with Southern Rhodesia as well as Northern Rhodesia. Also, the railroad in Zambia had been built as an extension up from Southern Rhodesia across the river at Livingstone near the Victoria Falls. This gave Zambia connections from Southern Rhodesia to Beira, which was important as the port of entry for petroleum products and other imports, as well as south to Lourenco Marques (now Maputo) in Mozambique, and both directly and through Botswana to South Africa. The latter connection crosses the Zimbabwe-Botswana border at Plumtree and enters South Africa from southern Botswana.

Thus, Zambia's main connection was almost exclusively southward in the beginning, although there was a fair amount of communication across from the Copperbelt to Elisabethville in the Katanga (now Shaba) province of Zaire, so there was a relationship there as well. But basically, it was oriented to the south.

Q: That included banking, if I recall.

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes, very much so.

Q: And it also included importation of some of the better things of life like food, at least for the expatriates, and other goodies?

EDMONDSON: Well, at least in part. Zambia produced a good deal of its own local produce. It had, in fact, a pretty good marketing system of local producers of vegetables. But it did import meat from Botswana and other food products from the south. Things like breakfast foods were those that were produced in South Africa. Industrial goods, especially mining equipment, came in from the south and probably still do.

You mentioned banking. I think increasingly a number of the banks were establishing direct branches from Europe, though there were both South African and British banks in Zambia.

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Q: Okay, on the political side of the house, Zambia then had a President, Kenneth Kaunda. It had more than one political party if my memory serves me right, and I wonder if you might like to comment a little bit about that please.

EDMONDSON: Well, the leading party, the government party, was the United National Independence Party, UNIP, which had earlier broken away from the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress, or ANC, which was headed by Harry Nkumbula. The ANC had as its main supporters a large number of the Tongas in the southern province of then Northern Rhodesia, eventually Zambia. UNIP, however, had started largely as a youth movement, and had recruited members from throughout the country, though many accused UNIP of being dominated by Bembas. President Kaunda was himself not a member of any major tribe, since his parents had come originally from a small tribe in Malawi. Nonetheless, there were tribal as well as political divisions. The old line nationalists, such as Harry Nkumbula and others, had been with the ANC, but many of those split away and helped form the first cabinet that President Kaunda led.

Q: To pursue President Kaunda himself. He is, of course, one of Africa's longest standing political figures today. What were the relations between him and Ambassador Good, and by derivation, yourself? And what was your judgment of him?

EDMONDSON: Well, the relationships were good. They were not as frequent as certainly Ambassador Good would have liked to have had. He constantly wished he could have a feet-up-on-the-table conversation with President Kaunda, which never seemed to take place. People who had known Kaunda before would come to town and go out to State House and have dinner and talk about these nice long political conversations. But the calls that Bob Good had were essentially business calls. Kaunda was friendly, outgoing, receptive to ideas and discussion, but didn't seem to let his hair down in quite the way that Bob Good thought would have led to better understanding of deeper problems in the future. I think he saw—it would be hard to say now—but probably he saw Kaunda every

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month or two as well as, of course, seeing him at frequent ceremonies either at State House or elsewhere.

I had a reasonably good relationship as well, though only when I was Charg# or at other times when I saw Kaunda perhaps at the airport or various ceremonies. He was friendly the times that I went to see him. Again, he was businesslike, but receptive to ideas. I remember once taking up a human rights problem at my own initiative—it was a case some tourists had seen in which a young Zambian woman acting as their official guide was beaten up by a group of young men in the market because her dress was too short (or something of that sort)—and I simply raised this with Kaunda as a situation where the lack of police action to protect the woman or arrest her attackers would not be understood by people from the outside. (The attackers were allegedly UNIP party supporters.) He seemed quite concerned and indicated that he would try to do something about it.

Q: Who else in the government besides the President was a power? The Foreign Minister?

EDMONDSON: Well, certainly the Foreign Minister. The first Foreign Minister that I dealt with was Simon Kapwepwe, who was extremely important and later became Vice President. Well after I left the scene, however, Kapwepwe ran into some difficulty with Kaunda and the party. But at the time I was there, he was particularly important. The Vice President also seemed of some importance, though it was difficult to know just how much at the time.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, to what extent did Kaunda share foreign policy considerations with Kapwepwe? Or, put another way, which of the two did you and the Ambassador see more often on foreign policy matters?

EDMONDSON: Well, I think we saw Kapwepwe certainly more often than the President, but I would say the President exercised the strongest influence or direction, and one had the feeling that within the cabinet or within party circles Kapwepwe and the President worked very closely. There were often rumors of some kind of rivalry between the two. We

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certainly discounted these at the time and didn't particularly feel that there was a pull away from the basic thrust that Kaunda wanted, although we did feel then that Kapwepwe was probably more inclined than Kaunda was to be sympathetic to the Soviet Union, China, and other bloc countries, despite the importance of nonalignment to Zambia's foreign policy.

Q: To go back to Kaunda himself a little bit, he adopted, if I recall correctly, a philosophy called humanism. He was also a rather emotional man. Could you comment on both of those?

EDMONDSON: Well, there was a series of books that came out about humanism. Some of them while I was there. The first, I think, was called *A Humanist in Africa*, written by Kaunda with assistance from a Methodist minister. The Methodists had joined with a few other churches to form the United Church of Zambia. This particular minister was Colin Morris who was from the Copperbelt and had known Kaunda for some time. They had become good friends and were both interested in a liberal philosophy.

The title "humanism"—I'm not sure where it came from—was unfortunate to the extent that it used the same name (and may have given the impression of being the same) as a much earlier body of philosophical thought that is generally referred to (and much argued about in our educational system today) as secularism. In Kaunda's mind, however, I think humanism probably meant little more than placing a first and primary emphasis on the dignity of individual human beings, although there is certainly an African content to his writing that emphasizes the importance of the human sense of community in a very African way. While one gets this from reading his books, one also senses that, as with many philosophies, there are frequent problems of inconsistencies and conflict between the theory and practice of humanism. But I think that as far as President Kaunda was concerned, then and now, his ideas of humanism are a very genuine and serious part of his outlook on life, which is probably what has made Kaunda so attractive to such a wide variety of people. It is a kind of sincerity of interest he appears to have in doing what he

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feels is best for the largest number of people, especially for the people of Zambia and, in a broader sense, Africa. The fact that these feelings may be highly subjective makes them no less sincere.

I believe that Kaunda's philosophy has made him see other sides of questions, and though he has very firm ideas on certain basic human problems, he has always had a willingness, I think, to sit down and talk to the other side. This is a very useful and healthy attribute to have for diplomacy, and it evidenced itself a number of times later in connection with negotiations on Southern Rhodesia and relationships with South Africa on the Namibia problem and similar issues.

As nearly everybody knows, Kaunda cries often during his public speeches and some other ceremonies, but I have no reason to believe that these expressions of emotion are not genuine, even when they seem in conflict or inconsistent with his failure to criticize acts by some of his supporters. He seems a genuinely emotional man.

Q: How did you and the Ambassador find access in general to Zambians, beginning with the President and throughout the government?

EDMONDSON: Well, in the first place we found—and I should put it more in terms of my own experience, but we discussed it very, very often—that the Zambians tended to be somewhat introverted and reserved with regard to foreigners of all kinds. It wasn't a particularly racial or cultural thing, and I later found during my time there that some Africans, African diplomats from other states, often had the same kind of experience with Zambians.

My last post had been in West Africa where there is a very outgoing society, a very extroverted society, and I found it interesting to make some cultural and political comparisons between that and Zambia. In Ghana, for instance, nonalignment had been a kind of extroverted nonalignment with everybody coming in. You could imagine somebody with their arms outstretched saying “come in, come in.” One can always argue as to what

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treatment was accorded to those who were being invited to come, but that's a different issue. In the case of Zambia one had the feeling that those arms were outstretched with the palms facing outward. Everybody stay out, stay out. Perhaps that's too extreme, but the parallel that I drew was one between extroverted nonalignment and introverted nonalignment. In other words, in West Africa, I had found that they wanted the Americans in, they wanted the Soviets, they wanted the Chinese. In Zambia, on the other hand, while some of the typically good African hospitality existed as elsewhere in the continent, the Zambians seemed in many respects equally suspicious of the Soviets, the Chinese, the Americans, or the British. They still looked on the British with feelings of anti-colonialism, of course, yet in many respects they knew and admired the British and would refer to them as "the devil you know." So there was a great deal of respect for the British, but there was also a considerable amount of distrust going back to the colonial period.

If you go back even earlier in history, what I think you find is that the Zambians always seemed to be in the middle of crisscrossing migrations of people even before European colonists ever came. People were always coming into Zambia from somewhere else, and if you were already there, you got pushed and shoved around, all of which led to the development of a fairly healthy concern for not giving way to outsiders.

I may be putting too much into this, but I do believe that the Zambians had developed this kind of reserve toward outsiders, and that it was possibly reinforced, as they took over the reins of a new, independent government, with a concern that they find out how to do things themselves. They obviously looked particularly to the British for assistance and advice, but I think that you frequently ran into situations where they didn't want to be told how to do something. They wanted to find it out for themselves, and various anecdotes come to mind where normal presentations that a diplomat might make to get Zambian officials to understand and perhaps adopt a particular position on an international issue would be regarded with suspicion because they felt it was up to them to determine their own position without necessarily listening to somebody else.

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Access was difficult at times because of this reserve or suspicion. I don't want to overemphasize the suspicion nor underemphasize the friendliness that you got from individual Zambians, particularly I think, from those who had traveled or gone to school abroad, of which there were very few in the early years, of course. [I believe much of this changed as Zambians became more experienced and confident in self-government.]

Q: We'll stop here.

This is Side 2 of my interview with Ambassador Edmondson. Given what you have just said, did you and the Ambassador find that dialogue with the Zambians flowed rather freely, that there was a good understanding of the positions of the two countries when you discussed matters with them?

EDMONDSON: Well, I think there was a reasonable understanding. There was this reserve when it came to matters of direct interest internationally as well as bilaterally. But I think that the Zambians appreciated the US position of support for Zambia both before and, of course, after UDI. This included support for helping Zambia find ways to maintain itself in spite of sanctions against Southern Rhodesia. I think they saw this as genuine, as necessary to them, and helpful. This made access much easier on certain occasions. On the whole, I believe we had little difficulty in discussing international political issues with them, although they were at times very reserved about taking positions (especially ones of agreement with us) on any faraway matter that they thought could affect their nonalignment.

I can recall one instance of really good access. I happened to be Charg# at the time our former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, G. Mennen (Soapy) Williams, came on a visit to Zambia. This made it possible to invite people who normally didn't go out very often to foreigners' homes to come see Governor Williams again. He had visited earlier—I believe it was about 1961—and became very well known in Zambia because it was in Lusaka, just as he was getting off the plane, that some white settler rushed up on

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the steps and socked him on the jaw. The reason for the attack was a speech Williams had made earlier in the trip expounding for the first time his policy slogan of “Africa for the Africans!” That certainly made him very popular with the Zambians, and the incident stuck in their minds. It established a relationship that helped Americans in many ways by illustrating the sincerity of our anticolonialism and our support for African aspirations for self government and for economic development.

Q: There were other countries represented in Lusaka at the time, most particularly the British. How large was the diplomatic corps then and were there interests on the part of other countries besides the British?

EDMONDSON: Yes, the British had by far the largest mission, but all of the other diplomatic missions were limited to 25 people on the staff. I can recall that there were Germans, French, Chinese. The Israelis were prominent in assisting Zambia at the time. And the Russians, of course, had a fairly good sized diplomatic mission. I'd have to go back and check our diplomatic list at the time, but the diplomatic corps was much larger, for instance, than you would find in South Africa today.

Q: How did you find our relations with the British?

EDMONDSON: Our relationships with the British were extremely good and close. We had regular consultations with them. We worked cooperatively on trying to find ways to assist Zambia in overcoming the problems of sanctions against Southern Rhodesia. There were times when each party probably felt the other could do more. I think the British did provide a lot of assistance to Zambia in terms of rolling stock on the railway originally, for trucks, for road maintenance and repairs, and a number of other things for preparing for UDI.

There was a period immediately before UDI—when it looked like it would in fact take place—that we began surveying almost every day of the week how many tons could be brought in by one of the various road routes—the Great East Road, the Great North Road, and so on—because it would affect very much what kinds of assistance would be needed. The

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British clearly led this effort by providing people to the Zambian government to work on their emergency preparations and by providing the financing. Other countries, of course, were interested, but particularly the United States and Canada.

When UDI in fact came and the consequent oil embargo resulted in the Southern Rhodesians cutting off any transit of oil up to Zambia, we had a real emergency. This was in the Fall—November and December—of 1965. And just after Christmas they began rationing petrol. I can remember vividly that for the first five week rationing period we had four imperial gallons of gasoline for each vehicle. That was very difficult. I happened to have had hepatitis right after Christmas and was home on my back for nearly a month, so I didn't suffer as much from the transport problem as others did. But in preparation for this I can remember buying bicycles for myself and my wife. Our two children already had bikes. And during the period that I was home, my wife had to do her shopping by bicycle to the nearest shopping center, which was about a mile or so away.

In the second period I think the ration went up to six imperial gallons for a month. Eventually it went to eight and then ten, and then we thought we were in very good straits when we finally got 14 imperial gallons a month. The reason the ration increased was that we, along with the British and the Canadians, had instituted an airlift of gasoline and other petroleum products from different ports around.

Prior to that, I should say, we worked very hard in anticipation of the need for such an airlift. It had been discussed, but no one had made any commitments. AID had sent a man out (Ed Hogan, I think his name was). I think this was in early December, 1965 and I can remember working late nights figuring what would be necessary and working with the AID representative to get agreement on what the US would contribute. Eventually the decision was to use a Boeing 707 to bring products down from Kinshasa to Elisabethville and then have them brought over by rail from there to the Copperbelt and onward via the Zambian rail system. That was the American contribution, and with the 707's we could carry very large amounts of petroleum compared to the L100 or the C-130 military version of the

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Lockheed Hercules aircraft that was being used by the Canadians. Their air force C-130's were flying all the way to Lusaka from Kinshasa. And the British were using smaller civilian aircraft, the equivalent of a DC6B (the Britannia, I believe it was called), from Dar-es-Salaam to Lusaka. The increasing amount of oil supplies brought that way permitted an increase in rations throughout. During this same period, also, work had begun on a pipeline which eventually relieved the pressure on Zambia in the petroleum field.

Q: Is it fair to assume that from the time that you arrived in early 1965, much of Kaunda's preoccupations were with Southern African matters, particularly with Southern Rhodesia and the impending UDI?

EDMONDSON: Especially UDI, yes. He believed very strongly that the British should take firm military action in the event that UDI should occur, and the British more or less telegraphed their lack of punch by saying that they would not use military force. Prime Minister Wilson made that very clear, and I think removed any element of doubt that might have been entertained in Southern Rhodesia. It's my opinion, and certainly I think it was the opinion of the Zambians, that this simply encouraged the Southern Rhodesians to proceed with the UDI. There had been some question as to whether the loyalty of the Rhodesian military would have been to the crown or to the Southern Rhodesian government, but as it turned out, there wasn't any question and there wasn't any threat to the Smith regime.

The British did send in a squadron of jet fighters which were stationed in Lusaka for a while and would occasionally zoom over the city, but after—I've forgotten now—6 or 8 weeks perhaps, maybe less, the Zambians felt that the aircraft were doing no good, that they weren't a threat to the Rhodesians, and that they weren't particularly necessary for protection of Zambia. In fact, they may have suspected ulterior motives on the part of the British—of what sort are unclear, but in any event they asked the British to remove their jets and take them back to the UK, which they did.

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I think it was during this period that one of the Zambian politicians who had served as the Zambian High Commissioner in London used the phrase “The Toothless Bulldog” to refer to the British for their lack of any action against the Southern Rhodesians.

We did get into a period where the British, some of the British officers at the High Commission at least, seemed to be critical of the Zambians for not participating more thoroughly in sanctions themselves. This was because the Zambians continued to allow certain supplies to come in from Southern Rhodesia even after UDI and during the period of sanctions on petroleum and other products. The British argued that Zambia should apply sanctions more completely even though the Zambians felt this would only destroy their own economy. There was a continuing argument between them on this, and I must say I think we felt some sympathy for the Zambians. There was a certain feeling among people in Zambia that the British criticism of Zambia's failure to apply sanctions completely was designed in part to temper Zambian criticism of the lack of British action. In other words, there was some sort of an impasse, though cooperation did continue on bringing things into Zambia. Nonetheless, I think this period of charges and counter charges represented a low point in the Zambian-British relationship.

Q: The whole issue of UDI was primarily played out between the British and not only Zambia but, of course, the Southern Rhodesians, and to some extent the South Africans. You mentioned the US role in helping to supply or helping break the oil embargo. Did we have other roles to play during that period?

EDMONDSON: Basically, no. I think we did try to encourage a sensible attitude on the part of the Zambians in preserving their industry, the copper industry. We looked at different possibilities for assistance with the importation of coal—for instance, whether they could have used the coal fields in the southern province of Zambia, but the quality of coal there proved insufficient to substitute for the coal that had been received from the Wankie coal fields of Southern Rhodesia. Also, efforts were made to convert from the use of coal to the

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use of oil in the smelter furnaces up on the Copperbelt, so we were concerned with that sort of thing as well.

Also, we certainly continued our economic assistance in agriculture, education, things like government cost minimization, and participant training in various fields not necessarily related to the political situation or to UDI. We found that the Zambians were interested in what went on in South Africa, but at that time it still was fairly remote from their basic concern with what was going on in Southern Rhodesia.

Q: If my memory serves me right, there was at least one instance of a rather serious demonstration against the embassy. Do you recall that and could you tell us a little bit about it?

EDMONDSON: Yes, this goes back though to the domestic situation in the United States. You have to remember that we're now observing the two decades that have passed since the disturbances here in Washington in 1968. The assassination of Robert Kennedy was what triggered this particular demonstration. Beyond that, we were never quite sure just who stimulated the demonstration or why, except perhaps that it was just high emotion or the feeling that there were groups in the United States that were anti-black, and anti-African, and must somehow have been behind the assassination of Robert Kennedy. We were never able to establish how it began. The demonstration was small and rather short lived. There was a picture in the paper the next day of Ambassador Good and me standing out in front of the embassy, looking rather angry, confronting this group. But essentially it was peaceful; nothing was thrown. There were some shouts and placards, but it was simply a demonstration of concern at a situation that was clearly difficult in the United States at that time.

Q: Looking back now, Mr. Ambassador, what would you feel were your most satisfying accomplishments when you were in Zambia and conversely your greatest disappointment?

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EDMONDSON: I think the accomplishments were mainly those of making a contribution to getting Zambia through this difficult period. Many, many people contributed to that, and it took a lot of work, a lot of coordination, consultations, and discussions with Zambians and British and other allies who were concerned. We spent a lot of late nights trying to get information back to Washington on what Zambian needs were, and while much of this would appear quite minute now—that is, the minutiae and details that we reported back—they were essential parts of a general effort to give the support that Zambia so much needed. The fact that this was of considerable help gave us a feeling of accomplishment.

Another accomplishment was the gradual improvement in our own situation as far as the embassy was concerned. We started out in a commercial building downtown—on the second floor of Chester House on Cairo Road—with the AID officers in another building and the CAMO office in a storefront location nearby, and a tiny garage-sized warehouse further away. These were not very good circumstances. I think my office was perhaps 8 feet by 10 feet at the most. During this period, we constructed a new building, a very pleasant building which, with subsequent additions, looks very nice today and seems to serve the embassy well. How great it was to move into that new building and have better offices! We persuaded President Kaunda to come and officially open the chancery, which pleased us very much. That too was an accomplishment. It was an accomplishment of many, many people. I think our administrative services also gradually improved, and we were able to institute useful internal guidelines and regulations.

I do recall when I first arrived going over to the little garage size warehouse and being taken aback by a great pile of supplies on the floor, completely mixed up and not properly accounted for. Although we had a great deal of difficulty establishing controls, we were able in time to improve them greatly. We improved our communications tremendously over this period. Obviously, rapid communications were important to the kind of work that we were doing, but when we started out, we had one communicator working in a miserable situation like a “black hole of Calcutta.” When he had to use his incinerator, the

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smoke went around his whole communications center. In our new chancery, we had a fairly modern communication center that permitted us not only to transmit messages for ourselves, but occasionally to help the Zambians in emergencies—and I think maybe even the British a time or two. To me, that kind of improvement in our staff, our facilities, and our procedures represented a considerable accomplishment.

The last 7 months of my time there, I was Charg# because Ambassador Good decided to resign right after the November 1968 election. He wanted to go back to academic life and he didn't want to wait until a replacement came, so he left sometime in early December 1968, I believe it was, and his replacement, Oliver Troxel, was not named for several months. Troxel finally arrived either in late May or early June of 1969. There was quite a long period during which I was Charg# and had to deal with a number of matters that were routine, but important to our operations continuing—mostly little problems of aid, questions of post management and administrative operations, handling visitors, doing reporting, and of course, maintaining good relations with the Zambian government. Doing so and doing so successfully was a rewarding personal accomplishment.

The period toward the end was at times tedious. We went through an election, I recall, and I had to do a fair amount of reporting. We did have a very small staff, and it required a lot of late evenings and hard work. But I can't, as I look back now, remember any major disappointments. It was a time of pretty steady achievement, I believe.

Q: One last question has to do with general every day living. Did you find living fairly pleasant? Were you able to get around the countryside and see much of Zambia?

EDMONDSON: I got to see a lot in some respects, but not nearly as much as I would have liked, because of the constant preoccupation we had with operational matters—certainly during the airlift—and we couldn't travel during that period. But I did get over to the eastern province and into Malawi, down as far as Blantyre, on one trip. On one occasion that is memorable to me still, Ambassador Good and I traveled with our families to see the

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Kuomboka, the annual ceremony at which the paramount chief, or Litunga, of the Barotse tribal group (in which the Lozi are the main tribe), goes by barge from his winter capital on the inundated flood plain of the upper Zambezi to his summer village headquarters on higher ground, some miles away. A very interesting ceremony.

I got up to the Copperbelt a couple of times, and down to Livingstone to see the falls, as well as to see people in the Livingstone area and Kariba—that sort of thing. But there just wasn't time to get to many of the areas, or to do a lot of the business traveling one would normally do.

Q: Was living in Lusaka reasonably comfortable?

EDMONDSON: Yes, living was comfortable. Zambia has a delightful climate really. Perhaps only one month of the year, October, is terribly hot. People often called it the suicide month, but if you come from the Washington area or from Nebraska as I did, you didn't find it too bad. It's a dry heat and while indeed it was hot, it was still very pleasant and fairly cool in the evenings. And the cold season very rarely would get down to freezing, perhaps a frost occasionally. But most of the year is the kind of weather where people can play golf or tennis, and it's a good climate for family life. We had a good school situation at that time. I was in Zambia just earlier this year and found that it's still a very pleasant place to live, as far as climate and geography go. If one can get supplies, especially food and other necessities, it can be very pleasant.

We had two different houses while I was there. One was a house designed and built by a South African who used a voortrekker theme of wagon wheels shapes, cathedral type windows, and a round central lounge. It looked rather interesting from the outside. It was very, very nice for large scale entertaining. The bedrooms were comfortable, but the living room was a little bit large to enjoy yourself in just as a family. Then we moved after two years to the former Ghanaian High Commissioner's house which we rented from the

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Ghanaians after they broke relations with Zambia. That was only about a block and a half from our new chancery. That was extremely pleasant, very comfortable.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, if I may now take you to an earlier period of your career when you were in Tanganyika, today Tanzania, could you contrast a little bit for us your experiences there with those you later had in Zambia?

EDMONDSON: Well, that was, of course, a different time and almost a different world from the Africa of today and the Africa of even just a few years after the time that I was in Dar es Salaam. I had been working on trusteeship affairs in the Department before I joined the Foreign Service proper, so I was familiar with the trust territories, particularly with Tanganyika and with other parts of Africa. So I was very interested and excited when I received my first assignment to Dar es Salaam.

We arrived there in February 1953 at an airport that consisted of thatched buildings, thatched roof and sides, and one had the feeling that you were really arriving in deepest, darkest Africa. We drove into town and were put up at what was then called the New Africa Hotel. It's now referred to probably as the old New Africa because it has been replaced by a newer building. It had been the Kaiserhof in German days, an interesting place with wide balconies and rooms that opened almost completely to the outside. You had to duck behind a 3-foot square pillar to dress in the evening if you didn't want to be seen by the people on the second floor of the house across the street.

The consulate was in a building called the Cable and Wireless building on a side street right across from the post office, about a block and a half from the hotel. The staff was small. There was a Consul—the Consul had left just the day before I arrived—a Vice Consul that I was replacing, and an American secretary. That was the American staff. There was a British stenographer. A young Eurasian girl was the file clerk, and three barefoot African messengers did the char work and odd jobs. It was a tiny staff that had to do a little bit of everything, but little in great depth. I remember we did our own ciphering

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and deciphering of the few telegraphic messages that we sent or received. Most of the telegraphic messages were on urgent administrative matters or sometimes consular questions. As I think of the two and a half years that I was there, I can recall only one political telegram that we sent. Most of our communications were dispatches, as they were still called in those days, and we had one courier pouch a month.

The major political interest the United States had in the country was in its status as a UN trust territory, because it came up in the sessions of the Trusteeship Council, and we were interested in furthering its progress toward self government and eventual independence. So our major political work was to monitor government activity and political events affecting the country's progress toward self government.

Our economic interest was largely in trade, particularly in the US importation of sisal. We were interested also in cashew nuts, but in fact those were exported first to India where they were processed for re-export to the United States. There was some production of diamonds and cotton, a small production of gold in the northwest, coffee on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, and tea in the Southern Highlands province of Tanganyika, as it was known then.

During the period that I was there, the Vice Consul that I replaced was called away after about a month to rejoin the former Consul, who had left on transfer to the Consulate in Port Elizabeth, South Africa the day before I arrived in Dar es Salaam. I was left alone in charge of the post for about a month and had to do a lot of late night reading of the Foreign Affairs Manual, the Foreign Service Manual I think it was still called then, to figure out how to handle passport applications, visas and so on, though we certainly had little consular work to do.

Most of the consular work was in renewing passports or issuing passports to American missionaries up country. There were very few Americans in Dar es Salaam. I think besides those who were stationed at the consulate itself there was one person there on

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an academic grant doing some scholarly work. There was an American manager of the CALTEX Petroleum Company who was there with his wife for a short time, and a woman of Greek origin who had a claim to American citizenship. That was it. We had very few visa applications, some but not many, and a fair amount of our time was spent on consular invoices that were required in those days for sisal and other goods shipped to the United States.

That gave us time to do political reporting, and the nationalist movement was still a nascent one. Julius Nyerere had just returned as a teacher in a Catholic high school near Dar es Salaam. He had received his Ph.D. at Edinburgh University, had begun some political organizing, and was considered to be a rather radical activist by the colonial government. The Governor was Sir Edward Twining, a rather pompous looking man but an effective governor. There was an executive council and a legislative council performing the roles of a cabinet and a parliament, if you will, of a modern society, but as colonial versions.

The Chief Secretary was in effect a kind of Prime Minister of the government and an important figure, as were such officials as the Member for Local Government and other Executive Council Members, Provincial and District Commissioners, and so on. It was a regular colonial set-up.

Q: These were all British?

EDMONDSON: They were all British. There was one great sign of progress at the time, one African district officer, but not a district commissioner yet. The British were very proud of his having achieved that status. We Americans were known generally as anti-colonialist. This was a period not long after World War II and, of course, the US was regarded, I think throughout the world, as being fairly anti-colonial. And while our relations were good with the British, I think we clearly differed with them and they with us on our pressures toward more rapid progression toward self-government.

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The new Consul, who arrived at the end of my month as the only officer in the consulate, was Dave Marvin who had come from a post in London, but left after a few months (in September 1953) to go into academic life. (He is retired now, having spent many years as a professor and department head at San Francisco State University.) I think it was Dave who first met Julius Nyerere and introduced him to me at some public ceremony. And later on I followed up and became quite well acquainted with Nyerere. I would say he was probably one of my prime political contacts at the time.

After Marvin left, there was another hiatus before Bob McKinnon, the next Consul arrived. And I think I had a period of perhaps a month or six weeks then alone again in charge of the post. It was during this period that I met a lot of people among the African, Asian, and European communities, who were quite divided at that time. They each had their own political party. Nyerere had started the Tanganyika African National Union, which was a reorganization of the old Tanganyika African Association. The latter had been an association consisting primarily of educated Africans and chiefs, fairly conservative or moderate even, and interested of course in the advancement of Africans, but not very assertive politically.. Nyerere's ideas were much more radical in the eyes of the colonial administration, as his goal was to develop a real political movement. In fact, one source of mine in the local government's "Special Branch"—where I checked occasionally to see if anybody had a criminal record before we issued a visa—told me that Nyerere had had very suspicious left wing connections in Britain, including people like George Padmore. But in my own conversations with Nyerere, I found him not radical in a philosophical sense at all. At least in the way Americans look at political development, he simply wanted for his own people what I think we all want for ourselves, and that was considered rather radical at the time by those who believed firmly in the colonial regime.

Reporting on people and events in such times was a very, very interesting occupation. One relied a little bit on the press, but there was only one major newspaper. There was an Asian-owned weekly that was not very strong on political matters, but the main paper was

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the British-owned Tanganyika Standard, somewhat biased I think toward the colonial point of view and toward the European settler point of view. I remember there was a European settler organization, called the Tanganyika European Council, TEC, headed by a man by the name of Tom Tyrell, who had some connection with the Capricorn Africa Society that was based in what was to become the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury. There was also an Asian association. So there was a three-way division in politics, especially as there was beginning to be some movement toward the eventual establishment of a legislative council that would have elected outside members as well as those that were either officials or nominated by the government. Before I left, in fact, Nyerere did become the first African member of a newly created legislative assembly for Tanganyika.

Q: This is Side 3, here with Ambassador Bill Edmondson, and we're talking about his experiences in Tanganyika.

Mr. Ambassador, I take it from what you've been saying that you were able in those days to have contact with Tanzanians. Was this US government policy or not, and did this cause any problems with the British?

EDMONDSON: Well, it's difficult to say it was or wasn't a policy. I think it was policy in the sense that our job was to report on political developments, and we reported directly to Washington. (We did not report to or through London or any other post.) We didn't have any special instruction as to whom we should see. Much was left to our own judgment in those days. We had to take care of our consular duties, obviously. That was a primary concern along with reporting on trade and economic relationships, but to report on political developments you have to talk to all kinds of elements. It wasn't all that easy at the beginning to meet Africans, and I felt particularly lucky that through Dave Marvin—and I don't recall now how he met Nyerere first—I met Nyerere and that he was really my first and probably best political contact on the African side. But because of our trust territory relationship, the fact that we were a permanent member of the trusteeship council, and

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because Britain as the administering authority of the trust territory had a responsibility to report to the trusteeship council and submit annual reports and other documentation on the political progress of the territory, there was a firm basis on which to ask questions and see people.

As I mentioned, there were these three main organizations outside the colonial government, and so one reported on their activities as well as on various governmental operations and on such things as the budget. I can remember that one major task was going to see people in the process of following a very complex budget—one that involved both a capital account and a current account—and trying to make sense of that and report it to Washington. But as far as political contacts, there weren't any specific restrictions, although I learned later quite vividly that there was a resentment of the degree to which we Americans were getting out and asking questions.

I can remember particularly the 1954 UN Visiting Mission. Ambassador Mason Sears was the US representative on the UN trusteeship council and a member of the 1954 visiting mission. When he came to Dar es Salaam, I made a special effort to be in touch with him. I think he came out for a meal or two at the house, and I wanted to make sure that he got some of the viewpoints that we at the consulate had. It was during one of the periods when I was alone that he came. I took him around to see various people and sights in Dar es Salaam and used that opportunity to brief him to the extent possible on the observations that I and others had made of what was going on in the territory.

Later on, when the visiting mission report came out, there were parts of it that were very critical of the British in their administration of the territory. The report came to the territory in about three copies, I understand. One of them came to the consulate through, of course, the Department of State, and the colonial government got at least two, one of which it gave to the Tanganyika Standard which printed what in my opinion was a rather biased version, primarily emphasizing those things in the report that described what the British were doing that was good.

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Nyerere had not seen the report, but came to see me one day with some of his colleagues and noticed that I had a copy of it on a side table nearby. In fact, it was open and I had been making some marginal notes on it. He asked if he could borrow it, and since I had read it through and saw no reason not to do so—since it was a public document—I said yes, but that I would like to have it back within the next couple of days. I think that was probably on a Monday, and I asked him if he could get it back to me on Thursday.

In any event, he took it and he returned it a couple of days later than we had agreed, but he'd had some problems, some good reason, I think, for it. But this became an issue, which was exacerbated—as I discovered later on—because it was during the period when I was alone and Bob McKinnon was in the United States on home leave. (He had come on direct transfer and gone on home leave not long afterward, then had a medical problem and was away much longer than he had anticipated.) Anyway, these events also occurred during a time when both Governor Sir Edward Twining and the Chief Secretary (who I had come to know quite well) were away. The Acting Governor was a man by the name of Page-Jones, who was normally the Member for Local Government and was one of the few members of the Executive Council that I knew less well and one who always seemed more critical of American activity than others.

In any event, as I recall it—and much of this I heard more or less second hand rather than having real documents, although some of it is documented—the British, under Acting Governor Page-Jones, cabled the Colonial Office in London and asked that I be declared *persona non grata* because of my close association with Africans. The Colonial Office, reportedly at least, went to the Foreign Office and passed on this recommendation, but the Foreign Office said that they couldn't do this because the Americans were allies. Apparently the Foreign Office thought it was ridiculous, but agreed to raise the matter in Washington. In Washington the Colonial Attach#—there was such a creature in those days—called the Bureau of European Affairs who didn't know anything about the matter, of course, but said they would look into it. They simply listened to the British bill of particulars,

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which I will describe in a minute, then went to the Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs, where the Office of African Affairs was located then, and AF responded that the whole thing was ridiculous.

One of the accusations was that I was anti-British. Another was that I had loaned Nyerere a copy of the UN visiting mission report. Of course, that was an unclassified document for general distribution in the UN and there was no reason that I shouldn't have loaned it to him. A third charge was that I advised Nyerere (presumably on political tactics). This seems to have stemmed from a number of questions that I asked different people in the process of trying to get information for reporting.

One of the questions I recall asking Nyerere and some other African leaders, as well as Tom Tyrell on the European side, and some of the members of the Asian Association, was whether any of them had made any effort to get in touch with each other and get together on what some of their views were. This was apparently reported to Special Branch in Dar es Salaam by someone—I suspect one of the contacts I had in Nyerere's organization—who may have phrased it in such a way as to make it seem that I was urging them to get together to oppose the government, or that I was advising Nyerere in that way. In any event, that was one of the British allegations.

One of the more ridiculous complaints—I have this all in my records somewhere—was that I had entertained Africans without having British present, which was true of course, but seemed to be something the British considered improper, just not done. In any event, to show that I was not anti-British, one of the desk officers from our Office of African Affairs called the British Embassy colonial attach# back and read to him some passages selected from some of my reports and some of my comments on the visiting mission report. The desk officer read sections in which I noted some errors made by the visiting mission and various instances where the report had not given the British credit for some of the better things they had done for the development of the territory, selections that showed fairly clearly that I had been reporting objectively. I think they probably didn't read to him some

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of my more critical comments, although I don't think any of them were all that terribly critical.

In any event, the issue blew over soon, maybe because I was about to be transferred anyway. This was sometime in the spring of 1955, and I was really quite worried about it. As it turned out, it probably did me a fair amount of good in the Foreign Service because of the obviously active role I had taken in political reporting. Subsequently, the Director of the Office of African Affairs made a trip around Africa and was asked as one of his duties to call on Governor Twining (who had returned by that time) to explain that the responsibilities of our diplomatic and consular officers required us to get out and make contacts and do political reporting. He stressed that I had been doing just that, and so they should not be concerned at that kind of activity, especially in a UN Trust Territory.

The whole incident illustrates the sensitivity that existed on the part of the colonial administration, at least in certain circles. I can recall among other things that I had become very close friends with a British labor officer who was originally stationed in Dar es Salaam and then moved up country. It was purely a social relationship, although we certainly discussed things like trade unions and economic development in Tanganyika. He was a great student of Swahili, and he and his wife were friendly, interesting people—just a very nice couple. They returned on leave to Dar es Salaam once and we invited them to stay with us. I can recall that he was criticized by his own superiors for having stayed with an American consular officer. I don't know what in fact transpired, but I had the feeling that he must have been reprimanded at having this kind of relationship.

So, again, as I say, there were sensitivities to American attitudes and American activities, though in fact there was nothing at all that could have been called subversive from our point of view. But it was a period where elsewhere in Africa other American diplomats were under similar pressures for any activities they engaged in to make contacts and get political information, as you probably experienced yourself in Mozambique. I recall that we had a Vice Consul who was actually declared *persona non grata* in Leopoldville—

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I believe it was there—at about the same time. I'm not sure of the actual time or place. But this was a period—as I like to remind Africans today—during which the United States was indeed an anti-colonial power supporting African aspirations for self government and independence.

There were other interesting things. As I mentioned, we did a little bit of everything. I had arrived and found that I was to be the Assistant Disbursing Officer, an assistant to the regular Disbursing Officer who was in Nairobi, so that meant that I had to do the monthly accounts. I can recall the first month's accounting that I did. The Vice Consul that I was replacing was about to leave and was to close out his last month of accounts, but when he started to work on them he closed the safe on his middle finger and cut off the tip. I took him to the hospital and found myself having to close out the accounts alone. So I learned the hard way about vouchers and fiscal management. It stood me in very good stead later on.

There were other administrative duties. We were building two residences at the time, one for the Consul, one for the Vice Consul. After spending about six weeks in the New Africa Hotel, my wife and I moved into a British businessman's flat for two or three weeks to “house-warm,” as they called it in those days. Then finally, after my predecessor left and our effects had arrived, we moved into an apartment on Windsor Street, a fairly small place on the second floor above a travel agency— which is still there incidentally, Kearsley's Travel Agency—in an area where there were tin roofs all around us. I can remember cats fighting and howling on the hot nights—literally, cats on a hot tin roof. Lots of noise, lots of activity. Eventually, when the Consul and his wife, the Marvins, left and there was to be a period of two months or so before the next Consul arrived, we had reached the point with the construction of the two new residences where it was fairly certain that the Consul's residence would be ready for them when they came. So I moved into the rented house that the Consul had lived in. Later, they finished the Vice Consul's house as well, and we moved into that.

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The original Consul's residence that we built became the residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission when an embassy was established. The Vice Consul's residence became the residence of the embassy's political counselor for some years, and just this year (1988) was converted into an American embassy community club. It's only a few houses away from the DCM residence atop the coral cliffs of Oyster Bay, the northern residential area of Dar es Salaam.

I mentioned earlier that we had to do our own deciphering of incoming messages. I can recall vividly on one occasion, just before Christmas, getting several unclassified telegrams in a row saying that we would soon receive an urgent classified telegram that we were to act upon as soon as possible. Then came a very long message, classified secret, and I spent a great deal of time deciphering it. And because long messages were segmented in parts that were transmitted in randomly mixed sequence, it was only when I was close to the end that I discovered that it was President Eisenhower's speech on the lighting of the White House Christmas tree. Why it had been classified so highly I don't know, except that it was not for release until delivery. By the time that I had deciphered it, however, I think he had already given the speech and it could just as well have been sent to us unclassified. I trotted off to the weekly newspaper and managed to get them to publish the full text which might have been seen as a great accomplishment for what was later to be USIS. I didn't have such good luck with the daily paper.

We also did such things as get scholarships going. I'd had the interesting experience of having worked, while I was still in the Department's Trusteeship Division, to get approval for an American offer to the Trusteeship Council of scholarships for the trust territories, then later conducting the first competition to select candidates from Tanganyika for that same scholarship program, and seeing a young man go off to the United States for his university education. This was a man who later on, as he came back from the United States and I was in Switzerland, came to visit us in Bern.

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In that and many other ways our tour in Dar es Salaam was very exciting. Lots was going on. There was political activity to follow. To the north of us in Kenya, the Mau-Mau conflict was going on, and once—I think it was the occasion of the one political telegram I mentioned earlier—some of the Mau-Mau crossed the border into Tanganyika.

We did some traveling around the country. We had two children born in Dar-es-Salaam. It was about four months after our daughter—our first child—was born, that we went about 2,500 miles in our Jeep stationwagon around the territory. We drove up to the northern border and into Kenya, where we saw Lake Amboseli and Mt. Kilimanjaro from the north, spent some time in the area of Moshi and Arusha, then drove out across the Rift Valley to Ngorongoro and back to the main road down through Dodoma and the central part of Tanganyika as far south as Iringa and some of the tea estates south of there. We came back to Dar es Salaam across a new road that was being built with AID assistance—a road that years later became a part of the Tanzam highway to Zambia.

I traveled to Tanga and visited a number of sisal estates. I was one of the first two paying passengers out of the then new port of Mtwara in the southern province of Tanganyika, along with the Director of Grain Storage, a man by the name of George Rulf, whom I had come to know well because of his marriage to Kate Greenway, who had been secretary to the first American Consul in Dar es Salaam. He was going on an official trip, so I accompanied him and made a number of official calls of my own, reporting about the new port and other developments in the south. We traveled by coastal steamer from Mtwara north to Lindi, where we disembarked and remained a day or so before flying back to Dar es Salaam.

Lots of memories flow back from that time, but I'm not sure that they would interest everyone.

Q: Dar es Salaam itself has an interesting name. It stands for...?

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EDMONDSON: Haven of peace. Yes, it was a fascinating harbor, a very beautiful one with a very, very narrow entrance. The tide rushes in and out through that harbor entrance and makes it a difficult one to navigate for some of the ships that come in and out. They used to have many ships standing outside waiting to come in because of the long turnaround time required for cargo handling by “lighters”—smaller vessels and barges used to move goods between ships anchored in the middle of the harbor and the docks on shore. They started building two deep water births, which were nearly complete when I finished my tour there, and so ships were eventually able to come right alongside the docks, and commerce increased. But even those facilities are now much overtaxed I'm told.

There's an interesting dhow harbor further into the bay, beyond the main harbor, where one could see the ancient Arab dhows that came in from Zanzibar and all the way from Muscat and Oman, along with the monsoons. The dhows have been coming literally for centuries to trade with the east coast of Africa. Dhows are very well known, of course, in Zanzibar. Zanzibar at that time was a separate protectorate. It was later incorporated with Tanganyika into the new independent nation of Tanzania, but Zanzibar was always an interesting part of the scene. We later established a separate consulate on Zanzibar. Historically, in fact, the first American consulate on the east African coast had been on the island of Zanzibar from about 1837, I believe, to about 1912. I'm not sure of the exact dates now, but it was not until the 1960's that a consulate was reestablished there. But the island was noted for its export of cloves and it was a fascinating place to visit even in the mid 1950's.

I mentioned the dhows. North of Dar es Salaam one could find an old cemetery, a centuries-old Persian cemetery, with some of the gravestones still mostly intact. These had been coated with an egg tempura mixture to give them a slick patina and make them last longer. Many had been decorated with inset Persian plates, some of which remained and could still be seen in 1955.

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One could drive into the Pugu Hills, inland from Dar es Salaam—I can remember going to see Nyerere out at St. Francis College there, about ten or twelve miles west of Dar-es-Salaam. It was enough higher than the coast to give one a hint of cool breeze and a little relief from the humidity of the hot season. It made a pleasant outing. It was always pleasant to go “up country.” Another spot of special interest was Morogoro, a town about a hundred miles inland. There was a little boarding house, or tourist home you might say, called Morning Side, up in the mountains just outside of Morogoro. It was especially pleasant. I suspect that Morogoro has become a popular place for people to visit now, as it is on the way to one of the game parks.

Q: Bill, you mentioned that there was not a separate Bureau of African Affairs in those days, but you mentioned that there was, however, a Director for Africa. Who was he?

EDMONDSON: I think the first one, when I came out, was John Usher, and his Deputy was Leo Cyr. This was during a period of “Wristonization” or integration of Civil Service and Foreign Service positions. John Usher was Foreign Service, I believe, and Leo Cyr was not. If I remember correctly, Leo Cyr was integrated into the Foreign Service with the same grade, or maybe a higher one, and John was unhappy with this and resigned to take up another position. (He may have left the service even.) In any event, Leo Cyr then became the Acting Director. Later on Fred Hadsel became Director of the Office of African Affairs, and he is the one who came out and visited with Sir Edward Twining to remind him what consular officers did.

Q: Did you have the feeling that Washington was listening to what you were reporting in those days?

EDMONDSON: Yes, very much so, although undoubtedly it was a very limited number of people. Africa hadn't become quite as important as it did later, but it was beginning to interest people more. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and Africa

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who was especially concerned with African affairs was Joe Palmer, who in later years became Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

Washington's primary interest in Tanzania, or Tanganyika as it was then, probably arose from the US role in the UN Trusteeship Council, as I mentioned earlier. That probably gave more interest to our reporting than might otherwise have been the case, but I think there was a growing interest that spread from that. The Office of African Affairs was fairly active then, and there was a growing interest in things African, so much so that the Department of State (possibly with some stimulation from Fred Hadsel, I suspect) decided to establish a special program of academic training for Foreign Service Officers in order to develop a corps of Africanists, or people with some African specialization, for future work in Africa.

Just at the end of my tour in Dar es Salaam—I had in fact just received orders assigning me to the Embassy in Switzerland—and on the very day that I went down to ship my air freight off to Bern, I received a telegram reassigning me to African area training. Because I had just shipped my stuff and because I wasn't at all certain that I wanted to devote the rest of my career just to Africa, I sent a cable back to Washington requesting them to cancel the university training assignment and reinstate the assignment to Bern, which they did. After a couple of years in Bern, however, I was interested in getting back into an area where there was a lot more political excitement than I found in Switzerland (although that was indeed an interesting assignment), so I applied for African area training and was sent to Northwestern University in 1957.

After a year at Northwestern, some three years after I left Dar-es-Salaam, the Department, through the Foreign Service Institute organized the first FSI Africa seminar, in which I was selected to participate. This was a group of twenty young officers who had been working on Africa, led by Fred Hadsel incidentally, which traveled around on a three month tour of Africa, visiting quite a number of the territories and some of the newly independent countries. We spent three weeks in Ghana, including two weeks at the University of Ghana in Legon near Accra; three weeks at Makerere University College in Kampala,

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Uganda; a week each in Nairobi, Kenya and Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia; about ten days in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia; and a week in South Africa. There were shorter stops on the way out and back in places like Lagos in Nigeria, Bangui in French Equatorial Africa, Leopoldville and Stanleyville in the Congo, Mbabane in Swaziland, Lourenco Marques in Mozambique, Abidjan in the Ivory Coast, and Dakar in Senegal—not to mention some interesting refueling stops in places like Tabora in Tanganyika, Douala in the Cameroon, and others.

It was a long, tiring, but interesting tour that gave us all a good, thorough introduction to Africa. I think several of the group had done some academic work on African affairs, so it was a good beginning as we approached the year of Africa in 1960, when so many new states became independent.

Q: Well, Bill, thank you very much. I can't begin to express my appreciation for all your patience and cooperation, your candor. For the record, I might say that Ambassador Edmondson earned his distinguished title by being Ambassador to South Africa at a much later date, and earlier than that served in Ghana, both of which are likely to be subjects of a future interview. Again, may I express my great appreciation to you for being very cooperative and for your extraordinary memory. Thank you again.

EDMONDSON: Thank you a lot, Art, and good luck to the editor.

End of Interview

A D D E N D U M

One significant Zambia-related item that was not covered during the foregoing interview was the assistance provided by the US Government through the African American Institute (AAI) for the building of a secondary school for African political refugees from Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. The Agency for International Development (AID) provided funds for the school—both its construction and its initial operations—by contract payments

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(or annual contract grants, I'm not sure of the exact format) to AAI, which worked directly with the Zambian Government. The project was never described or publicized in Zambia as a US government aid project, apparently because President Kaunda and the Zambian Government regarded that as too sensitive. Nonetheless, Ambassador Good made frequent reference to the AAI - built school as an example of support and assistance provided for the refugees of southern Africa "by the American people." The school, named Nkumbi International College, was located just about a mile off the "Great North Road," at a distance of maybe twenty miles or more northeast of the point (just north of Kapiri Mposhi) where the Great North Road turned off from the Lusaka-Ndola road. Construction began before I arrived in Zambia and was completed during my first year or so. Temple Cole and I, together with our wives, visited it once after it had opened, and I was impressed at how much had been done and how difficult it must have been, in such an isolated location.

The isolation was deliberate, because the Zambian Government did not want the refugee students to be located near Lusaka or any of the other Zambian population centers, reportedly because they did not want the refugees influencing or interfering in Zambian politics. Some local Zambian students were also admitted to the school, and as their proportion grew, efforts were made to get the Zambian Government to assume direct responsibility for administering the school, which I believe they eventually did.

It would be interesting to know what happened to most of the early southern African refugee students at the school and how history will ultimately judge the value of this unique educational endeavor. The school was intended among other things to serve as a feeder—or at least to help in the academic preparation—of candidates for the Southern African Scholarship Program (SASP), which was funded by the US Government and administered by AAI to provide opportunities for qualified southern African refugees to obtain university training in the United States.

PART TWO

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Date: April 26, 1995 Interviewer: Tom Dunnigan

[Note: This transcript was not edited by William Edmondson]

Q: Today is April 26, 1995. This is Tom Dunnigan. This morning I will be completing an interview with Ambassador William Edmondson. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. Bill, you came back from Africa in 1969 and were assigned to the National War College, which is a prestige assignment for any Foreign Service Officer. After that year, you were assigned to the Department, to the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and more specifically, to the African Region of that Bureau. Was this an assignment you had asked for?

EDMONDSON: It was one of the assignments that was available. I had thought of the possibility of going into another bureau, but it was one of the fairly few things that seemed to be open at the moment, and it was an area I was interested in, so I took it quite readily.

Q: You had, I believe, John Richardson as your director at that time. Did he or did the Administration show much interest in cultural exchanges with African countries?

EDMONDSON: Oh, indeed. John Richardson was a very enthusiastic Assistant Secretary. He did want to make a number of changes, because very frequently he wanted to do something, and one of the people who had been there for a long time, one of the Civil Servants, would say, "Well, you can't do it that way," or, "We tried this once before and it didn't work." So he was instrumental, I think, in bringing in more Foreign Service Officers as directors and deputy directors in positions in CU, because they tended to be, in fact, more flexible. They often had — some of them were USIA officers — experience in the field or the area.

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Q: What was the extent of our cultural relations with the White-dominated countries of Africa at that time, such as South Africa and Rhodesia? And also with those that were still colonials, like Angola and Mozambique?

EDMONDSON: It was, I would have to say, almost minimal, with the exception of South Africa. There was a limitation, because they didn't feel they could find enough Black candidates — they had had some — and there was criticism of having too many White candidates from South Africa in particular. We had no program at all with Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, because of the UDI, but I can't really recall that we had much with either Mozambique or Angola. We had a few programs from there, but it was primarily Mozambique.

In South Africa, one of the things that I did when I became Director of the Office of African Programs was to promise them that we could provide more funding if, indeed, they made a greater effort to get Black candidates, "Non-Whites," as they were called, but that's somewhat pejorative, and we soon abandoned the use of that term.

One post came back and said they had scraped the bottom of the barrel, but I increasingly felt that this was not the case, that there obviously were people out there who would work fine. The posts began to get some very, very good candidates from the Black, Colored, and Indian communities, as well as a few Whites. But we clearly changed the percentage, so that nearly three-quarters of the candidates from South Africa were Black. That, among others, included the present "Colored" (in South African terms) South African Ambassador to the United States.

Q: How much of our cultural work in Africa was defensive; that is, blocking the Soviets and the other Communist countries?

EDMONDSON: I would say very little. I think the major emphasis was on the objectives of the Fulbright Act, the educational/cultural exchange act, which was primarily to

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improve the knowledge of people overseas of the United States and also to improve Americans' knowledge of countries abroad. So we looked at it in a very broad, long-term sense, particularly in the Department of State. We avoided its being political or its being linked closely to any immediate foreign policy objectives. We looked at it as developing understanding of the United States, friendlier relationships with other countries, and not in support of specific short-term policy or tactical objectives.

Q: Did the French resent our cultural efforts in their former colonies, or did other former colonial powers?

EDMONDSON: In the earlier years they perhaps did — I think the French were perhaps more sensitive to English-speaking classes and that sort of thing — but not in any serious way. For the most part, since cultural exchange also contributed to development objectives, it was generally encouraged. You have to remember that this was after the wave of independence, so that we were dealing more and more, outside of southern Africa, with independent African states.

Q: Did you receive cooperation from African-American organizations like the NAACP or CORE in the work you were doing?

EDMONDSON: Well, indirectly. We did work with a number of organizations interested in Africa. There were a number of Black Americans — African-Americans, we now say — who were involved and enthusiastic. We had the African American Institute. We had the Phelps-Stokes Fund. The NAACP and others had their own broader agendas, but they generally, indeed, supported the idea of exchange with Africa. They found it of great interest.

Q: Did you feel they were pressuring you in any way to do certain things that they wanted done, or was it more of a feel of cooperation?

EDMONDSON: No, I would say it was all in the feel of cooperation.

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Q: Did you find that African-Americans suffered from an estrangement from native Africans in carrying out our cultural message; that is, could we send Blacks to carry our cultural message into Africa?

EDMONDSON: Indeed, we did. We had a number of Black officers, both in the Embassies and USIA, and had had for quite a number of years. I had specialized in African Area Studies at Northwestern during a year of training from the Department, and therefore I was particularly sensitive to the attitudes of African-Americans, and indeed among some in an earlier time, there was a sensitivity almost that they wanted to have nothing to do with Africa. Now that has changed radically; it's almost the opposite now. There were people still in that phase, perhaps, but they were going through the change, and there was, largely, I think, because of the explosion of independence in Africa, this growing interest among African-Americans, as well as all other Americans.

Q: Did we have cultural programs with the more repressive regimes...? I'm thinking of someone like Idi Amin in Uganda?

EDMONDSON: We certainly had programs that preceded him, and these tended to continue. I think we had difficulties, but Idi Amin was not one we had to deal with on the cultural programs. As far as having relationships with repressive regimes, you have to remember that this is not an AID program to other countries or governments: it is an exchange program. We did everything possible to have direct relationships with academic institutions, with potential leaders, and so on, so we had equal programs with those regimes as well as others, or with the countries in which those regimes held sway.

Q: Did you have to balance cultural exchanges, that is, between tribes or ethnic groups, say in Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Kenya, and places like that?

EDMONDSON: I think in our political relationships with countries where those were important, we always had to be sensitive to them, but as far as I can recall we didn't

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have any problem of balancing. We did try to get equal or appropriate distribution representation, but I don't think we had to think of it in terms of balancing. We were looking for people who would be influential in their own communities and, over time, at the national level.

Q: Were you invited to speak by Black organizations and colleges in this country?

EDMONDSON: When I was here, yes, but I didn't do a lot of speaking in that area, because my job was essentially a management job, supervising the program throughout Africa. I spoke much later in my career.

Q: After four years in the cultural field, and it certainly gave you a wide overview of things African, you went to South Africa as the DCM. I believe you had two ambassadors in that period, John Hurd and Bill Bowdler. Did you and the ambassador divide your duties? Did he give you certain fields he wanted you to follow? Or did you work as a tandem team there?

EDMONDSON: Essentially I worked as an alter ego, which meant that I covered all areas, though some, of course, I would watch much more closely than others, because of the issues of the moment.

I should add, with regard to going to South Africa, that since my experience had been in Black Africa, and my training in African Area Affairs, I had once felt that I would never want to serve in South Africa. I really didn't have any interest at all. In fact, the experience that I had in educational and cultural affairs, and in trying to improve particularly our programs in southern Africa, created much greater interest on my part in the issues there, and a better understanding of them. As I met many more Black South Africans I thought that it would probably be a very interesting place. When I started looking for an assignment toward the end of my period in CU, South Africa was high on the list.

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Q: What was the political climate when you arrived in South Africa in 1974, and what was the attitude towards the United States?

EDMONDSON: In a sense, there was a great deal of hostility, particularly among Afrikaners, and on the part of the National Party Government. They liked to think of the United States as an ally, they liked to think of themselves as part of the West, and they constantly emphasized that and emphasized the role they had played in World War II, despite the fact that the leadership of the National Party had essentially been against South African participation, and some of them had been outright pro-Nazi. So there was that attitude.

They knew very well that the United States Government — and we constantly emphasized — the people and the Congress of the United States were not in agreement with the policy of apartheid. There was an earlier time when I think that we had been much more conservative in our approach — doing in Rome as the Romans do — but by this time we already had a much firmer policy against South African apartheid.

Q: We're talking about an era of, say, twenty years ago. Could the Embassy at that time foresee the coming changes, the changes that have now taken place?

EDMONDSON: Changes were obvious. They were constantly going on. To say that we could have foreseen what has taken place in that way, probably not. But our hope was that indeed there could be changes toward that end. In the long term, with lots of problems in between, that hope has been realized. But at that time there was already some movement away from some of the aspects of the apartheid that had been brought in by the National Party, after 1948, and particularly after 1950 (but one needs to go into the history of that to understand it). But there was some slight relaxation here and there that we might discuss in further detail later.

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Q: How were our relations with the South African Government at that time? Would you say they were warm? Correct? Cool?

EDMONDSON: I would say they were correct... that in some regards we had a degree of cooperation. We had a missile tracking station there for some of the space activity. But that was a minor thing that involved only a couple of people, actually under contract, a civilian agency. And unlike some of the propaganda against it at the time, this was not an element of military cooperation, or anything like it. Although the South Africans, I think, would have liked to have seen more cooperation in that sense. Already we had cut off any kind of naval visits or relationships of that sort.

Q: How would you characterize the Embassy's relations with the Black and Colored leaders and their organizations?

EDMONDSON: We made a conscious effort to cultivate those leaders, particularly on the part of the substantive officers. We got out into the townships. We certainly dealt with all levels of representation in the White Parliament, including not only the National Party, but also, very obviously, the parties that were in opposition and the Progressive Party, the Progressive Reform Party, later, as it developed. But among Blacks, we were eager to make the acquaintance of different types of leaders, in the labor movement, in different student movements, and so on. That was a very important part of our effort to understand what they hoped for the future of their country and what they were trying to do.

Q: Could, and did, the ambassador entertain Blacks and Coloreds in the Residence?

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes. This had started much earlier. It started originally with invitations — and I can't tell you now which ambassador did begin it, but it went back a long time — where we held a Fourth of July reception and invited prominent Blacks. That increased constantly in number, and extended in time, before I came, to other types of representation. I made it a policy, as DCM, with support from Ambassador Hurd, to

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encourage officers, always, to try to have mixed functions, and to include more Africans, Coloreds, etc., in our representational efforts.

Q: What was the effect on the Embassy of the campaign to get United States companies and institutions to withdraw their funds from South Africa and to dissolve their ties there?

EDMONDSON: One has to look at this over a period of time, because it did occur over quite a long period of time. There was a great deal of criticism of the fact that the US did have investments in South Africa, and many people wanted pressure to withdraw those investments. But the pressures didn't become very, very strong until a much later period.

The US Government took a neutral policy on investments. That is, we neither discouraged nor encouraged investment. We tried to explain to potential investors the kinds of problems that they would face from possible protests or from internal problems within the country, and that above all, if they should come in, they should pursue policies that would advance the interests of black workers, that they would help with the housing, and that sort of thing. We particularly encouraged support of the Sullivan principles and had developed a lesser code that was not mandatory, but that we put forward as guidelines for business to consider if they were coming into South Africa.

Q: Did the introduction of Black FSOs at the Embassy prove to be a problem?

EDMONDSON: No. I was very strongly in favor of that. The first Black FSO had been assigned before I came, and had left before I arrived. Ambassador Hurd, I think, had some problems of his own: he was a little uncertain of this and wasn't particularly eager to get additional [Black] officers at that time. But we did get those, particularly under Ambassador Bowdler, who enthusiastically supported a policy that I and the political section suggested, that we needed to have Black representation in our different agencies throughout. So ultimately we had Blacks in the consular section, the political section, and USIA.

Q: With no grumbling from the South African Government?

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EDMONDSON: Oh, there was grumbling... but I think the Department of Foreign Affairs understood our approach. In fact, I would suggest that the Department of Foreign Affairs was somewhat more liberal than many of the other branches of government, with a few exceptions here and there. We made it clear we were going to assign such personnel. We expected no difference in treatment to any of them, and I think that by and large we had support there.

There were some specific incidences... In one case I remember an officer had been out on an outing, and actually taken some Embassy children out, and had some car problems. He was given a very cold treatment at a hotel when he tried to have the children stay there and have some refreshments. I protested that. The Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs accepted that protest, and we understand that there were some pretty firm actions taken with the hotel management.

Q: Did we get any credit for helping prevent South Africa's expulsion from the United Nations?

EDMONDSON: I'm not sure that we did. I can't recall that by the time we were involved in other issues, that it was really an important thing for us.

Q: After those two interesting years as DCM in South Africa, you came back to the Department and became a Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. I believe you worked under Bill Shopela and Dick Moose in those years of '76 to '78. How many Deputy Assistant Secretaries for African Affairs were there at that time?

EDMONDSON: When I first came back there were four, and I was named as the third deputy. I had actually been on a three-year tour in South Africa. It was shortened to two and I was brought back, at first to work on very general things, including public relations, Congressional relations... but increasingly, because I had been in South Africa, because Kissinger had that Spring, the Spring of 1976, "discovered Africa" according to many, and

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there's some truth to that, there was a greater activity on the part of the Secretary and the leadership of the Department to try to move things along in South Africa, and particularly on the issues of Rhodesia and Namibia. Therefore I increasingly got drawn into that and played quite a role as far as the southern African problems were concerned.

Q: What were the major problems that you had to deal with at that time, such as Angola, you mentioned Namibia... Portuguese Colonialism being a big issue at the time, and Rhodesia, and then the Soweto riots also, I gather...?

EDMONDSON: Well, the Soweto riots occurred while I was in South Africa; in fact, had been going on for a while just about the time that I was called back to work in the Bureau. The riots had pretty well subsided, but the issues that lay behind them were things that we had been pointing out to the South Africans for some time as problems of apartheid. So, yes, internal affairs in South Africa were a concern; however, if you put it in terms of the Secretary's priorities, I would have said Rhodesia came first. There had been earlier concern about Angola and Mozambique, particularly when it looked like South Africa might — and did for a while — move some troops over toward Angola. That quieted, so Rhodesia and Namibia were the first two issues, and there was always concern about the problems in Angola.

Angola was a sore spot at an earlier time, because the invasion of the South Africans into southern Angola complicated matters no end. In fact, with regard to that particular issue, the role of South Africa I think changed things for the worse, because when Communist influence [began], the Russians and the Cubans (even before the Cubans, the Russians were involved), countries like Ghana and Nigeria were clearly opposed to this Communist effort in Angola, but when South Africa came in, they simply flip-flopped. Any Africanist could have predicted that would have been the effect. I think there was a division within political circles in the United States. Actually, with the wisdom of hindsight, we should have protested much more strongly and more directly the South African incursion into Angola.

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Q: In that connection, were our relations with the South African Government such that our military attach#s or our political officers at the Embassy had foreknowledge that the South Africans were going to move into Angola?

EDMONDSON: I don't recall that we had foreknowledge. We did have intelligence with regard to their being there very, very soon... I just don't recall. There were accusations that the United States had actually encouraged South Africa to go into Angola, and subsequently, Pieter Botha, who was at that time Minister of Defense, accused the United States of "leaving South Africa in the lurch," the argument being, from his point of view, that the US had encouraged them to go in. I have no knowledge of any such encouragement being given, overtly or covertly.

In fact, the only thing I would say is the absence of very strong protest on our part could have been perhaps misinterpreted as encouragement. Subsequently I was, as charg# at one period, authorized to deliver to the Foreign Ministry and to press sources a clear denial of any official encouragement to the South Africans to interfere in the Angolan situation.

Q: While Secretary Kissinger had talked about formulating a comprehensive United States policy towards Africa, did we ever do that?

EDMONDSON: Yes, there was an overall policy; a great deal of emphasis, however, was placed on southern Africa, because of its importance throughout the continent. I think one of the elements of Kissinger's "discovery," if we can use that phrase, was a realization that Communist influence would grow, unless action were taken to try to solve the problems of Rhodesia, Namibia, and indeed, South Africa itself. The Secretary did make an effort to work on several of those issues. Rhodesia, however, was prominent, foremost. And his efforts on Namibia were less successful. South Africa, he felt, probably should be left a little bit on the back burner. He didn't feel that we should accept what he called

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“institutionalized racism,” but he didn't feel we should get too deeply involved while we were trying to solve the issues in Rhodesia and Namibia.

Q: I believe it was during this period that Secretary Kissinger met with South African Prime Minister Vorster. Did that result in a great deal of unhappiness or criticism in this country?

EDMONDSON: I don't recall a particular meeting (I should add that I haven't made the preparation I would have like to have made for the interview). I wonder if you are referring to what happened after the Carter Administration?

Q: No, This was a meeting I believe they held in Geneva sometime in the summer of '76.

EDMONDSON: I think that may have had to do with the efforts to bring about a solution in Rhodesia, following Kissinger's travels, his “shuttle diplomacy,” between Dar es Salaam and Lusaka, where he spoke both to Nyerere and Kaunda. Eventually that did lead to a statement by Smith that backed away from his “Not in a thousand years” earlier position.

Q: You were Deputy Assistant Secretary when the Administration changed in '76/'77. How did Africa as a subject rate in the incoming Carter Administration? Do you think they were looking forward to giving close attention to it? And did Secretary Vance himself give it much attention?

EDMONDSON: Yes. Before I mention that, I would just say that Kissinger did give Africa a lot of attention in the time that I was there. I arrived back in August or September of '76, and when I became involved, it was because he was holding daily meetings, unless they were interrupted by some other State event, on Africa, at which he usually had the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, his Deputy Secretary, an Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, the Chief of the Policy Planning Council, and usually, one of the deputies from the Bureau. As I took over the southern African set of issues, I usually accompanied Ambassador Schaufele, or whoever was

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acting as Assistant Secretary, to those meetings. We met every day with Kissinger on African issues, primarily the southern African issues.

When the new Administration came in, Schaufele was asked to stay on for a period, though subsequently Dick Moose, who had been Under Secretary for Management briefly, was transferred to Africa. At that time I moved up to the position of second of the Deputies, the only holdover from the previous Administration. As an FSO and fairly nonpartisan, nonpolitical, it was an interesting experience, because some of the newcomers looked at anybody who had been held over with a considerable amount of suspicion. One had to prove one's credentials as being seriously engaged in trying to do the best things for the United States.

But, indeed, the Carter Administration put much heavier emphasis on certain aspects of the African situation. They moved Namibia up to have equal place with Rhodesia on the front of the burner, and they also, I think, moved South Africa up, so that it was no longer quite on the back burner that Kissinger would have had it on. There clearly was strong emphasis on trying to come up with policies that would do more to further solution of these issues.

Q: I can read that to mean that they put more attention on those issues that were directly under your purview there?

EDMONDSON: That's correct.

Q: Did our interests in Africa conflict with France's special mission there?

EDMONDSON: You mean in Africa generally?

Q: In Africa generally.

EDMONDSON: No. I don't think so at all. In fact the US was often criticized for a certain amount of deference to the French and former French areas, the Francophone African

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countries. I think that was only natural, because those countries themselves had become associated with the EEC, and had continued to have a good deal of French assistance and a lot of French troops there. While we took a strong interest and played a role, I think that we didn't particularly disturb the French. There may have been small issues here and there, but I would have said essentially that they did play an important role.

Q: I believe that Vice President Mondale was named informal coordinator of our policy toward Africa. Did he make his presence felt, as far as you were concerned?

EDMONDSON: Basically, he was asked to take on the task of meeting with Vorster in Vienna and underwent quite a number of briefings in which the Director of the Office of Southern African Affairs and I and others participated... preparation in particular to say what President Carter wanted him to say to Vorster in Vienna, to explain that we were taking now a harder position on apartheid, and we wanted them to take some steps forward. I think we were trying to say that they needed to make progress away from apartheid and toward full political participation. We weren't providing any particular formulas, because that's up to the people of the country itself to do. The South Africans chose to interpret that more strongly.

The press after the conference in Vienna asked Vice President Mondale about what he'd said, and one of the questions was, "Well, does that mean majority rule, or one man, one vote?" The Vice President said, "Yes." It's obviously more complicated than that. You can argue, with our Senate and House of Representatives, we don't technically have one man, one vote, or one person, one vote, that it's a very complicated mechanism that does provide a democratic atmosphere. However, the press reaction to that I think made Mondale pull back somewhat. He had been very eager to do exactly what President Carter had wanted, went over it very carefully. The press blew this up.

The other part of it was that Vorster went back to South Africa — an election was pending, the campaign was on — and used that as a tool to try to increase his majority in the

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election. In effect he fought against the United States rather than against any opposition in South Africa.

After that, Mondale was occupied with other matters, not with southern Africa in particular.

Q: Did we believe at that time, say fifteen years or more ago, that the South Africans were working on a nuclear weapon?

EDMONDSON: We never knew for sure. We had suspicions that they were. They clearly had a nuclear program. Earlier we had had a degree of cooperation with them that we trying to use as leverage to try to get them to join the Nonproliferation Treaty. We could understand from their point of view, that they saw the possibility of enriching uranium and exporting it as a commercial advantage that they wanted to pursue. But at the same time, their degree of secrecy, their refusal to join the Nonproliferation Agreement, gave us a great deal of concern. So we watched it very closely, and we had several high-level visitors come out to negotiate with them and try to persuade them to join the Nonproliferation Agreement.

Q: Did you work on the British-American plan for the transition in Rhodesia? Did you get involved in that?

EDMONDSON: Well, involved, yes. There were, as you know, several stages, and eventually we assigned our Ambassador to Zambia, Steve Low, who is now President of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training, as a liaison with the British in their negotiations. We supported that by keeping the South Africans informed, trying to win South African cooperation.

In fact, if you go back to the Kissinger period, Kissinger felt that there was no way we were going to get a solution in South Africa without pressure on Rhodesia from South Africa. I think, indeed, the South Africans saw it — at least the South African Government — as in their interest to see come kind of settlement, because the continuation of the war in

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Rhodesia could only create more problems over the long run for South Africa. So, indeed, it was possible to get some cooperation. It was limited. It was at times cranky. But it was an important element. So we continued to want to keep the South Africans involved and supportive with the idea of getting a solution in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

Steve Low would often come through... occasionally we'd have him brief somebody, or we'd obtain the information... some of it was simply a matter of transportation into and out of Rhodesia when the British were going back and forth as well.

Q: Finally, in that period, did you find that National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski involved himself in African matters?

EDMONDSON: Oh yes, yes. Not to the exclusion of other things, but certainly he was interested in it. Tony Lake, who is currently in that position, was the head of the Policy Planning Council in the Department of State, and he played a very, very important role as well.

Q: In 1978, then, the President nominated you to be Ambassador to South Africa, a worthy promotion. Did you have a difficult confirmation process?

EDMONDSON: No, I did not. I was probably assisted by the fact that the day before, maybe even the morning that I went up, the news had come that the South Africans had accepted an agreement, proposed through a resolution in the Security Council, on Namibia. So there was a fairly good feeling that we might be on the road toward some solution there. I was fortunate — I was, by the way, not expecting to get South Africa — I had heard rumors of another possible post, so it was somewhat to my surprise that I was actually returned to South Africa.

Before confirmation, but [after] the nomination had been made, I accompanied Secretary Vance on a trip primarily to Rhodesia. We went to Dar es Salaam, and then to South Africa, and then to Rhodesia itself, for the first time in a long time, to talk with Smith and

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his people. It was then that the announcement of my appointment came out, so when I arrived in Pretoria, people knew that I was to replace Bill Bowdler. Bill Bowdler was getting ready to leave already.

I might confide a feeling that I had at the time... though I certainly had been interested, because it was an important post... We had arrived and had discussions with the Foreign Minister Pieter Botha. He had invited the delegation out to dinner and further discussions at his house. I left a little early in an Embassy car to get back and send off a cable on some of our conversations. I was alone in the car riding back to the Embassy, and suddenly a great feeling of depression came over me, that I was coming back to this country, facing all the problems of apartheid, the issues and so on, and for a moment I wondered, Did I really want to do this? Of course, later, when I arrived, the adrenalin ran again, the issues are difficult but fascinating and important. But that was the atmosphere when I went out.

You asked about the confirmation hearings... I was lucky in that I had been following it so closely, so there weren't many questions they could ask that I didn't have reasonably good, logical answers for. I was really quite well informed. I had the whole committee, and it was over in the Capitol, rather than in the Senate Offices Building, so the beige-covered tables were down on the same level. I sat right next to the note-taker, and at the same level... it's not quite what you often see, where the witness is sitting way below the group of judges. It was very collegial. I remember one of the senators reading a telegram sent by an acquaintance of mine, with whom I had worked many years earlier in CU, endorsing my nomination. It really went quite well. It was a long session, about an hour, but there, again, the adrenalin ran and I enjoyed it.

Q: May I ask, was Senator Helms then on the Committee? Did he give you any difficult questions?

EDMONDSON: Senator Helms was not on the Committee.

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Q: I understand your feeling of momentary depression at the thought of going [to South Africa], but I think you'll admit it was one of the half-dozen Embassies we had at the time that were in the spotlight, in which there would be great attention focused, not only from our Government, but also from institutions and people in the country. Did President Carter give you any special message to take when you presented yourself?

EDMONDSON: No, not at that time. I subsequently carried messages out for him. Essentially it was a policy that was pretty well established and set. In paying courtesy calls, of course there is the usual exchange where you present credentials; these are usually pro forma remarks on both sides. I made clear that my position was to represent the United States to all the people of South Africa, somewhat pointedly. But it was an easy sort of occasion.

Q: Going back to a question we discussed earlier, was your mission there affected by the demands on our companies and institutions to withdraw their investments. Did you feel that was hindering you in any way?

EDMONDSON: No, it wasn't hindering. In fact, I think it was illustrative of the pressures in the United States. It was easier, when we were taking our position with the Department of Foreign Affairs or other South African officials, to say, "Look, we're expressing the views of the American people, views that are also being expressed in Congress." I think they understood better our neutral position on investment, for example. I declined, as had my predecessor, the position of Honorary President of the American Chamber of Commerce, because we didn't want to be too closely associated. We did cooperate, and I would meet with them, and spoke to them on occasion, and we tried to be helpful to the businessmen who were there. But we tried particularly to encourage the activities that the majority of them were carrying on to improve their community service. That is, the idea of service, which they often practice here.

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One of the issues that concerned the South African Government and some of the businesses was that the Carter Administration had applied a number of new restrictions, you could even call them sanctions, if you wish, but they were limitations on exports, and an absolute prohibition of exports to the South African military or police or any of the South African Government institutions involved in the enforcement of apartheid law. That led to some difficult problems. For instance, if the police department, and police were included with military, wanted to put in some new traffic lights in a city, technically those came under these regulations and there would have been a prohibition. This kind of issue would come up. What were called the “grey areas” issues were constantly debated, and there were other problems of that sort.

We also in the Embassy concentrated on reports of things that might be in violation of such regulations. For instance, we were very concerned at one point over the possible export of heavy duty tractor engines that might conceivably have been used to put into armored vehicles or tanks, even. Those would have fallen under the restrictions. This sort of thing was a matter of constant work, but not a matter of controversy, necessarily.

Q: Pieter Botha had become Prime Minister by this time. What were your relations with him? Were you able to meet with him... freely?

EDMONDSON: He became Prime Minister soon afterward, but when I first arrived, Vorster was still Prime Minister and then later became Executive President. Vorster and I had a very good, long conversation, which I reported in detail to Washington. My first conversation with Botha was when he was Minister of Defense and he was still off on his kick about how the US had left them in the lurch in Angola, and he was very bitter about the application of military sanctions and embargo on military equipment. The US had had one for many, many years, but we had pushed very strongly in the UN for a UN resolution on this.

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When I made my courtesy call on him, unlike all the other ministers — and South Africans by their nature tend to be personally courteous and outgoing and fairly friendly; most of them would come out from behind their desks and greet you, you'd sit down at a table and have some tea or something like that — Botha came out, took my hand, and went back behind his desk. So I sat on the front side, he on the back side of his desk, and he proceeded to lash out against US policy. I found myself getting more and more angry, the red creeping up the back of my neck, but trying to stay diplomatic. I had the feeling I was responding just as firmly, almost pounding my side of his desk, as he was his. It wasn't a very good substantive conversation. As I try to recall, there wasn't much reportable, except the attitude of Botha himself. He was very, very, very bitter about the United States and about our policy.

Subsequently I did have dealings with him on occasion. I recall, once I was in Pretoria and we had information of [South Africans] being active again in Angola and frankly wanted to warn them of the fact that we knew through intelligence sources what they were doing. I don't know what those sources were, and obviously couldn't mention them, but I suspect that they might have been from air surveillance and that sort of thing. I flew down from Pretoria. He hadn't moved up to Pretoria from Cape Town.

As you probably know, there are two capitals, really: the administrative capital, the regular capital people think of, is Pretoria, but the legislative capital where Parliament meets, is Cape Town. During the meetings of Parliament, the Cabinet and all the senior officers of the government and various departments would have been in Cape Town. Then there was usually a little period in between when they moved back and forth. [Botha] had just been named Prime Minister and he was still living in the house where he had been as Minister of Defense.

I went down and by the time I had arrived — of course we had shared some of our information with some of our allies, particularly the group of five who worked on Namibia, the “Contact Group” as we called it — the ambassadors of those countries had received

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instructions, while I was flying down, to associate themselves, or to authorize me to say that they associated themselves, with the protest that I was making. One of the officers of the Embassy in Pretoria alerted the Consul General in Cape Town, so when he met me I had his assurance that I could speak on behalf of the Contact Group and not just the United States, which made more of an impression.

To my surprise, Botha took it very well, I think probably very seriously. He was really quite friendly and very courteous, and after the session —it was about 11:30, it was getting toward lunchtime — he introduced me to his daughter, who had come in before lunch, and he asked me to stay for lunch, which I thought was very nice. I declined, because I had a business lunch. But he could be charming. On the other hand, I found Botha a very, very difficult man on other occasions that I had to meet him. Some of those may come up later.

Q: Were you able to meet with or entertain the anti-apartheid leaders who were not in jail?

EDMONDSON: Yes. Definitely. Frankly, some of the more junior people, or people who were more activist, would really prefer to come to the homes of more junior [American] officers. For instance, one of the political officers who followed Black politics in particular really got some of the more radical Black leaders. But he would invite me, so I had an opportunity to meet them and they to meet me without their feeling they were coming to see the American Ambassador. There were a variety of ways... You have to remember that an Embassy works as a team. I very much encouraged our officers to get out, to see these people, to see them in the townships, keep me informed...

We even had a policy, which I had enforced earlier as DCM, to make sure we went into the townships freely. Normally Whites or outsiders were supposed to get permission to go into the townships, but we simply went. Often we were tailed. Only once or twice did it look like somebody thought about stopping us or arresting us... no one did. (Journalists would have this problem.) I told them, "We are not going to ask for a permit. We are going to go in and see people." And we were able to do that.

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Of course, there were many people who were anti-apartheid and very firmly so, and sometimes quite outspoken, who were not necessarily political people primarily. But we certainly invited them, heard their views, and also tried to have, as I mentioned earlier, mixed parties. At dinner parties we tried always to have some Blacks or Coloreds or others — in Cape Town, more often than not they'd be Colored — to our dinner parties, and the only occasions I can recall that would be strictly all-White were for instance, if we met with a segment of a Party that had no Blacks in it. It would be a lunch, say, we might do to get with a Party's leaders who by definition happened to be all White. But on a purely social occasion we really did try to mix as much as possible.

Q: Did this bring any resentment from any of the White guests at occasions like that?

EDMONDSON: It may have, but none where they ever expressed it. By that time enough changes — we haven't really discussed the change from the earlier period to the later period — had occurred that I think they had gotten used to it. I mentioned our earlier ambassadors had started having Blacks come to the Fourth of July party and others, but the Fourth of July party was particularly important, because in the old days, you would always invite the ministers, and I'm sure in the past Cabinet Ministers came. For a while, the government effectively boycotted those Fourth of July parties. The ministers wouldn't come, and senior civil servants wouldn't come. Gradually it got to the point where we'd get civil servants coming, and finally maybe a minister or two coming, and I entertained and got them to come.

Frequently you would have situations where there might be a businessman, or there might be someone in government somewhere, or there might be someone in the academic area who would come who had their own Black contacts, which was useful, because many of our Black contacts would come from those South Africans, liberal and other, who made a point of keeping up contacts with Blacks. There were very few, indeed, but still of importance to us. We would get others together and have them talk back and forth;

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sometimes the arguments would be pretty strong. It was always fascinating to see, as they left, how they would say, “Well, we must get together...” It was interesting.

Some of these people we would invite were in fact not illiberal. They were not necessarily supporters of apartheid, either. They were people, I suppose, like the majority of many of the people in any society or country, who went along. They had odd feelings and misunderstandings, kind of like the South in the old days in our country, where contacts were only with servants, and that sort of thing. They really didn't know what educated Blacks were like. For them it was an education, and I think probably an enlightenment and pleasure — they really probably did enjoy this. For the Blacks, sometimes they felt a bit awkward. But often they were very outspoken: they said what they felt, for instance, some of the Black journalists.

These kinds of events done at different levels by Embassy staff people I think probably did some good. How big a factor they were is hard to say, but they certainly gave us a better picture of what different attitudes and feelings were like. It could be very surprising to hear some of the things they'd say; you felt you might be having a little bit of influence in certain areas.

Q: Perhaps some of those contacts that were made fifteen years ago are having their result today in what is happening in South Africa. At least one can hope so.

When you were ambassador, were you publicly criticized by the South African media?

EDMONDSON: Oh, yes! Very, very often, and it seemed to be increasingly so, at times. Early in my period there as ambassador, I arrived in Cape Town and presented my credentials there. My first speech was I think to a Rotary group, and I made it off the record. It was fairly quiet. People by word of mouth got an idea of what was being said, which was essentially what our policy had been all along: I explained that we had applied a number of restrictions on exports to military and police, our abhorrence of apartheid,

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our hope to influence the government to move away from apartheid, toward full political participation.

But I made a stronger speech fairly early in my period there, in Johannesburg, to the South African Chamber of Commerce. There, again, I didn't initially issue press-release copies of the speech, but the press was there. Some of it was misinterpreted. Among other things, I explained that over the long term, apartheid could lead to increasing difficulties within the country, struggles from opposition. I used, among other things, [the phrase that] consequences could lead to problems like civil war, which really hit a button. I was called in very gently by the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to indicate their unhappiness with the speech. The press had various distorted versions. One of the Afrikaans journalists there, however, was one of my most constant defenders, effectively, because he heard what I said and knew what I didn't say.

But the Afrikaans press was very eager, often, to show a prejudicial view on the part of the Embassy, and of me particularly. I can remember once going to Soweto, where we made a book presentation to a new Center we had established there, I think it was Sintopticon Week. The book, Marx's *Das Kapital*, was one of the books that was a prohibited book, so we didn't include it, since this was not, essentially, a local community thing. But I mentioned [the prohibition]. Interestingly, there was a Black Rhodesian journalist there who picked it up, and there was a slight difference of interpretation of what I had said. It appeared in the Rhodesian press and then played back, mostly in the Afrikaans press. I have clippings somewhere... I don't remember all the details now, but it distorted the point and made it look like a much more anti-South African speech than it indeed was. So the Afrikaans press really roared up and down on that.

The later period, after the election when President Reagan came in, a lot of South Africans could barely wait until I was removed as ambassador. They hoped for a much closer alliance with the US Government, which in fact didn't occur (but there can be differences of interpretation of policy, of course.) I was kept on [for months]... I was suggesting that I

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should be removed, and was hoping to get another assignment. It was not until July when finally, and rather suddenly, they suggested that I come home, which was fine.

At the Fourth of July party, my wife had arranged that we have something different from the usual cocktails, champagne, and so on. Those were all available, but we made it a noontime kind of picnic-party where we had hamburgers and hotdogs and cokes, and we had some of the servants wearing straw boaters, to make it a somewhat more gala occasion. People liked it and frankly I was impressed that we had a lot of Cabinet ministers there. Because we had advertized that it would be something like this, someone in one of the Afrikaans papers wrote, "We know the American ambassador is on the skids, because he can't afford to have anything but hotdogs..." something like that.

But they looked for these things. Well, I got to the point where I almost perversely enjoyed it. You get pretty thick skin in any job like this. I knew that I was doing my job right, I knew that not only many friends among the Black communities, but also among South Africans, including Afrikaners, not necessarily liberals, but Ferlisthe Afrikaners realized that we had taken a position, that rarely was it as strong as the Afrikaans made it out to be, and sometimes it was stronger than people elsewhere thought it should be. Yet, I was constantly being harassed, in a sense, but it didn't bother me. I rather even enjoyed it. It showed that from my point of view, I was doing my job.

Q: You weren't lacking for publicity, in other words.

EDMONDSON: No, sir. I remember one of the best speaking occasions I had I was invited to come down on a "Freedom of Speech" day at the University. This was after our airplane incident where we had a couple of our attach#s declared persona non grata. There were big posters: "Ambassador Edmondson Coming!" There were little subtitles talking about spy planes and so on, so there was a good turnout. The students who were there were Black as well as Whites, and the Whites were known often to be rather radical.

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I made a speech that got on television... I left a lot of time for questions, and the questions were hard ones and good ones — sometimes a little hostile. But I felt good about it because I was able to explain American attitudes and policy more fully than I had on almost any other occasion. I felt that the response was good. The questions got more substantive and less polemical as we went along. It was a really good feeling.

Q: Was that covered in the press at all, your speech there at the University?

EDMONDSON: Yes, it got television coverage. Portions of it. It came out very well.

Q: I wanted to ask you about that spy plane incident. How did the South Africans get access to our plane? What made them think that our people were spying.?

EDMONDSON: For many, many years there had been an attach# office in Pretoria, and for many, many years we had a plane. When I first went down as DCM we had what must be promoted as a DC-3, a Z-47. Subsequently we got a C-12, which is a small, more executive jet, very handy for certain things. The attach# office often used flights for, in effect, representational kinds of things, so there were South African military officers who had flown on that plane, and I'm sure they knew that it had a camera in it as well. They made a big thing of it, but they probably knew ahead of time.

I had also used that plane once when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary... Kissinger sent me out on a trip to liaise with the senior British representative, Lanview, who went out on a negotiation trip with regard to Rhodesia. Kissinger didn't want us to be directly associated, didn't want me to fly with them, and I had to fly separately. In the southern Africa area I was able to get the attach# plane to take me to places like Botswana and then over to Maputo and up to Dar es Salaam. The plane was then used when Steve Low was going into Rhodesia, since the commercial connections weren't particularly good. It would pick him up in Lusaka or Pretoria to carry him up there.

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On one occasion the air attach# who piloted the plane did not observe my direct instructions. First of all, I was a little reluctant on that particular trip, because there could have been a commercial connection, but I knew it would have been a lot easier and quicker for Steve. So I agreed to check with Washington to make sure they had no objections, and they agreed that the trip could go on.

I instructed the pilot not to go across to the military side. They were always very eager to make some contacts among the Rhodesian military and see what they could learn — I sometimes thought they felt they could learn more than they actually could — whereas we had prohibited such contacts, except on a casual basis if they occurred accidentally. I told [the attach#] to park that plane on the civilian side of the airport and to return as soon as he'd refueled. He claimed, at least, that a storm front had come in and they were delayed, and he parked the plane on the military side.

We later had some information, I don't know the accuracy of it entirely, that the Rhodesians had perhaps put the South Africans up to the idea of looking into the plane. The plane had a locked door, but like one on an automobile you could open it with a screwdriver, I guess.

It so happened that the attach# was eager to fly over an area where we'd had some flights before and were suspicious with regard to South Africa's nuclear work, but we had other sources that were far better than an airplane of that sort. (Obviously, from space you can see a great deal.) So I prohibited him from flying over that area, or creating further problems when he didn't have to.

For some reason [the attach#] was picking up our one Ambassador to the Else countries, Ambassador Norland, to go from Botswana over to Swaziland or Lesotho. He had a flight out to the West Coast first, and then he had applied for a clearance to fly from Uppington in the western part of Cape Province to Botswana, which was an unusual route that went over part of the Kalahari Desert, where we already had information of some activity by

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the South Africans, both from our own sources, and, interestingly, from some Russian sources.

There was no need for us to fly. And it was pretty well clear that they wouldn't have approved [that flight plan] anyway, so why ask? He asked and it was refused, and he had to go through the usual route of flying out of Johannesburg. As a result, while they were parked in Uppington, having applied to go and been turned down, the plane was broken into, by, presumably, South African authorities, because they got whatever was in the camera: some photographs, which were of normal kinds of things: approaches to airways, and so on, which are often available from other sources. But they made a big deal of it. They decided to declare [persona non grata] the air attach#, the assistant air attach#, who was the copilot, and who often piloted the plane, and the enlisted noncom, who was the flight attendant officer.

It so happened that they didn't tell me... it happened in this way: I had been back in the United States on consultation. When I arrived back in Johannesburg, I was met briefly by the DCM, who had been charg#, of course, while I was gone. I had a message to deliver to Botha from President Carter, a tough message on apartheid and some other matters. So I took the plane on immediately to Cape Town. The attach# told me that they'd had information that the plane had been broken into, but said it had been reported to Washington. I said, "Fine. I don't want to carry the cable with me on my person tonight. I won't be going into the office tonight right away, but bring it down." This was on a weekend. I delivered my message to Botha I think that morning. He was very angry, virtually almost threw it down on the coffee table in front of me and ranted and raved a bit.

It was while the plane was down there that they decided... I was called in by Foreign Minister Botha and told that they were going to declare these people persona non grata, that they were to get out in 24 or 48 hours, I forget what it was, but whatever it was it was unacceptably short, because they had to get back to Pretoria and pack up their equipment and their household effects. Actually I first said, "Let me report this to my government,"

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which was the normal procedure so we could give them some sort of answer. I didn't have an answer to give them at the moment. I said that I had no knowledge that the plane had been engaged in any illegal or improper activity. The implication was that I would be given time to report and get back to them.

But I'd hardly returned before it was on the radio and television that Botha came out with the announcement that they were declaring these people *persona non grata*. We had by that time secure phones, which most [Embassies] now do, so I was able to get back. I learned that yes, they had reported this to Washington, but they had reported only to the Pentagon, not even sent a copy, as I had understood, perhaps incorrectly, that they had done, to the Department of State. The first thing I did was make sure that the Department got a copy of the message, gave them an explanation, sent off cables, etc., and hoped for some instructions. But by this time, obviously, [the South Africans] weren't going to back down...

We had an assistant naval attach#, a Marine officer and a pilot, who could and occasionally did fly that plane. So I ordered him down to remove the plane, take it out, because I didn't know if they would try to violate diplomatic immunity and get into the plane, or not. He came down, flew it out to Botswana, and their air attach# came down from Kinshasa, picked it up, and flew it on back.

So we were reduced, and ultimately we pulled out that assistant naval attach#, and we left one officer, because we in turn had, to their surprise, apparently — they seemed very surprised — retaliated by asking them to remove their attach#s from Washington. So that was the short of it.

Q: Did this linger on and affect your relations with the South African Government, or was it a one-time ...

EDMONDSON: Well, not really. There were lots of jokes about it. I can show you the cartoon downstairs that I was given when I left that showed me with some planes. (I had

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once had a pilot's license, so I was always interested in planes, anyway .) Things blew over in that way. They always resented it, but in effect I was not all that pleased to have so many attach#s there anyway; I didn't think that we needed that many. I'm not sure that we got that much information from having them, and there was no reason... We did not, propaganda from other places to the contrary, engage in any kind of military coordination with the South Africans. The very presence of these people simply aided the impression that people had to say that we did.

I was happy that we were left with the Army attach#, who had had African area training. He'd been in Ghana briefly — when I was political officer there I had once briefed him. We got what I thought was a lot of very good reporting from him, in a matter-of-fact way... he did understand American policies... I thought it was just as well to operate with one attach# with as many as we'd had. I was unhappy with the incident, but I wasn't unhappy to see reductions in the number of attach#s.

Q: It was, I believe, about this time that Jesse Jackson made a tour of South Africa. Did you meet with him during that period?

EDMONDSON: Yes, I went to the airport to meet him. There was a banquet being given for him that I wasn't able to attend because of a competing invitation. I did ask our political counselor to accompany him, to have a meeting with him, and to give him any assistance that we could while he was there.

Q: How did his tour affect US-South African relations? Or did it?

EDMONDSON: That's hard to say. Over a long period of time it was one of many, many things that adds in to impressions and policies. But I wouldn't have said it had a major impact, by itself. Except — and this is a little bit difficult to describe accurately and not be misinterpreted...:

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African-Americans have a very strong interest nowadays in Africa, a very good, healthy interest. It's good to see [African-American] businessmen, Peace Corps people, and of course by then Embassy people taking part... And [African-American] people visited. (Some couldn't get visas. We tried hard and eventually got some in. Others we couldn't. This goes back a long time.)

The attitudes of Africans varied. For the most part Africans are very, very interested in Black Americans. They come to [the United States] and they want to see the Black community and they experience some wonderful hospitality. That is also true of Africans: they are eager to have African-Americans come visit their churches and communities and so on. One thing, however, is that they don't like to be preached to by Americans, whether White or Black. Some Black Americans, because of their own experience in the United States, tend to feel, "We can tell them how to do it." The truth is, we can learn both ways. Of course we Americans now can learn a lot from South Africans of both kinds.

I think there was a feeling that occasionally visitors from overseas, White and Black, I should say, tend to overlook the differences that exist among different African groups: the different countries, different communities, different races, different tribes, etc. When we tell them that they ought to get together — and this is, essentially, and correctly, a message that Jesse Jackson was trying to deliver: if they want to have an effect in the fight against apartheid, they need to work together — this is not always received the way it is meant. While the effect of Jesse Jackson's visit was good in most respects, there was among a few people a feeling of, "Why is he coming out to tell us what to do?" This is something that all Americans have to be just a little bit careful of.

Q: It was about this time that Andrew Young was removed from his post as our representative at the UN. Did that have any resonance in South Africa?

EDMONDSON: Not directly, because it was very clearly over the problems of Israel and the Near East. Andy Young was highly respected, and, interestingly, among Whites as well

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[as Blacks]. He had visited South Africa after being in a conference in Dar es Salaam or Mafuto earlier, and had spoken to a number of businessmen, including Afrikaans-speaking businessmen, and they came away thinking, "Andy Young makes a lot of sense." It was always interesting to see that he had really achieved some respect among those people. After that, they looked up to him a great deal more in the UN. Of course, his deputy who later succeeded him, Don McHenry, was also very effective. He'd actually been in South Africa a number of times earlier, and as the American most responsible for working with the Contact Group on Namibia, he was well known. He carried on pretty much... so Andy's resignation didn't really influence that too much.

Q: Were you able to meet freely with Bishop Tutu?

EDMONDSON: Oh yes, very easily, with no problems. Occasionally he came up to ceremonies at the Episcopal Church in Pretoria as well.

Q: Was he critical of our policies at that time?

EDMONDSON: Like many Black South Africans, they all hoped that the US would and could do more, so critical in that sense, yes. But I think he was encouraged about those things we did that they did consider positive: the restrictions on exports to South Africa of certain types, and the fact that we did make an effort to get out to see and show our support for various elements of the Black South African society. He was unhappy after the election with the Reagan Administration. I remember his saying that he would come for a farewell thing for me, but that he wasn't going to be coming to the American Embassy any more after that. That was a symbolic act on his part. I don't think that applies any more: it's past history.

Q: Did we have a policy on South Africa's Homelands at that time? Did that affect your activities?

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EDMONDSON: Indirectly, but not much. We refused to recognize the so-called “independence” — nominal independence — of those Homelands of South Africa declared to be independent. Of course, no other country in the world recognized them, either. We pursued perhaps a little bit more vigorous policy than certain other countries in consequence of this, because I didn't want anybody to be seen in any way as doing something that officially recognized those countries.

We would not recognize their passports: if they could come, they were South African, they could get a South African passport. In fact, they had worked out some system that they did get South African passports if they wanted to travel abroad. I put restrictions on travel just as we had done to southwest Africa and Namibia to make sure that no one mistook our policy, that we in no way would recognize any aspect of these so-called “independent Homelands.” We did visit Homelands from time to time, and we could go to these Homelands, but if we did so, we didn't do it as an official visit on any of the officials there. We just went in as though it were a part of South Africa, because you weren't stopped.

With regard to the other Homelands, we regarded them as part of the South African system and we had, of course, a relationship with Chief Buthelezi, sometimes a bit tenuous, but we did go in for those affairs.

Q: Did you maintain relations with the Congressional Black Caucus during your time as ambassador?

EDMONDSON: Yes, but not in a formal sense, but as any other Congressmen. Indeed. Congressman Davis, of course, came out [to Africa?] earlier, and we had difficulty getting him into the country [South Africa?]: it was always a source of friction with the South African Government. Congressman Davis [was] unhappy when we couldn't achieve getting him in, but there was just no way of forcing another country to do our bidding.

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Q: How useful was the visit that the incoming Assistant Secretary Chuck Crocker made to South Africa at that time?

EDMONDSON: It was useful on his part for him to get a first-hand view, I'm sure, and to explain the policies of the new Administration.

Q: Which, I gather, were warmly received by some of the Afrikaners.

EDMONDSON: Yes, it's a period that historians may continue to want to examine and argue about. "Constructive engagement," which was his term, in a purely theoretical sense made some sense, as I would argue. I was myself uncomfortable with certain aspects of it which made it appear that we were getting much closer to the South African Government. This needs to be explained a little.

There were elements in the US, in the Government, who often went to extremes in what they were saying about South Africa. These were usually people who were not in a position to pronounce on US Government policy towards South Africa. I wouldn't cite names now, even if I could recall... but I remember some actually false statements made about what was happening in South Africa, whereas people like Don McHenry were always, always very precise. When Don McHenry spoke about South Africa, he knew whereof he spoke, and he could articulate US Government policy very, very well. But there were people speaking out here, there, and elsewhere in other parts of the Government who went beyond... My feeling was, and this comes from somebody who was criticized for his own speeches occasionally, that it was terribly important to be very accurate and very careful in our expression of policy.

So one new aspect of the new policy of perhaps speaking a little bit more quietly, being less on a pulpit, I could understand and, to some extent, agree with. As one always does, you adjust to a new policy. But I had a feeling that some people felt that just by being nicer to the South African Government and removing some of the restrictions that the Carter

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Administration had had — and this caused a great deal of concern elsewhere — these kinds of things made it appear that “constructive engagement” was nothing but a closer relationship with the South African Government.

I think that ignored the feelings of many of the Black African States, whose assistance, I felt, was very important in things like the earlier negotiations on Rhodesia and then Namibia. It turned out ultimately to be important in Rhodesia that the African Nationalists involved be very pragmatic in the negotiations, say, with Britain; that was a little harder, maybe, with South Africa, but the extreme positions they took didn't always help negotiations. Very frequently, countries like Nigeria and Tanzania would provide advice to organizations like ZAPU and ZANU, SWAPO, ANC, and PAC that would be more moderate, would see how there were tactics and strategies that would be more likely to bring about an agreement towards independence.

Q: How close was the cooperation between South Africa and Israel? Did we have any evidence of their working together in the nuclear field?

EDMONDSON: It was closer in some respects than we felt comfortable with, but it wasn't as close as many perhaps suspected, either. The Israeli ambassadors usually were very outspoken about apartheid. I can remember one of them who led a boycott of the showing of the film *Golda* that was to have been segregated. He insisted that the Diplomatic Corps join him, which we did, in not attending a segregated film session. There were other occasions, too, where the Israelis were quite outspoken.

On the other hand, as occurs in other parts of the world, the Israelis were interested in technical cooperation that was seen perhaps by them to be in their own self interest. We would have information from time to time of certain types of experts arriving in South Africa, and we assumed from that there was, indeed, a degree of cooperation, part of which, of course, was openly known. It was a kind of cooperation that we certainly did not regard with favor.

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Q: Another delicate question: Do you feel the South African Government welcomed your departure, hoping that the Reagan Administration might appoint someone more sympathetic to their view?

EDMONDSON: Not delicate at all. Quite the contrary, they certainly did welcome it. The Government didn't say anything as such. The National Party Press and the Afrikaans papers certainly welcomed it. Foreign (?) Minister Pieter Botha, on the other hand, was very gracious, had a very nice luncheon for me. My wife, who happened at that Fourth of July party we talked about, while rushing around to have fallen and broken her wrist and her nose, was treated with special courtesy. South African Government officials usually were very courteous, and I had a number of people I felt were particularly close friends: the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs while I was there, was always someone I felt I could deal with very frankly.

As always happens with diplomats, you nowhere trust everyone implicitly to the nth degree, and you take what they say with all the other evidence you can gather, and analyze it very carefully. But in terms of personal relationships with most of the diplomats, they were really fairly good.

Q: When you departed, were you convinced, or did you believe, that major changes were coming to South Africa?

EDMONDSON: My belief was that major changes inevitably had to come to South Africa. The question was how they would come about, and how much violence would be involved. I had developed over time a theory that has been picked up in a few academic circles, of what I called South Africa in the process of "violent evolution." Looking back to Soweto and other events, there were changes... Things had already changed even from my first period there, when I took my daughter on one of her vacations from college to see the post office in Cape Town where there were separate counters for Whites, Blacks, and Coloreds just to get stamps or money orders. It looked like a railroad station with different trains. Even a

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bench would be divided, with one end of the bench marked for Whites only, in Afrikaans, and the other for non-Whites, nieblunk. That had disappeared.

Towards the end of my first time there (I was charged there four different times, and for quite a long period at one point), I went with some other diplomats to a luncheon at one of the banks. It was a very, very nice luncheon... They explained how their policies were going, and that they now had an area where Blacks could go and deal in their own languages — they had several local languages there being spoken — but they could also go down below at the main counters. The Greek Ambassador and I, after we had said our good-byes (I think we were perhaps the last to leave), walked about a half a block down, and we'd gone out past an African guard. We left, but I said, "Let's go back and ask that guard what the upstairs there [what we had just seen] is for."

We went back and asked him. He said, "That's for Blacks." We said, "Can't Blacks go downstairs?" He replied, "Oh, no, Blacks have to go upstairs." So from the point of view of the Africans, it was clear that there was still a form of segregation, in spite of what the bank management might have said, or maybe even intended. We couldn't be sure, and we were obviously a little bit cynical.

By the time I returned, it was a real pleasure to go into the bank and get in line at a teller and find there were Blacks and Whites in the same line. Subsequently I went through South Africa on a visit elsewhere in southern Africa, on a USIA speaking tour, and noticed that even more, in the shops, particularly in the suburbs of Johannesburg, there were Blacks and Whites in the same lines. There hadn't been earlier, but [by then] there were Black sales attendants. There had been real change over time.

You could argue that that wasn't significant change; in any political sense that was certainly true. But change had been occurring, and there was an acceptance of change. I should have mentioned that even during my first tour I had talked to a couple of Afrikaners

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out in rural areas, and I can remember one man said, “There will be Black government before I die.” (He wasn't that old, it might have been a long way off.)

The theory I mentioned earlier, of “violent evolution” was that there were periods of adjustment and readjustment. Soweto was an excellent example. The outbreak, of course, was over the enforced teaching of Afrikaans to all Africans in Soweto, and the strike against that by young people, and one boy was killed, and then everything broke loose. All kinds of grievances came out. You saw people, then, wringing their hands, even the very liberal White South Africans who were very concerned about apartheid, who wanted their government to move much, much faster, were also very concerned about this violence. You could see how they were being torn apart by this as they watched these things for the first time on television, which had for a long time been prohibited but came to show this kind of news, so people saw what was happening in their country. You could see people almost literally wringing their hands, worried about it, wanting to move away from apartheid, but not wanting this kind of violence to occur.

Of course it also happened that there was a reaction on the Black side. They began to feel, I think, “Who's getting hurt in all this? It's mostly Blacks.”

So there was a reaction on both sides: there were Whites, who were saying, “We do have to make some changes, we've got to reform some things”; and there were Blacks, who were saying, “We're the ones getting hurt, let's find some other way to do this.” Then there would be a period of adjustment, there would be some changes, there would be some advances, but after a while you had a lot of Whites lapsing back into the same old thing, and the cycle began again.

So you had periods of violence and peace. You had strikes... They weren't all Sowetos, they weren't all major, but there was a pattern that looked like it was cyclical of a sort. One felt that this could at some time break through into an absolute revolution, but the power [of the non-Whites] wasn't strong against the military power of the State. The ANC/

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PAC really had little chance, and I think they themselves came to that realization. One thought that perhaps, through reform, through evolution, there might at some point be a breakthrough, but it could either be a very violent one, or it might be simply through this process of evolution that was not always peaceful.

In the long run — after I left you began to see this — you had the ANC moving away from the idea of armed struggle, and having more and more contacts with Whites in South Africa... I had served before at Lusaka, where we had very close relationships. Much was made of our having established a formal relationship with ANC and PAC during Paul Herer's time as ambassador. But the truth is I think we always had a lot of contacts with the nationalist parties of different groups. We could see that they were using computers, they were calling up by phone... they had contacts not only with their own people, but with Whites. When finally you got a movement (so that you had this meeting I mentioned earlier in the car), you had the feeling that the ANC leadership had come to the realization that there were Whites who did want to have a change, to move away from apartheid, to have a society where they could all work together. I felt that over the long run there were strong elements that could be used to build a peaceful change of a radical sort, over time. And, in fact, that came to pass.

Q;After you departed from South Africa, you came back to Washington and joined the Inspection Corps, becoming Deputy Inspector General at the time. I believe the people you worked with were Bob Bloun and Bill Herrer. Had you found inspections useful when you were in South Africa?

EDMONDSON: Yes, I have to say, always useful. I will always remember my very first inspection, Dar es Salaam, where I spent about a third of my time alone in charge of the post. We had inspectors who came for one week... Nubigan was one of them; I can't remember the administrative inspectors, two officers. My wife was pregnant, we had a party, and then soon after that we had some problems...the child was soon born. The chief inspector sent a lovely bouquet of roses, which he must have had flown down from

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Nairobi. But, more importantly, being alone, and at my first post, there was an awful lot that I didn't know. I found that the inspectors were not looking for something wrong to pounce on you; they were looking to help you do things right. I remember they found a couple of things we were doing wrong, and some things we weren't doing at all. They very patiently laid out what we should do. I found it was a useful process, and that set my attitude towards inspectors ever since, when inspected later in Bern, Switzerland, and so on.

And so I do believe, and felt all along, that the inspection process is a useful thing. However, there are inspectors and inspectors; some are obviously better than others. I had a real disagreement with the last inspection in South Africa. (I had two, one as DCM and one as ambassador.) They felt we could save money by not moving the Embassy down to Cape Town when the government moved. I took really very strong exception to that.

I tried to stay out of it when I came back to the Department. I certainly took no initiatives until people came to ask me what my view was, having seen my response to the team earlier. I pointed out a number of reasons why I felt it was important that the ambassador and his deputy [should go to Cape Town].

[The inspectors] wanted to leave the deputy in charge in Pretoria, but deputies are, and most Ambassadors like to use their deputies as, alter egos: it's one of the most important relationships in the Foreign Service. It can be a tough one, especially for the DCM, but it's an enjoyable one. And if [as a DCM] you have a good relationship [with the ambassador], you do what you know the [ambassador] wants, almost like a husband-wife team, and it works effectively that way. You can help the ambassador, and help solve some of the problems the ambassador doesn't see, or be a middle person. The idea of leaving the DCM back would mean that he or she wouldn't have the contacts that are necessary with senior government people. [The ambassador] often wants to take the DCM along, or send him or her, and the DCM has his own set of contacts. It should be that when [the

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ambassador] is out of the country, [the government officials] look to that charg# d'affaires as the personal representative of the US Government, just as much as the ambassador. Maybe they feel better with the more senior-ranking person, but if that charg# is good, it makes no difference. And to leave [the DCM] in Pretoria to just be in charge there shows a total misunderstanding of that important role.

Now [it was important to send the] political officers [to Cape Town] because politics were going on in both capitals. We left the economic counselor and some of the senior economic officers in Pretoria, because most of the economic activities continued there, but they often made trips [to Cape Town].

So, I was interested to see that [keeping the Embassy in Pretoria while the Parliament was in session in Cape Town] was one of the recommendations that was not accepted. (I think the recommendation was made several times and never accepted.) I think it should be up to the ambassador to have certain sway over how the Mission is to be organized. But I still felt that the inspection process was a very important, very helpful one.

Q: Did you do field inspections when you first went back?

EDMONDSON: Yes. I went out as the senior inspector leading inspection teams. I found it was an awful lot of work. The first one I had was a series in the Francophone West African countries. We went to Niamey, Ouagadougou, Bamako, Dakar, and Nouakchott. This was all in a period of 6 to 8 weeks. I've forgotten how long exactly, but I remember we did Niamey in one week. Even though it's a small post, they had a pretty good-sized AID mission there, they had a very large administrative operation, both for the support of the Embassy and AID, and there were lots of little problems, particularly administrative problems there. We had to come up with some special recommendations, which I think the post was very happy to have.

We suggested a team be sent out to help them get set up and solve some of the problems, because the Administration was pretty messy: not the fault of any particular individual —

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some of it was lack of proper training... but that's what inspectors can do. Political activity there was well covered, certainly a good charg# at the time. In Ouagadougou there was also a charg# between ambassadors. They didn't have quite so many problems...

But to inspect takes a lot of work. You look at all aspects — as I think most Foreign Service people know, but outsiders don't necessarily — you look from the top down. You look at what the ambassador is doing, how he is coordinating policies of the country team, the other agency heads and representatives there over which he has authority, how he or she is using his or her deputy, the role of the political officers and their reporting, the economic reporting, the consular work, protection of American citizens, relationships with businessmen, promotion of trade, all of these things...

So we are interested, really, in management. It's not just an audit, accounting of money... We are interested in that aspect: the administration. And we are interested in any evidence of wrong-doing, of taking shortcuts where they shouldn't, but we are most importantly interested in the overall management of the post. Have we got too many people, too few people? Could we make some shifts, could we do something differently? Sometimes the questions are open: we simply suggest that an ambassador or post look at something. I found that to do all that in a post in a week's time, we were working until sometimes two and one time four o'clock in the morning.

Later on, after I retired, I was called back to fill in for a couple of chief inspectors. I did, for instance, the inspections of our posts in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Subsequently I did Moscow, Leningrad (as it was then), and Helsinki. Inspectors have to work hard, and long hours. They don't get much sight-seeing. They may be lucky to get out of the office for part of a weekend to see something, which we did. Senior inspectors sometimes take their wives, who will tell them what to spend their time on when they do have a little time off.

Q: Well, that certainly coincides with my view. I've had many inspections, and I've noticed that the inspectors do work very hard, and long hours. Sometimes I resented their

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questioning, but I saw what they were getting at in most cases. Did the inspection function change from 1981 to 1986 when you left?

EDMONDSON: Yes, it changed in several ways... The process is always changing and must be subject to change, just as the Foreign Service and its posts are subject to change. But we tried to get a more systematic approach, where we were able to do more careful advance preparation in the Department of State before we went out or sent a team out. There was always a certain period of interviews, but we tried to get more specific questions directed to the post ahead of time, and to actually draw up a prospectus, so that we had a feeling we had some sense of where the major problems would be that we had to look into, so that we could apportion our time to the things that we thought needed most attention. That has again, I'm sure, changed.

Towards the end of the period, there was a great deal of debate because the Department of State had one of the first inspection systems. The very first of course, was when General Washington named an inspector general for the Army. I think the next to have an inspector general was the Department of State and the Foreign Service, and increasingly, we had Foreign Service inspectors in the Consular Corps, but that became under the Foreign Service Act of 1926, and later of '46. A great deal of authority rested with the inspector general to concentrate on management, to find cases of mismanagement or waste or fraud. Investigations came under the inspector general, and eventually, afterwards, security inspections.

There was always a feeling among certain interested people in Congress that somehow it was strange that the Foreign Service inspected the Foreign Service: that the inspector general had been a senior Foreign Service officer, and the team leaders had always been senior, usually ambassadors or senior DCMs who knew what was going on — and that the inspectors themselves were Foreign Service.

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We brought in more audit-qualified inspectors who had been purely auditors, and tried to familiarize them with the Foreign Service. So a major change there was getting them involved. Part of that meant that they had to learn that while they could audit the same in St. Louis and Washington, Philadelphia, or Miami, wherever, that wasn't the case overseas. Our Foreign Service posts operate in different political and economic environments, there are different banking systems and administrative requirements, you can't insist on the same kind of receipts, you are often dealing in foreign languages, so that you have to have special systems to take that into account. The people who are inspecting need to know how the processes work. If you want to catch people doing wrong, sometimes it "takes one to know one," as they often say. It was important [to know the system].

Towards the end there was a move to have a Civil Service operation, for getting the Civil Service to inspect Civil Servants. But we now have a non-Foreign Service person usually appointed as inspector general, and we've brought in both Civil Servants [and Foreign Service personnel?] But fortunately the first Civil Service inspector general saw the value of having Foreign Service inspectors, and they are still brought in to help in the process.

Q: You were in the Inspection Corps when we changed Secretaries of State, from Haig to Shultz in 1982. Did that have any effect on the Inspection Corps?

EDMONDSON: Not directly, except I would say (I hadn't worked very long at all under Secretary Haig: by the time I was Deputy IG, we were under Secretary Shultz) Secretary Shultz was really very supportive of the Foreign Service, and that included, of course, the inspection operation. He came down and visited the IG offices, had some of our assistant IGs brief him, explain things. He took an interest in it. He took an interest in the Foreign Service in other ways. I think that is very important, to have support from the top in ensuring that you have good management throughout the system.

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Q: Absolutely. Because with so many ambassadors being very senior people, political people, you want to know the Inspection Corps can at least talk about them... and be backed...

EDMONDSON: Be backed up, that's correct.

Q: Did the Inspection Corps become involved in the aftermath of the terrorist bombings, such as those at Embassy Beirut and at Embassy Kuwait, where Americans were killed?

EDMONDSON: Yes. Some of this was after I had been directly involved, but there was a whole change, of course, in the security system. We were very much concerned, more and more as we went out inspecting. Of course, there were special inspections of incidents like that, which come under the IG often, not always. But more importantly, when events happen that require a change in our organizational behavior, in our professional behavior, the inspectors are the ones who help people adjust to the new requirements and make suggestions as to how they can meet those. Sometimes we felt that there was a little bit too much of an overall pattern of trying to enforce on a little, tiny Embassy what you could expect from a big Embassy. So we would try to find ways that they could still meet our security needs [without being nitpicking about the regulations].

Q: Did you get involved in such matters as the cost of the new Embassy residence in Cairo, which excited a lot of people, including those on the Hill?

EDMONDSON: Yes, indeed. We did send out a regular inspection team that looked at that, and I remember reading the reports when they came back. We were disturbed at some of the contracting problems that occurred, and we actually found some malfeasance in the earlier part of it. That is always an important role.

Q: Do you get involved in other types of issues such as that of Ambassador Van Damme in Vienna divorcing and marrying an Austrian citizen.

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EDMONDSON: No. I don't recall that we were involved in that. But I remember one question came up [that concerned] her allowing the use of the Residence for a fashion show that particularly [featured] one designer (I don't recall the details now). It's one thing to promote American products, and that's terribly important. You try to avoid getting involved in competition, although there may be some changes going on there now. But it's quite a different thing to sort of "hire out" the Residence for use by outsiders.

Q: And how about involvement in such issues as charges that the Department had discriminated against women in the Foreign Service?

EDMONDSON: A standard part of our examination of personnel policies from the outset was how well offices in the Department or posts in the field, or subsections thereof, were in fact carrying out our Equal Opportunity policies. And how well the system set up to enforce that itself operated. We looked very closely at that.

In addition we would look at performance reports. If someone seemed to be unfairly rated... In the old days we wrote performance reports on everyone, which was part of the difficulty of the job. Eventually that was cut down greatly to look at the reporting system. Where we felt it necessary we would then write a report to correct what we felt was an imbalance earlier of any kind. In some cases we'd say somebody should have had a better report than they did, or a worse report. I am told over and over again, by people serving on promotion boards, particularly, that the inspectors' reports were always considered among the most valuable.

In terms of equal opportunity, we had things like harassment: any scent of that at all we were fast to look into deeply, and, in some cases, bring about a correction. You also had the problem of somebody sometimes complaining that they were being discriminated against, because they didn't get as good a report... we had to look very carefully as to whether it had been objective reporting or there was some racial or other bias involved. Our effort was to try to present as balanced a picture as possible.

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Q: Did the Corps take a position on whether wives should be paid, which became an issue in recent years?

EDMONDSON: I don't think we ever took an official position on that. It does vary among officers and among their spouses. Times have changed. We all know the difficulties of adjusting to that. There are more tandem couples, so there are difficulties in assignments, in corporations as well as the Foreign Service.

My wife and many others, of course, worked very hard... Her position, and I agree with her, is that wives shouldn't be paid. That isn't to say they don't do the kind of job that deserves payment, but that needs to be observed in other ways, such as allowances on the servants, the household help, and that sort of thing. As one servant said as my wife took off to the store for the umpteenth time to get something for entertaining — we had been doing it over and over again for several weeks in a row — she said, “I'm sorry, Wright, I have to go off to the store again,” to which he replied, “Don't apologize, madam, this is not a house, it's a hotel!”

Q: Then in 1986 you retired from the Foreign Service. How would you characterize the Foreign Service as a career for young people coming along now? I take it you enjoyed your tour, but do you think in the future it will hold the same challenges?

EDMONDSON: I believe it will. There are always changes, and people who come into Government service or Foreign Service soon learn that change is a constant factor. Nothing stays the same, and some things keep coming around again. I would strongly advocate Foreign Service for anybody interested in it. But I just spoke to a group yesterday of UN fellows, that corps, saying they were mostly on internal assignments, with specialized agencies or UN offices, or NGO. One has to look up with great admiration to the people working overseas now in different types of operations, with refugees, in development... There are many, many different ways you can serve. I'm not saying the Foreign Service is the only way. It is an exciting career — all of these are — and I

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would encourage young people to take an interest in international affairs, and if they are interested, they might find a fascinating career.

The world is constantly growing closer, maybe no smaller, but it seems to be smaller, and you can really grasp it now in your own sense and knowledge and imagination, whether it's in financial operations or representing government. Now we are concerned about the environment, about problems of crime and drugs, so they are all areas for specialization. I have a strong feeling that because we do represent different entities, just as states in the Union maybe, we have common interests, and it is a career with aspects that are difficult, sometimes boring, sometimes terribly exciting, sometimes very, very dangerous. But it is a career that I would strongly advocate for anybody who has any interest at all... at least take a look at it.

Q: Well, I can't think of a better way to end this very interesting interview, and I want to thank you, Ambassador Edmondson, for it. This is Tom Dunnigan speaking on behalf of the Oral History Program at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

End of interview