

Interview with Andrew Steigman

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

AMBASSADOR ANDREW STEIGMAN

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Q: How did you become interested in foreign affairs?

STEIGMAN: It was a gradual process, I suspect. It went back clearly to my high school days because I picked my undergraduate university for its program in international affairs, Princeton, at the Woodrow Wilson School. The interest clearly was there at the time I was applying. I still remember reading the undergraduate catalog and being absolutely fascinated by the courses they offered.

Q: Had you known anybody in the Foreign Service or any idea of what the diplomatic service was about or anything like that?

STEIGMAN: No, the specific interest in the Foreign Service presumably came at Princeton. It must have been somewhere then that I decided to take the exam.

Q: When did you go into Princeton? What years were you at Princeton?

STEIGMAN: 1950 to 1954. I applied for and took the Foreign Service exam during the academic year 1954-55.

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Q: So you were already into the foreign affairs apparatus with the Fulbright and all that. What were you doing in the Fulbright in London?

STEIGMAN: I went up to London in the London School of Economics for a year basically to start looking at Africa. I got interested in Africa, the one area in which Princeton had no courses. I felt it was a gap. I had done course work on the Middle East. I had done course work on the Far East and Europe. But I knew nothing about Africa, and it was a period of great change in Africa, and I wanted to know something about it.

Q: Well, this was when that you were in London?

STEIGMAN: 1954-55.

Q: Really all of Africa was, at that point, still colonial and it really wasn't opening up.

STEIGMAN: It was clearly moving in that direction, though. It was only three years before the early independence of Ghana and then of Guinea and then the whole series of independences in 1960. There was clearly movement in that direction. With an eye, if you will, to the Foreign Service, the appeal of Africa was that there was no established U.S. policy. This was going to be tabula rasa. You looked anywhere else in the world, and there were great constraints on U.S. policy. Latin America never interested me because it always seemed to be just too much of an American *chasse gardée*. There were people who had been serving there for years and then a mind set. The Far East, we had just gone through the "who lost China" business, and again it seemed that any attempt to be creative in policy in the Far East was going to be burdened by that.

Q: Here you are, a young grad student, talking about policy.

STEIGMAN: Well, to be part of something that was not completely locked in and had some chance for movement, a chance for actually putting an imprint on what was going to happen.

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Q: What were you getting out of the London School of Economics about Africa at that point?

STEIGMAN: The study of African government and society, the evolution of Africa governments, varying colonial policies. I had almost no background in that. That was my introductory background to the continent.

Q: What was the London School pushing did you feel?

STEIGMAN: To the extent that they were pushing anything, the woman I studied with, Lucy Mair, was essentially telling us how good the British were in diminution, the gradual transfer of power to Africans and careful preparation for independence. There was somewhat lighter emphasis toward the other colonial powers, but I do remember to this day the studies of how the legislative council increased the percentage of elected members and the executive council gradually moved from appointed to elected members, the very elaborate structure through which the British made the transition toward independence. But it was a very planned process and the British are rightly proud of it, I suspect.

Q: Because you were going to serve also later as ambassador to a country that was under French rule, did you have any feel for how the French were doing it?

STEIGMAN: Somewhat less. Inevitably LSE stressed the British. The French and others I picked up more when I did additional graduate work after I got into the Foreign Service.

Q: How about the great disaster of all colonial transitions, the Belgian Congo and the Belgian way? Did anybody even talk about it or say there was going to be a problem there?

STEIGMAN: No, because the Belgians assumed in 1955 that independence would not come practically in that century to the Belgian Congo. That was certainly the

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Belgian assumption. In 1955 a Belgian professor proposed a 30-year transition plan of independence for the Congo, and was hooted down as a dangerous radical. That would have meant independence in 1985. The Belgian Congo was not looked at very much by those who were pursuing the questions of transition to independence.

Q: So you really had your eye on Africa as something to do at a time when I don't think many people were thinking about Africa at all. I know, I came into the Foreign Service in 1955, and it was only three years later that I started thinking about Africa. I never went there, but this looked like a target of opportunity. It was only when I was in the system and looking around for a place to go that all of a sudden Africa crossed my horizon.

STEIGMAN: I came into the Foreign Service with an eye on Africa clearly. I already had the interest in Africa.

Q: This is, maybe, not unique but certainly this is not the way most of the people who were involved in conservative foreign affairs were looking at things at that time.

STEIGMAN: Well, it was a very new discipline. Even in the academic community there were really only two centers of African Studies in the U.S. at the time.

Q: Where were they?

STEIGMAN: Northwestern and Boston. As I said, as an undergraduate at Princeton, I had no African courses to take. African courses didn't exist there, and you had to go and scrounge if you wanted to do more studying in the African field. But by the time I got into the Service, I was one of, I guess, two people in my entering class of '58 with a strong interest in Africa. Oddly enough the other one kept asking to go to Africa. First he went to London, then he went to Stockholm, then they sent him to Columbia to study North Atlantic up there. So he said, "Well, it wasn't meant to be". He stopped asking for it. By then he was a European specialist.

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Q: How did you get into the Foreign Service actually?

STEIGMAN: I took the written exam in London in, I suspect, it was the spring of '55. I think then the exam was given in April. The records would no doubt tell when it was done that year. I took the oral exam in January or February of 1956, by which time I had already been drafted. I was in the military service. I'm still convinced that one of the reasons I was treated kindly on the oral exam was that I turned up in uniform. I was in basic training back then. I had to get a day's leave to go take the exam and showed up in uniform which I think at least convinced the examiners that I wasn't trying to duck the draft by entering the Service.

Q: Did you get any African exposure in the service or anything that . . .

STEIGMAN: No, I was sent off to Germany for a year, which was fine. I got to see a good deal of Europe.

Q: Yes. I served my time in Germany, too. Well, then you came into the Foreign Service when?

STEIGMAN: In April, 1958.

Q: With your class, how would you characterize the people who were coming in at that time?

STEIGMAN: We were a class of 25 white males. I had the impression that the classes before and after us were very similar. In retrospect it seems quite incredible that there were practically no women and no minorities at all and nobody really thought much about it.

Q: I came in in July of '55. We were white males, and it didn't occur to me that there were any gaps in this process.

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STEIGMAN: But in retrospect it was clearly a remarkably unrepresentative service. I met a couple of women junior officers who were not in my class. In fact, one of the ones who came in about the same time was Roz Ridgway. So clearly some of the women officers who came in at that time were incredibly good and presumably had to be to get through this very, very tough filter. But we were 25 initially, one dropped out before the end of training, so 24 ended up going on first assignments. The other odd thing, looking back, was that all 24 who were assigned stayed in Washington, first assignments in the Department.

Q: That was odd because that was not normally the pattern was it?

STEIGMAN: I think it tended to be about half-and-half in those days. It wasn't what it is today in which everybody goes overseas. But most other classes at least some people went overseas. From my class everybody after the, it was then, I think, 12-week orientation and training, stayed in Washington.

Q: Wasn't that sort of a let-down?

STEIGMAN: I'm not sure it was, because as I recall, I think at the time we felt it was probably not a bad idea to get a feel for the Department in a more familiar setting, that we would be better equipped when we did go overseas.

Q: Oh, I'm sure it was.

STEIGMAN: I'm trying to remember, were we on probationary status at that time?

Q: Oh, I think there . . .

STEIGMAN: No, we weren't in a formal sense. We had reserve appointments initially, but that was simply an interim measure until they could get the confirmations from the Senate. But there was no probationary status, there was no tenure process, so the

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Department didn't need to make the same kind of judgment that it needs to make today with probationary status. So there was no hurry to get us overseas. The other bizarre thing, of course, was that we all got consular training as part of the 12-week training even though nobody went overseas to use it.

Q: Yes. Particularly you need that and you pretty well better use it right away or else it's very easily forgettable.

STEIGMAN: As I discovered when I went overseas two years later as an economic officer, supposedly, but arrived at my first post and discovered that the consular officer had just been selected out and I was told that I was going to have to fill in as consular officer my first two and a half months. And I said, "Whoops!" I had to review the stuff because I hadn't expected to need it. I had to re-read the manuals.

Q: One other thing about the class that came in just to get a picture of the time, can you describe what was your impression of the motivation of the interests of your group?

STEIGMAN: The impression that I had was that the people who were coming in at that time were there because they thought it was a worthwhile thing to do, that it was an interesting career. They certainly viewed it as a career coming in, not just as a job. It was something that they looked forward to doing for the rest of their lives, the bulk at least, their working profession. And they seemed to have a sense that working on American foreign policy was important and worthwhile. We had at least one who had a law degree and left a law practice to come in. I think we had, in fact, two lawyers. I'm sure of one. The average age probably was 28 or 29. I was just under 25. I was the second youngest in the class.

Q: I think one other thing that you didn't mention but I assume is probably true that the great majority had had military service of one kind or another, hadn't they?

STEIGMAN: Probably over half. In fact, the youngest member of the class is now the Staff Director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Gerry Christianson.

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Q: Before we leave this, could you do a little contrasting? You're teaching here at Georgetown in the School of Foreign Service, and you're seeing people who are going into the Foreign Service. Outside of the fact that it's no longer all white male, can you see any other dissimilarities between those that are going in regarding outlook and all?

STEIGMAN: It's funny. They start, I think, looking at the Foreign Service with the same kinds of assumptions that we held 30 years ago—and that it's something exciting, it's something worthwhile and you want to be part of the foreign policy process. I have to question them a little bit since the Service has changed to make sure that they understand that what they are going into may not turn out to be a life-long career. It's not the same degree of loyalty from the top down as there was.

As a result, I think that a number of them wind up taking it not with the idea that they're going to be in it for the rest of their working lives, but they're going to test it. Job mobility is much greater today than it was 30 years ago, the willingness to change jobs, a sense of risk-taking is present, I think, to a greater degree, possibly because there are also more women now. Some women are not sure if they want to do lifetime careers, whether they want to have a career for a few years and then have a more traditional wife and mother role. They haven't really sorted out their own priorities yet, and even for the men, recognizing what they're going to have to deal with if they want to get married to women who may wish to pursue careers on their own. The Foreign Service may be incompatible with that. All kinds of different motivations are applied.

The kids going in, I must say, are at least as bright as we were, and I think as I consider my own class I suspect they're brighter. They're better prepared today particularly because you are drawing on a larger group through a more competitive process. When you were only drawing on white males, you had to go a little bit deeper to get the same number of people. Now that you are going after qualified minorities and especially the large number of women, you can just take the cream off the top in all categories.

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Q: Your first position in State was in INR. Was that dealing with Africa at all?

STEIGMAN: Yes. That was North Africa which at that point was considered, of course, part of Africa. Both in INR and in the Bureau, everything on the continent except Egypt belonged to Africa. I had indicated that I wanted to work on Africa and got the job at INR. It's interesting because my name was sent over to INR for vetting, and I actually got an interview at INR before I got the job which was a rather different procedure.

Q: Yes. The Service is not much larger actually than it was then, but I think there was a little more care taken.

STEIGMAN: Well, yes, more care taken . . .

Q: More family.

STEIGMAN: More family, but also more opportunity, if you will, to discriminate because it was done on the basis of personal likes and dislikes. I mean, that still exists certainly. It's a lot easier to get a good job if you can find somebody who likes you and who is in a position to influence the decision because the Bureau still has a great deal of weight in job choices. But you do have a central system that tries to look after the people who don't have mentors, that tries to even the odds out a little bit, at least, and that didn't really exist in those days. Personnel was totally decentralized.

Q: What was your impression of INR? What was the role of INR when you were dealing with them?

STEIGMAN: INR was doing much more basic research than it has done in recent years and a lot of its resources went in to producing the old National Intelligence Survey. I must have spent two-thirds of my work time that two years at INR writing NIS chapters.

Q: Would you describe what an NIS is?

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STEIGMAN: The National Intelligence Surveys were essentially encyclopedias. There was one for each country. It was possible to have up to about 60 chapters in each INS though they were not all written for every country. But there were chapters on the economy and on the political system and on the court system and on the social structure. I was doing political system and social structure chapters on the North African countries. I did four or five of these things over two years. They were massive productions. While you worked on them, if something came up you were pulled off and did current intelligence as well as the basic research. The basic research was really terribly academic in nature. Finally, the responsibility for the NIS production was shipped out to Central Intelligence entirely. Chapters were written originally in different places, Defense did the military ones, the CIA did some and we did some. But finally it was all consolidated under the CIA and INR went back to being a current intelligence support activity which is, I think, much more appropriate.

But the current intelligence opportunity was fascinating because a lot was happening in North Africa—this is 1958-60—including the fun of writing the first intelligence pieces on the consequences for Libya discovering oil in 1959.

Q: Yes. We'll come back to Libya, but let's move to your assignment to Leopoldville. You were there from 1960 to '62. You couldn't have asked for a better time to go to a country or a worse time to go to a country. Could you describe when you arrived what the situation was at the time?

STEIGMAN: When we arrived there, the situation was very peaceful. It was the Belgian Congo.

Q: You arrived when?

STEIGMAN: We arrived in March of '60, three and a half months before independence. There was a certain amount of what the Belgians might call effervescence because

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everybody was anticipating independence. There was great excitement in the anticipation of independence. New political coalitions were forming and reforming in a very, very inexperienced and unstructured body politic, and it was great fun trying to keep up with it. I mean, we were working our heads off, and we still had a very small, understaffed consulate general.

Q: It was a consulate general when you arrived?

STEIGMAN: Yes, facing a transition to independence it had one political officer; one economic officer, me; one consular officer, also me for the first couple of months, so I overlapped the economic officer I was replacing for about a month; one CIA officer; an administrative officer and a GSO.

Q: And a consul general.

STEIGMAN: A consul general.

Q: Who was the consul general at the time?

STEIGMAN: Tommy Tomlinson was the consul general. Jerry LeValle was the number two and the political officer. Jerry was very good and knew everybody. He knew a lot of the Congolese.

Q: I was wondering, was it difficult to meet the Congolese at that point?

STEIGMAN: No, Jerry knew a lot of them. He had very good relations with a number of them.

Q: But there was any way to get a hold of them? I don't mean get a hold of them, but since the Belgians had sort of excluded them so much from leadership positions . . .

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STEIGMAN: At the point we got there, of course, they were preparing for leadership and leadership transition. A lot of them very much wanted to talk to the Americans. They were very inexperienced. They really didn't know what they were dealing with or how they were going to cope, and they were coming around looking for advice and counsel. The Belgians obviously were going to be the main source, but some of these guys didn't trust the Belgians and wanted to talk to other people. So a number of them had started to talk to the Americans. Both Jerry and the CIA guy, we had them make contacts. They were the two people, really, working in the political field and were starting to meet people and talk to them and get a feel for them.

Q: How about the Belgians? Were they sort of being the dog in the manger at the time?

STEIGMAN: Oh, no. The Belgian gamble was to give the Congolese their independence before they were ready for it on the assumption that the Congolese would then be totally dependent on the Belgians and the Belgians would stay and run things from behind the scenes.

Q: This was open talk?

STEIGMAN: Oh, yes. The Congolese were clearly unprepared. The Belgians had done nothing for generations to prepare them. They had trained only a handful beyond the high school level. They essentially were training clerks and locomotive drivers on the assumption the Belgians would continue to run things. They figured, "Okay, we'll make the clerks office directors and ministers, and the locomotive drivers will become the presidents of the corporations, but obviously they won't know what to do so their Belgium counselors behind the scenes will continue to make all the decisions." It might have worked if they had been not quite so heavy handed with the military.

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Q: What were you all doing? Were you going around and saying, "This is a hell of a way to run a railroad!" and telling people this? or just saying this isn't our business so we'll just report on what's happening.

STEIGMAN: On my level, we were just reporting. I was so busy running the consular section and trying to do economic reporting on what was happening, to fix the position of exchange controls and the risks of capital, the way the Belgians were behaving, what was happening to—you know, we had all these periodic mineral reports and agricultural. Since I was doing two jobs, I was just totally occupied with that. I mean, I would wind up going over trade figures at night and reading the consular manuals at night to try to solve problems, plus trying to move into a house and trying to get our household goods in. It was a very busy two or three months. I'm really not sure what line was being taken by the consul general and Jerry when they talked with the Congolese.

Q: Well, let's come to when independence came. What were you doing?

STEIGMAN: Well, independence came very peacefully.

Q: It was which day?

STEIGMAN: June 30th. There were big ceremonies, delegations from abroad, we had a major delegation with our ambassador-to-be and a couple of other senior representatives, and the Belgians orchestrated it pretty well. The transportation worked. Lumumba, then who was the new prime minister, made a rather sour speech which insulted King Baudouin. He was establishing his nationalist credentials. Apart from that, it all went off fairly well and everybody congratulated themselves that they seemed to have passed the moment of independence, the flags had changed and the Belgians were saying, "Aha! Okay. You know the surface appearances have changed, now we can go back to business as usual."

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It might have worked if the guy who ran the military, the Force Publique, General Jassens had not been so heavy-handed. Had he made a couple of quick promotions of Congolese sergeants to be junior officers and give them quick responsibilities in visible leadership positions with a Belgium advisor, they might have gotten away with it for a little while. Janssens has said in a meeting with the troops and sergeants apparently something about the fact that, look, they're not going to have any Congolese, it's going to be a slow transition, the Belgians are going to continue to run this, this is a military operation, by God, and it can't be done the sloppy way the civilians are doing it, which triggered mutiny. And since there were a lot more Congolese than there were Belgians, that was the end of the one force that was able to maintain order and all uncertainty rushed to the surface. The place essentially came apart, and the Belgians panicked. The troops rampaged on a couple of military bases, people gotten beaten up, several women were raped, very few deaths. It was mostly, I think, a repaying of past humiliations.

The Congolese had always been treated as very much inferior beings, and one suspects that the people who were beaten, raped, abused, were those who probably had used a certain amount of abuse on the Congolese in the past, and that those, in fact, who had treated the Congolese well in the past probably were not hurt. The stories were wildly exaggerated in the telling. The numbers of people who had been assaulted, who had been killed had been magnified, and there was general panic. Most of the Belgians fled the country.

The Belgians then sent troops in to try to restore order to try and protect their nationals, stirring a real anti-Belgian feeling because here we are independent, our sovereignty is being abused, we're being invaded. There was a call for UN intervention by the Congolese; they called for a UN force. We were there when history was being made.

Q: What were you doing during this period of time?

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STEIGMAN: At that point, the consular section, fortunately, was out of my hands and the consular officer had turned up around the beginning of June.

Q: There must have been a terrible demand on the consular officer for Americans trying to get out.

STEIGMAN: No, there were hardly any Americans then. There were almost no American citizens. The Belgians just wanted to go home. There was no time to do any immigrant visa business. People were just fleeing and if they had to do any visa business they were going to have to go elsewhere. So the consular section, in fact, was not terribly busy. What the consular officer did, in fact, was try to manage the emergency evacuation effort because there was very little immediate demand from Americans in the capital. But I guess what we were doing more than anything else was trying to figure out what was going on. We were all trying to sort out rumors.

Q: Let's try now to reconstruct where we were. What were you doing at the time?

STEIGMAN: We were pretty much running around trying to find out what was going on. Once the Force Publique had mutinied, the question was what remained in the way of government structures, and we were really trying to find out who was in charge, how much control they had, how were the factions forming and reforming. We had people running in and out of the embassy. We had a group of very inexperienced Congolese ministers. We didn't know whether the ministries were functioning or not. We didn't know with whom we could deal on questions of anything — everything ranging from security to possible economic assistance. A large part of our problem was just trying to track down the people who were in charge. The place had come apart before they could put an organizational structure into place, and it was a very confusing atmosphere in which to operate. We were also very busily engaged going back and forth with Lumumba. He first asked for U.S. forces, then when we said no, he asked for U.N. forces. At one point he asked the

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Russians for help, and we were trying to keep track of it, trying to influence decisions. The whole story is told in Madeline Kalb's book, *The Congo Cables*.

Q: What sort of support were you getting? Speaking of the Congo cables, these were cables between our mission in Leopoldville and Washington. What instructions was Washington giving you at the time? Were you just playing it by ear?

STEIGMAN: I must say, most of what I remember of this comes from having reread Madeline Kalb's book a few years ago, but not recently enough to be able to give you the details. I really think the book is going to be a much better source on it than my recollection at this point in terms of the substance.

Q: Okay. Now I want to touch more on what you were doing. Did you feel under any threat yourself? Was it a dangerous time for you and your family?

STEIGMAN: The first couple of weeks we were really not sure how the Congolese military were going to behave. Initially, a day or two after the mutiny, we were advised by the embassy not to leave our homes. The Force Publique had set up roadblocks, and we weren't really sure what instructions they had been given. Then the embassy got word that Lumumba was going to make an inflammatory speech over the radio at noon, and the network called everybody and said, "Okay, form up into convoys. Everybody come down to the embassy as a safe haven in case we need to get out." Nobody was quite sure, and Lumumba was considered quite unpredictable. Nobody was quite sure what he was going to do or whether he was going to call on the Congolese to throw out all the foreigners. He didn't. So we set up convoys and went down and worked our way through a series of roadblocks, and all grouped at the embassy. The Lumumba speech was not sufficiently inflammatory to put us in any danger, but we still weren't sure. We weren't sure how they were going to look at the Americans.

As it turned out, the Congolese man in the street and most of the troops looked at the Americans as friends. We were next door to the Portuguese Embassy, and the

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Portuguese were considered terrible colonialists. One time they came and there was a hostile demonstration at the Portuguese Embassy with a certain amount of rock throwing. Then they started marching, and we were right next door, and we didn't know whether we were going to get rocked. They pulled up in front and they gave us three cheers, and then they went on to stone the British Embassy. But we didn't know. As the crowd came by, we really were not sure what their reaction was going to be.

Q: Let's get a little idea of how now all of a sudden you're no longer a consulate general, you're an embassy. Were any more people sent in to help you?

STEIGMAN: Oh, yes. We got tons of people at that point. We got two political officers. We got Army, Navy and Air Force attach#s. We got additional CIA personnel. We got additional administrative help. The staff suddenly tripled.

Q: But all of them were obviously unfamiliar with the situation there.

STEIGMAN: Yes, but on the other hand, the old hands, for the most part, who had been there, like me, had been there for two months. So we weren't exactly in-depth experts. We were all learning very quickly. This was a brand-new ball game.

Q: Who was your ambassador at the time?

STEIGMAN: Clare Timberlake came out as the ambassador.

Q: How did you operate? I'm speaking now about the officers. Did you all get together in the morning and say, "Tell me, what the hell is happening here," and sort of share information and then fan out, or what would you do?

STEIGMAN: The first ten days after the mutiny when we were all assembled in the embassy, we slept in the embassy. Families were all evacuated. Women employees were offered the option of evacuating if they wished to. We only had, I think, two

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secretaries who were evacuated. Essentially it was entirely voluntary; it was not an ordered evacuation. My wife stayed. The consular officer, who was a woman, stayed.

Q: *Who was she?*

STEIGMAN: Alison Palmer. I think there was one woman working with the CIA who stayed. But otherwise it was essentially an all-male group, and we just lived in the embassy for the first couple of weeks. At that point, we had our staff meetings around midnight or whenever we finished for the day. Anytime between 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m., we would all gather in the ambassador's office, and we would all have a drink and we would all talk over what had happened during the day and what was likely to happen tomorrow so that when we got up we knew what we were going to start with, we knew what rumors we had to track down, who we needed to talk to. People reported on which journalists they had met with during the day and what stories the journalists had come in with.

We were working very closely with the American press. There were some top reporters that had come out there, and they were, in effect, almost extra political officers for the embassy because we were very open with them. They would bring us the stories that they picked up, and we would tell them whether or not we had information that could confirm or if we had totally contradictory information so that their reporting would be as accurate as possible.

Q: *I have to say that I was in Washington and was in INR dealing with African affairs. Although I had the Horn of Africa, obviously the Belgian Congo was number one on our list. Most of the reports that we were looking at because they came faster were the news reports. These seemed to be rather wild at the time talking about armies moving through the jungle and all that. It was a peculiar time. To get an idea of how a brand new embassy works in a crisis, what would you do? I mean, you say you go out and track down rumors. How does one as a Foreign Service officer go out and track down a rumor?*

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STEIGMAN: We would do the same kinds of things that the press people would do. We would drop in on different ministries, drop in on different offices, make phone calls, we would check with the journalists to see what they were picking up, check whatever sources we could reach. I'd say the big problem in those days for all of us, the journalists and the embassy alike, was we weren't sure who was where. We also had a number of people who would drop in to see us. There would be a rumor, for example, that Lumumba had ordered the arrest of the Foreign Minister. We would try to find out. We would start calling people who might be in a position to know. We got the final answer when the Foreign Minister showed up at the embassy and went up and took refuge in the ambassador's office, then there was an arrest order out on him. That's how we found out for sure. That was the absolute confirmation.

Q: You saw a whole bunch of people from the press. At that time, it was mostly the written press rather than the TV press. Again, coming into an unfamiliar place, and the word there going out was of paramount importance to how the world would view this. As I say, at INR we were responding probably more to press reports at that time because they were coming first. But how did you evaluate their reporting? How good were they?

STEIGMAN: The top American reporters who were there at different times, people like Lloyd Garrison, Paul Hoffman, later David Halberstam, Jonathan Randal, were among the best foreign correspondents in the business. They tried very hard to be sure that their reports were accurate and were well documented. We didn't read their stuff, but we talked to them and had a sense from talking to them what they were going to report. All I can say is that from that side of the experience, we had the impression they were trying to be very careful to sift out the wild rumor and the exaggerated story and to keep it out of their accounts.

Q: How about some of the other reporters? These, of course, were the main reporters and the main ones that were read by policy makers.

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STEIGMAN: Yes. I mean, the New York Times people, the International Herald Tribune people, the people from the major news services, I'd say they tried to be very responsible. It was, however, as you've also noted, extremely difficult to sort out the facts, and these guys were working on deadlines. We had the luxury that we did not have to get a report in by 2:00 in order to get it into the morning paper. We could wait until 6:00 if that extra four hours helped us confirm something. So you might very well have seen something first in the newspaper because it was still uncertain, and they would have to send in something that said, "It has been alleged that . . ." or "It has been reported that . . ." or "There is an unconfirmed account of . . ." We would try to hold it until we could confirm it one way or another.

Q: Did we have a particular line or policy that we were doing, or was it just trying to keep . . .

STEIGMAN: To keep the Russians out. It was a very Cold War policy. Lumumba was not necessarily considered to be a Communist or anything, but he was considered to be very unstable, and nobody was really quite sure what he was going to do, and the big thing that one wanted to avoid was to have him create an opening for the Russians. The U.S. was not prepared to bring in its own forces, but the UN force was seen as a way of providing stability and precluding Russian intrusion.

Q: We felt this was a very serious possibility at the time?

STEIGMAN: Oh, yes. This was very much a Cold War approach in Washington. It shines through *The Congo Cables*; it shines through other books that have been written about Kennedy policy in Africa in that era.

Q: After the situation sort of settled down, if you could call it that, I mean it's a turbulent time, what were you doing for the remainder of the time that you were there until '62?

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STEIGMAN: Once the UN force had come in and there had been at least a restoration of law and order, there was still constant political turmoil. I went back and forth. I was not only an economic officer. When I went out there to a consulate general, I would have been the economic officer but in a junior position, but with an embassy, a more senior economic officer was brought in, an economic counselor and a mid-level officer. So I became the number three in a three-man section. Because there were three economic officers in a very uncertain economy, I tended to be a float. I spent a lot of time doing political reporting plus some economic work. So I did a fascinating mixture of things. I wound up the principal political section contact with several of the Belgians who had remained on as counselors. One at the presidency and one at the foreign ministry became good friends, and they were invaluable sources, and I used to see them on a regular basis and feed their information into political calculus.

Q: How did we view, again at the time, the situation when Lumumba was killed and all? Was this a good thing from the embassy point of view?

STEIGMAN: The embassy's response, I think, was a sense of great relief. Lumumba was looked on by the embassy as a loose cannon on the deck, as the one man who could rally serious opposition to the relatively moderate government that we wanted to see installed. At the time Lumumba was killed, there was an interim government in place which we had been supporting. It was a few months before the summit which produced the Adoula government, but clearly as long as Lumumba was alive, he was the logical man around whom a number of Congolese would be likely to rally. With Lumumba out of the way, there was no clear successor, and it made the situation easier, if you will, to manipulate. So I think the removal of Lumumba, whom we did not trust, was regarded as essentially a helpful thing.

Q: How about our feeling toward the separatist movements that were developing in the Congo? Did we have a strong feeling about that?

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STEIGMAN: We were consistently opposed to the Katanga and Kasai separatists. Those were the two movements at the time, and our policy was consistent in opposition to Tshombe in Katanga and to Kalonji in Kasai particularly once the UN force was in place. It took us a little while and it took the UN a little while to really exercise their mandate strongly enough to end the secessions.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to cover here, or should we move on?

STEIGMAN: I think we might move on. As I say, in terms of the political atmosphere at the time, I found Madeline Kalb to be an excellent source for anyone who wants to get a sense of how the embassy was responding. Since she has gone back through the documents, she's going to be much more accurate than anybody whose memory is 30-years cloudy.

Q: Well, sometimes we're trying to get some of the atmospherics which . . .

STEIGMAN: Yes, but she has a lot of that, interestingly because she also did a great deal of interviewing, but her interviewing was aided by the fact that she had just read all the documents and could come back with much more specific points.

Q: Then we move to your next assignment, which was Benghazi in Libya. Now what was the situation because the capitals of Libya, particularly in those days, were rather obscure. Things moved back and forth there.

STEIGMAN: Constitutionally Libya had two capitals, Tripoli and Benghazi, and the government was supposed to shift back and forth at two-year intervals. King Idris had created a third capital at Baida up in the Jebel Akhdar, the Cyrenaican hills, which was originally called the "Summer Capital." But it was his favorite place because it was his homeland. He began shifting some of the government functions up to Baida which became de facto the alternate capital rather than Benghazi. So about 1964, when we left, the government functions were pretty much split between Baida and Benghazi. In fact, the

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U.S. recognized the de facto situation by downgrading the embassy office in Benghazi to a consulate and creating an embassy office in Baida.

Q: Well, what were you doing then?

STEIGMAN: I went out to Benghazi which, at the time, was the capital. It was the principal embassy office with the ambassador in residence when I arrived. I went out as economic officer in Benghazi. I was originally assigned to Tripoli. It was supposed to be sort of a reward after the Congo. It was a fairly modern place with good facilities, a big air base, a commissary, a PX and all the rest. But the senior economic officer who was supposed to stay and be with the embassy in Benghazi decided that he really wanted to be in Tripoli. That's where the oil headquarters were and that's where he ought to be. So my assignment got flip-flopped and suddenly it became Benghazi which was not nearly the same kind of reward because it's really a backwater. But it was a quiet place. It turned out professionally to be useful because when the post was downgraded to a consulate, most of the embassy staff moved off to Tripoli, and I wound up as principal officer. So I was economic officer for one year and principal officer for one year.

Q: So what were your principal responsibilities?

STEIGMAN: As economic officer the principal job was really keeping track of the developing oil industry. We got out there in 1962; Libya had pumped its first oil the year before. The major discoveries in Zelten had come in 1959. They were just starting to pump, and we were trying to get some reasonable projections for the future growth of oil exports, how much oil was Libya going to be able to pump, what would this mean to the international oil market, what would it mean for Libya's own economy. The senior economic officer in Tripoli was getting official projections from the oil company officials with whom he played golf.

Whenever I went out in the fields or went down to the ports and talked to the guys on the rigs or who were setting up the pumping stations, I always came up with different numbers,

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much more optimistic numbers. The senior officials would tell the senior economic officer in Tripoli that they were going to double production in the next three years, and I would go down to the port and they were building separators capable of handling ten times the production. It was obvious that he was getting low figures. So I kept working out different figures, and it was very useful because the information I was getting out of the working level turned out to be much more accurate.

Q: Was there any reason for giving low figures?

STEIGMAN: I think they were just being terribly cautious. Maybe they were afraid their figures would get back to the Libyan government which would expect greater revenues from them. I don't know what their motivation was because these were people I didn't meet, he did. All I knew was that I was getting straight stories from guys in the field who didn't have political concerns and were just telling what they were building. It was a fascinating process. Other than that there was a limited amount of commercial-type work, market surveys, contacts and the like.

Q: How about the contacts with the Libyans?

STEIGMAN: They were pretty limited. I must say, after being in the Congo where the people were really great fun—there weren't that many highly educated Congolese, but the Congolese we knew were alive at least—we found the Libyans to be a very introverted group. One limitation was, of course, I didn't speak Arabic. I learned enough to get directions, but that was about the limit. But most of the Libyans we met we found generally a less interesting group with few exceptions—an opposition parliamentarian, a couple of business people. They had very little sense of humor, took themselves very seriously, not our cup of tea.

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Q: To move on, you came back to Washington in 1964, and you spent five years there in a very interesting position. Could you tell me what your assignments were there and then we'll talk about some of them?

STEIGMAN: All right. Two years in the Bureau of African Affairs in a newly created position, really. It was the Office of Inter-African Affairs. I was the first OAU desk officer. The Organization of African Unity had been created in 1963, and the Bureau decided they wanted somebody to spend a little time figuring out what it was about, what it was going to do and to keep track of it. So I did the first basic study of the OAU, a piece for publication. In fact, it was in the "Background Note Series." It was not on a country, it was on an organization. I tried to track what the OAU was up to. Since this was Inter-African Affairs, we did a little bit of everything. We did all the primary studies, for example, on Rhodesian UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) in 1965. Our office was tasked with looking at the consequences in southern Africa and what it would be. I remember spending Thanksgiving weekend cramming papers on UDI. So it was a very varied sort of assignment.

Q: Did you feel sort of the initial enthusiasm over the independence of Africa which came out particularly when Kennedy came into power and all? I mean, this was a rather exciting period of time. This had begin to die down, hadn't it? And sort of the realities and the problems of Africa began.

STEIGMAN: Yes, there was a fading. It's interesting because I think people looked on the OAU possibly as a way for Africa to deal with some of its own problems. I think that's why there was a new concentration on the organization and interest in studying it more closely and watching its evolution. We were always looking for new signs of hope.

Q: To get some of the spirit, we were really hoping for things to work out there. Had the concern about the Soviet menace given way to a feel for this is a new area of putting

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things together and it's in our interest to see solid developments or were we still really concerned with the Soviet problem?

STEIGMAN: I think you had what you've had ever since in dealing with Africa, the debate between the globalists and the regionalists, people who said, "You've got to look at Africa as an area with problems that need to be dealt with as African problems. You've got to concentrate on development. Forget about the Soviets. They're not going to make much difference in Africa." Then you have the globalists who said, "There is no area of the world that is insulated from the U.S.-Soviet competition. You've got to look at Africa as another arena in which we are locked in mortal combat with the evil foe of Communism." These are extreme positions. There's always been this tension, and policy has always been the result of a pulling and hauling between these two groups. So you always have something in between. You always have some attention to the U.S.-Soviet competition, and you always have a great deal of concern for the legitimate development of Africa in and of itself.

We have gone back and forth between the two poles over the years. Certainly in the early Kennedy years we were being very much the Cold Warrior. There was the Kennedy enthusiasm that, "We've got to help these newly independent countries in the best American tradition," but underlying it in the Kennedy years certainly was the sense that one of the reasons why we have to do it is because we've got to keep the Russians out. And you've always had the mix, and it's not been a Democratic-Republican split, it's been partly circumstance. But you're right, by the mid-'60s some of the initial idealism, idealist surge—the feeling that Soapy Williams certainly represented, if you will, that we've got to help Africa for its own sake—had begun to fade. But from the beginning, other people in the Kennedy entourage were more globalist. [Telephone Interruption] But as I say, I think we were still looking for signs of hope. We still wanted to be idealistic to the extent that we could.

Q: Well, what was your attitude towards Africa? Where did you fall?

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STEIGMAN: I was still fascinated by Africa. I guess I probably fell somewhere in the middle. I wasn't yet at the level where I was thinking as globally as one should. I was dealing with problems as they came. But I still remember during that period getting a sense of how important Africa might or might not be when there was a coup in Dahomey, the first or second or third coup in Dahomey which was suffering coups. And I bumped into a friend who was at the time the Secretary of State's staff assistant. We were all excited about the coup in Dahomey, and I said, "What did the Secretary think about the coup in Dahomey?"

And the answer was, "He took note of it." Clearly for the Secretary of State, the second or third coup in Dahomey was not going to be more than a blip on his radar screen even for a secretary like Dean Rusk who read voluminously. I mean, he would have taken note of it because he read an enormous amount and tried to keep informed about what was going on, but it was not going to really occupy his attention for very long. He was not going to have to do anything about it. There were other problems which were clearly much more important for him.

Q: Why don't we move now to when you actually came up to . . .

STEIGMAN: In '66 I moved to be staff assistant to the Secretary. Dean Rusk had a very small staff. He essentially had retained the habits of the military staff officer, and he had a special assistant and a staff assistant who screened all the paper for him, paper going in and paper going out. Our job was to know what he was interested in, what he was working on, what decisions he had to take as an indication of his interests, make sure he saw what he needed to know and was spared what he didn't need. It was a fascinating overview of the foreign policy process, a sense of the way the foreign policy priorities look from the perspective of the Secretary of State.

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Q: This is '66 to '69 and certainly a period where Vietnam was very much on—was this sort of our of your hands. I mean, was that dealt with elsewhere, or did you get involved with the Vietnam process?

STEIGMAN: It's interesting. We got involved in everything in a sense that we moved material on every subject to and from the Secretary. The first thing that was on top of his stack every morning was the intelligence summary dealing with Vietnam, and the things he always wanted to see was what were the bombing missions that had been carried out, what were the casualties, what was the general military situation. He followed it very, very closely. He had been a military staff officer, and I think that was part of the reason he was interested in following the military detail. But we were not involved in the policy sense in anything that went on. We were conduits. He did not use his immediate staff to help shape policy in any way. He dealt directly with the assistant secretaries unlike other secretaries of state who have tended to work with a very small immediate staff in making policy decisions. We were really just the channels. We really provided a truly staff rather than line function.

Q: Well, could you give an idea, again purely from your viewpoint, of the type of person, as you saw him, what Dean Rusk was like? I'm speaking both personally and as a working man.

STEIGMAN: He was a workaholic, for one thing. This was a man who worked 70 or 80 hours a week, who was probably the best informed Secretary of State in terms of the volume of material he devoured on what was going on in the world, a remarkable stylist, great craftsman of the English language, a man who at 11:00 at night could sit in a hotel room overseas, or usually in the guest room of an ambassadorial residence, and dictate an absolutely flawless telegram to the President on major discussions that he had during the day with other world leaders, which simply came out of his mind in complete paragraphs that he never had to look at or re-edit, that we could send off after he had

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gone off to bed and we knew it would be fine. He knew it would be fine. He just had a great command of the language and a great command of his material.

Personally he was a delight to be with. He was a total gentleman, very thoughtful, always concerned about the people who worked for him, never angry, never harsh. As a Secretary of State, I find him very hard to judge. He was totally loyal to the President, again, very much in that military tradition, has never written about the advice he gave to the President, has never discussed it, has always said, "That was between me and the President," loyally supported whatever policy emerged, and I never knew, working with him very closely for two years, spending long hours on airplanes with him playing bridge, I never knew whether he personally agreed or disagreed with any aspect of the policy that he was espousing, defending, implementing.

Q: Can you think of any particular moments which you observed or were concerned with particularly in dealing with things that were happening around the world?

STEIGMAN: Lots of things happened in those two years. I remember the Secretary coming back after dinner in black tie at 11:00 one night when the Greek colonels had staged their coup. I remember playing bridge with the Secretary for 14 hours nonstop.

Q: It would be 1967.

STEIGMAN: Yes.

Q: April 22, 1967.

STEIGMAN: You were involved with that, I gather.

Q: Well, actually I was in Yugoslavia, but I later served in Greece, and April 22, 1967 was emblazoned across walls all the time. This was the phoenix.

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STEIGMAN: Okay. That was the date. I couldn't have told you the date, but that's the date. I remember him coming back and sitting in the office, and we were there until 2:00 in the morning dealing with the spill off and what was happening and what to do about it with assistant secretaries coming and going. I remember sitting on airplanes with him from Hawaii to Washington, playing bridge nonstop from the time we took off until the time we landed. He loved to play bridge. That was his favorite form of relaxation. He basically didn't like airplanes. He had flown over the hump too many times in a DC-3 during World War II to be particularly fond of air travel. What he liked to do on an airplane was either play bridge or sleep, mostly play bridge. That wasn't, interestingly enough, one of the things that I was asked before I was picked for the job, whether I played bridge, but once I got the job I was asked whether I played bridge, and I think he was very pleased that the answer was yes.

Q: Did you ever get the feeling that certain things he wanted to know, you mentioned military, but how about other things? I've heard it said in other interviews that he was always interested in what happened, but basically he was focused on the Far East more than, I'll say, European affairs. Did you have any feel that this was a Latin American affair or an African affair, and he's not as interested in that as something that would happen, say, in Thailand or of that nature?

STEIGMAN: Well, it's inevitably true for any Secretary of State, though, and it's true for the United States as a whole. The foreign policy mechanism can only focus on one or two areas at a time, and the U.S. has its priorities. The first priority is the U.S.-Soviet relationship, the second priorities are the Far East and western Europe, then you spill off to Latin America and the Middle East, and then you get Africa and South Asia which are normally the last priorities. But that's always been true. And certainly during the Vietnam War, Rusk's primary focus had to be on Vietnam because that's what he was being questioned on constantly on Capitol Hill and in public appearances. He had to be thoroughly informed. He had to be concerned with Europe. Vietnam was even a subject

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inevitably in NATO consultations. But he had to keep up because he went to NATO twice a year. He saw NATO foreign ministers all the time. He had to be very well briefed on what was going on in Europe. He certainly had to be kept thoroughly up to date on the U.S.-Soviet relationship. After that it depended on whether there was a crisis in the area or not or a major policy decision that demanded his immediate attention. Otherwise, on things like most developments in Latin America and most developments in Africa, he probably would rely largely on the daily summaries. We would not give him very much backup traffic on areas unless we knew that he was going to deal with it.

If, for example, we knew he was getting ready to go down to Uruguay to Punta del Este with President Johnson for a Hemispheric Conference, for a few weeks before that we would give him a much heavier dose of traffic from all Latin American capitals so he would feel more comfortable when he got down there knowing what was going on in each of the countries whose foreign ministers he would be meeting. He would also get briefing books, but we would give him the current traffic. When he got back from that, we would probably cut off most of it because his focus would have to shift to something else. If we were giving him too much of something or not enough of something, he would let us know. But our job was to try to anticipate his needs and be sure that he was well prepared.

Q: Well, within the staff around him that you were able to observe, was there a feeling of optimism or it was just a job and about Vietnam?

STEIGMAN: Oh, there was a general pessimism. We felt that this was a no-win situation. Most of us felt that the policy was not really going to work very well. He was very persuasive at defending it, and if you listened to his speeches often enough, you could almost come to believe it. But then you'd read the cables, and you'd see what was going on. We'd talk among ourselves and we generally sounded discouraged.

Q: Shall we move on then to Paris?

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STEIGMAN: Sure.

Q: You went to Paris as a political officer from 1969-72. What were your responsibilities there?

STEIGMAN: There was a year in between, by the way, just to clear the record. I was a Congressional Fellow for one year before going off to Paris. I went to Paris by accident, by the way. I was really supposed to go to Brussels as a political military officer, but the position was abolished in one of these budgetary cuts, and I was in need of a job when Bob Oakley, who was then in the Paris slot, was asked by Charlie Yost to leave Paris a year early and join his staff as the Middle East guy at the UN. So that position suddenly opened up, I needed a job and the timing was right. It was the Africa-Middle East slot in the political section. The political section in Paris had an internal and an external unit. The external unit was essentially regional specialists, one for Far East, one for Middle East-Africa and a couple for Europe, and I was the Middle East-Africa man.

Q: Again we're talking about '69 to '72. What was your impression of the French role? Let's talk about the Middle East. The American attitude has often been that the French were sort of a wild card in certain areas including the Middle East.

STEIGMAN: They were very much a wild card at that point. The French position, as we saw it from Paris, was that they wanted to be sure that they continued to play a role in any decisions that were taken on the future shape of the Middle East. The French had traditionally been a Middle Eastern power, and they really didn't want to be treated as irrelevant.

The U.S. position at that point was to try to keep the French involved so that they would not become a wild card. There was a regular four-power consultation going on in New York among the permanent representatives to the UN. There was also bilateral consultation going on between Joe Sisco, who was then Assistant Secretary, and the

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French ambassador—I think it was Lucet at the time—who would meet fairly regularly. I tried to keep up a parallel dialogue in Paris with the Deputy Director for Middle East at the Quai d'Orsay, first Luc de Nanteuil and then Fernand Rouillon. And we had quite frank exchanges paralleling the Sisco-Lucet exchanges. Joe Sisco tended to edit his cables. Somebody would take notes on the meetings with Lucet, they would come back to him, and he would presumably do some editing to make sure that they reflected what he wanted to convey.

When the cables would come out, one was never sure whether Joe had done any editing on them or to what extent he had done any editing on them. We would play it safe. I would take a copy of the Sisco reporting cable, minus the comments, over to the Quai and Nanteuil and I would swap cables. I would show him Sisco's cables, and he would give me Lucet's version minus comments.

Q: You teach diplomatic history, and the whole idea is that you come out of a meeting . . .

STEIGMAN: Both sides understanding clearly what has been said or what has been intended. This was a very useful device because I would read the Lucet cable and comment on it, and he would read the Sisco cable and comment on it. We didn't leave text with each other. We just read them and then retrieved the text since they were all top secret, God knows why. But it was very useful because there was several times when either Lucet, who was fluent in English but that was his second language, had misconstrued something Sisco had said, or Sisco had not intended what he said and had edited his cable to reflect what he intended. It was very important that there be no misunderstanding. To our mind, that was the surest way of guaranteeing that there were no misunderstandings on the French side what Sisco wanted to convey.

Q: This is an excellent device which is normally not followed.

STEIGMAN: You have to have a very good working relationship to make this possible. Fortunately, this was in the immediate post-De Gaulle years. It would not have been

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possible two or three years earlier when the relations between the embassy and the Quai were much more formal and correct. We had really good personal relations. I worked with either five or six sous-directeurs at the Quai because I had a tremendous geographic spread, and I really knew them all very well. It was fun.

Q: How did we see the French role in the Middle East, your impression of the French role?

STEIGMAN: Well, the French really were not playing a major role at that point. My impression was what we really wanted was to keep them on the team to make sure that they were a part of a joint effort and did not go off on their own and to do anything independent as a wild card. That struck me as the real purpose of the whole thing. At one point, for example, when the U.S. proposed to temporarily suspend the four-power consultations in New York, something was going on and I don't remember what the reason was, but that was sufficiently important that it was something that the ambassador was asked to convey to the Foreign Minister, not something for me to do at the lower level, but to convey to the Foreign Minister and explain that this was a temporary suspension. The reason I remember it so graphically is because the Foreign Minister, Maurice Schumann, misunderstood what the ambassador had said. This was Arthur K. Watson, who was not the swiftest of ambassadors, anyway, and Schumann misconstrued what Watson said, and thought we were proposing to abolish the four-power consultations. I could see from his reaction that he was reacting too strongly. When he asked a clarifying question, the ambassador didn't catch the import of the clarifying question and reinforced the mistaken notion in Schumann's mind. I scribbled a little note and handed it to the ambassador and said, "He thinks we're ending this not suspending it. You've got to clarify." So Watson then clarified and Schumann said, "Oh, that's entirely different! That's an entirely different matter!" But the importance of it is indicated by the fact that the instruction to the ambassador was to explain to the Foreign Minister that we were suspending this so that there would be no hurt feelings. There was a real concern to keep the French on board.

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Q: Well, now in Africa I assume the situation was quite different. In fact, we were delighted the French had their area of responsibility and we didn't have to worry about that. Was that the attitude?

STEIGMAN: Yes, the general attitude was very much one that we wanted to have the French stay there. One of the things that we were constantly trying to—this went on as well when I got to Gabon—was to reassure the French that we had no intention or desire to replace them anywhere in Francophone Africa, that we were, as you say, delighted to see them there and encouraged them to maintain their presence and to increase their assistance in Africa. Again, there was very, very close cooperation and very good exchanges. We used to exchange a lot of information. We tended to have better information very often on what was going on in Anglophone Africa, where we put more attention, and I used to do an awful lot of information exchange with the French.

I would drop in on my French counterparts and bring them up to date on whatever I picked up from embassy reporting repeated to Paris to supplement what they were getting on areas of interest to them. I would ask them questions. We'd get cables out of the Francophone posts repeated to Paris, and I would go in and get the Quai's comments on what was going on, how did they see what was being reported.

Q: This is an aspect of diplomacy that's been all but lost and that is the exchange between diplomats of information that they are getting, not only close allies but ones that are maybe not just allies but on basically friendly terms.

STEIGMAN: You've got to do a lot of trading. Information is a commodity, and by and large information is either bought or bartered. Since overt diplomats don't buy information, you generally get it by barter. You barter something for it. You may barter friendship. You may barter hospitality. You may barter information. And if you're dealing with somebody whom you can trust with some of your information, the easiest way to do it is just a nice professional information exchange from which both sides come out richer. As long as

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you're not compromising your own national interests or doing damage to any of your own national programs, that's an ideal way to operate and it worked extremely well in Paris.

I say it would not have been possible two or three years earlier because the French would not have given any information so there would have been no reason for us to give them any. But with the post-de Gaulle opening, the French were willing to talk to us. I assume that David Newsom has been one of your interviewees.

Q: No, not yet.

STEIGMAN: Because David, who was then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, used to come to Paris once or twice a year. We would do a two-day, all-day session with the French on Africa, and it was wonderful. We would have an agenda worked out in advance, and we would go over all of Africa, an hour and a half, two hours per area, per chunk of Africa with an agreement as to which side would lead on each subject. We would give an appraisal of how we saw what was going on, what the current developments were; then the other side would comment what it's information was, and then there would just be an exchange of impressions and views as to what was going on and what we might do about it constructively from both sides, were the French planning to do something more in this area of concern to us, could we encourage them to do some more. It was really quite a frank exchange, and it worked very well because David has pretty good French, and the ground rule was each side spoke in its own language. I mean, everybody was reasonably bilingual but most comfortable speaking in his own language. David had no problem following and understanding the French and, in fact, he sometimes responded in French. But mostly he would make his presentations in English and they would make their presentations in French and the discussions would then tend to go back and forth after that. But these were very good open discussions.

We did this occasionally on Near East as well, not to the same extent and not as formally because Joe Sisco never was willing to give the French that much time. He didn't take the

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French that seriously. In the Middle East, as I say, he regarded them as a loose cannon to be sort of patted on the head and say, "There, there. You just stick with us, guys." He wasn't going to give them that kind of time. In fact, once when he was in transit in Paris, I got him to agree to spend an hour in the lounge of the airport with Luc de Nanteuil. Luc and I went out to the airport and he and Joe spent an hour in the airport exchanging views in the VIP lounge. But it was harder to get Joe to come into town.

Q: Shall we go to Nigeria now?

STEIGMAN: Sure.

Q: You were assigned, obviously moving up in the area, as a political counselor which is the equivalent to the top political reporter in Nigeria in 1972-75. Could you describe the situation in Nigeria at that time? It was, again, a rather important period.

STEIGMAN: It was a very quiet period. It was the post-Biafra period. The war had been over for two years. Nigeria was still under military rule. It was the Gowon regime. It was a period, by and large, of political stability. There were no civilian politics. We were essentially watching the administrative development of Nigeria. We were looking at the civilian institutions that were permitted like trade unions and other groups. We were talking to the people in the military regime to try to get a sense of where they were going. It was not a period of high political activity or heavy reporting responsibilities for a political section. We were trying to do some longer-term appraisals. We were trying to look at where Nigeria might be headed. John Reinhardt was the ambassador, and with his encouragement, we did a long piece trying to analyze the way the Nigerians look at the world, the Nigerian outlook, the Nigerian political outlook based on extensive interviews and research and input from the whole embassy to try to provide a framework for political analysis. We were able to do that kind of thing.

Q: In brief, how would you say the Nigerians looked at the world at the time?

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STEIGMAN: As a series of concentric circles. They were primarily concerned, as most countries are, with their internal development, if you will, a certain amount of gazing at one's own navel, their immediate neighbors, then the rest of Africa and only after the problems of Africa were dealt with did they then look beyond. Even then, there are just a couple of countries in the world that were really of major importance to them, the U.S., the U.K., the OPEC countries and the Soviet Union and peripherally China.

But most of the rest of the world really didn't engage their very active attention. Nigerians also have a wonderful mixture of arrogance and insecurity which governed all their behavior and which had to be taken into account, very self-assured on the surface but if you scratched deeply they had some real ego problems. They really weren't that self-confident and you tended to get the blustery or sharp reactions because they weren't sure how to react. It was an interesting process of analysis. The political section had an awful lot of business with the Nigerian government on foreign policy issues, on U.S.-Nigerian relations. Much of what we were doing was the bilateral relationship and UN issues and African issues.

Q: How did they view the United States? You were in a period of, really, fence-rebuilding, weren't you, after the Biafran War about which there was a lot of resentment? Although we supported the central government, there was a tremendous movement to help Biafra.

STEIGMAN: There was a lot of pro-Biafra sentiment in the U.S. That stirred a great deal of resentment in Nigeria. It was a period of fence building, but, by and large, we had a very positive relationship with the Nigerians. We all had a lot of Nigerian friends, and I never detected any basic hostility to any of the embassy people because we were American. We had very good working relationships.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about John Reinhardt as an ambassador, how he operated?

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STEIGMAN: John's a consensus builder, at least as ambassador. I think he took some tough decisions while he was at USIA, I gather, which offended people, but within the embassy in Nigeria, he tried to avoid having to make people seriously unhappy. He tried to avoid confrontation and to build consensus. He's fairly low-key as ambassador.

I remember, for example, I think John basically believed our AID mission was overstuffed and overstaffed and given Nigeria's oil wells probably should be phased down and have its program scaled back. He would smile benignly when I would suggest things like this in staff meetings, and over time the AID mission was scaled back, but I don't think he ever confronted the AID mission director or pushed very hard himself for it. I think he may have had a feeling that this was one of those things that was inevitable, it was going to happen, he didn't have to get into a confrontation on it, and he was delighted when other people pushed the process along. But the whole place had a fairly low-key leadership.

Q: Did you, as the political counselor, deal with Gowon who was then the chief of state?

STEIGMAN: I met him a couple of times, but I never did business with him, no. Nobody saw him very often. Even the ambassador didn't see him very often.

Q: Politically though we saw this as a government in power working without much of a challenge.

STEIGMAN: No, there was no external challenge to government. Our political predictions were that this government was immune to external challenge, that the challenge, if any, would come from within the military, and if one group within the military decided it didn't like Gowon it probably could remove him fairly easily—but that we would have probably no foreknowledge of this, no warning, and we would simply report it when it happened. In fact, that's just about what happened three weeks after we left. Gowon was away and he was replaced while he was out of the country and he went back to school in England in exile. It was peaceful, very Nigerian. I wasn't there at the time, but my guess is that it came as

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a total surprise to the embassy when it happened unless somebody had come around to the attach#s the day before and said, "By the way, just so you know, it's going to be very bloodless. While Gowon is away, we're going to replace him. We just wanted you guys to know so that you won't be upset, and there won't be any change in policy." They may have told them the day before, they may not. But if they chose not to tell the embassy, the embassy was not going to know it.

Q: Did we have any problem with Nigeria? Dealing with the United Nations, this always has been one of our tasks of each embassy going out and trying to get their delegate in a country to vote on a particular thing.

STEIGMAN: We made our pitch. We would go and make our pitch every year on the UN laundry list, but they voted their interests, not ours. The Nigerians couldn't be bought or swayed away from what they thought was in their interest. We did our best to persuade them. We would argue on certain points that this would really be in their interest or that they had no particular reason or no Nigerian national interest on this one, you know, could they please accommodate us, things like the Puerto Rican decolonization issue. We'd say, "Now why do you want to make the U.S. mad at you. For heaven's sakes, you have no real interest on this one." I don't even remember whether we won or lost. The Nigerians were not unreasonable. The Nigerians were not flaming radicals. By African standards, they are relatively conservative. They are a bunch of flaming capitalists and a relatively conservative bunch at that.

Q: You came two years after the Biafran War, and if you recall we were inundated with this is going to be a slaughter when the Central Nigerian government comes over and from other interviews I understand that you had the Jewish lobby which was using Biafra as a model for what would happen to Israel, if the Arabs took over there would be a blood bath. You had the Catholics and you had the Protestants, as well as show biz, all pleading the cause of the Biafrans. So you much have been monitoring the situation somewhat after this.

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STEIGMAN: Oh, but this is two years later. Reconstruction had not taken place on a large extent in the east. There were still blown bridges and the roads hadn't been repaved, the Onitsha Market hadn't been rebuilt yet, but people were living fairly peacefully, and there were Ibos all over Lagos again. We had good Ibo friends . . .

Q: You were saying that the Ibos weren't being discriminated against two years later.

STEIGMAN: Not visibly. I suspect that because there were fewer Ibos in senior civil service positions they may have had a harder time getting government contracts than they had enjoyed before. I'm sure there continued to be tribal favoritism and certainly a great deal of corruption. But in terms of the way people were living, we drove all through the east several times, and life seemed to be flourishing again. As I say, the roads still had a lot of pot holes that needed to be repaired. There were bridges that needed to be rebuilt. There were markets that needed to be reconstructed. The flow of funds for reconstruction of the east had been slow, but that did not mean that people were not living fairly comfortably.

I remember in Paris in early 1970 when the Ibo resistance collapsed. I remember getting a phone call at the embassy from one of the French deputies who had been very pro-Biafran saying, "The U.S. must intervene to save the lives of the Biafrans. They're all going to be slaughtered."

I remember telling him on the phone, "Mr. Deputy, I'm reading telegrams from Nigeria even as we speak, and I'm reading press reports from Nigeria even as we speak, and it is clear that there is no genocide going on, that people are not being killed, that the Nigerians are sending food in. It is just the contrary of what you are saying."

"Oh, no," he insisted. "That cannot be true. They will all be slaughtered. The U.S. must act."

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I said, "Mr. Deputy, we have no evidence to support your allegations. I'm sorry, the U.S. cannot act on your allegations because the evidence is to the contrary." But people were really just wild for this.

Q: I understand one time Secretary Rusk told the Nigerian desk officer, "Well, at least you've succeeded in having the Protestants, the Catholics and the Jews all against our policy." Well, then let's move to your assignment to Gabon as ambassador. Now the ambassadorial assignment is obviously a very important one within the Foreign Service. How did yours come about? Was it logical progression or luck or what?

STEIGMAN: Certainly a logical progression but also clearly a certain amount of luck. Very unexpected. We were in Nigeria getting ready to leave. I was looking for a job. I was, in fact, trying to get a DCM job because I had never been a DCM and that seemed to be the next logical step. I wanted a DCM job, and I also wanted to get away from Africa. I wanted to vary my experience. I got a call from Washington offering me a job on the Policy Planning Staff, and I negotiated a little bit. They needed an Africa-type on the Policy Planning Staff. I said, "Look, I'm really only interested in it if I can do something else besides Africa. I don't mind doing some Africa, but I want to broaden my background a little bit." So that had been negotiated, and I thought was going back to the Policy Planning Staff, and we had gone through this thing. A week later, I get a second call from Nat Davis who was then Director General saying, "Any reason why we should not put your name up as a candidate for ambassador of Gabon?"

And I said, "But I thought I was going to Policy Planning Staff."

He said, "Well, yes. But any reason why we shouldn't put it up?"

And I said, "My God! Are there any schools in Gabon? Are there any educational facilities?" I said, "Can I call you back tomorrow? Let me go home and talk to my family. My family's all set to go back to Washington. We've just gone through getting the kids used

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to the idea of going home, and now all of a sudden we're changing signals. Let me call you back." So I called him back the next day and we caucused and said, "We'd cope with the schools one way or another." It was not the sort of thing that you turn down. We caucused and I called back and said, "Okay, yes, go ahead. Put the name up." And I said, "Is this real? Do I really have a chance for it?"

And he said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, we can pretty well control it by the names we put on the list. You're the candidate. They'll be a couple of other names on the list, but we'll make clear that you'll be the candidate." How it happened I have no idea. Something happened in Washington, this is what came out and there I was..

Q: What were American interests in Gabon, if any?

STEIGMAN: American investments, at that point, primarily in manganese production.

Q: You're talking about 1975-77.

STEIGMAN: Yes. U.S. Steel had half interest in the manganese, a major source of manganese of considerable importance to the U.S., U.S. Steel at least. Oil, which we were keeping tabs on very closely. Gabon was an OPEC member producing about 230,000 barrels a day, very small production but prospects for more. Because there was an oil boom it was likely to be, though small, an interesting and attractive market. The country was going to be spending a fair amount of money. Gabon was one of the most moderate and Western-oriented states in Africa under fairly strong French influence but a state you could pretty well count on to vote with you when you needed some help. It was decidedly secondary, however, on the U.S. priority list. But, nonetheless, of sufficient interest to warrant maintaining a dialogue, at least.

It was interesting the year after we left, Bongo even became President of the OAU for a year. Bongo was interested in diversifying and showing the French that he wasn't 100% dependent on them without pushing them to the point where they would cut off his

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subsidies. So he liked to use the Americans for that. That helped keep the dialogue going. During the two years we were there, for example, we started a small military assistance program in close collaboration with the French to make sure that we didn't get their noses out of joint.

Q: Well, how was this done? Any fiddling with the military obviously was diminishing the role of France.

STEIGMAN: Well, not really. They recognized what we were doing; in fact, and they recognized this, they recognized that Bongo had to do some diversifying for his own self-image. They would rather he diversified with us because we had a regular dialogue going, and we were basically trying to encourage them to maintain their role. We kept reassuring them that we were not interested in displacing them, that we were going to do this on a very modest basis. And we weren't putting any personnel in. I mean, we were not a threat in the sense that American personnel were not going to turn up, and the French were going to keep running the show. First of all, we didn't have anybody who spoke French, for Heaven's sakes, or hardly anybody to work on the military. So it was all done very quietly. We kept the French fully informed of what we were doing both in Gabon and in Paris, made sure their noses didn't get out of joint. Bongo didn't want their noses out of joint, because he knew we weren't going to replace them. We were never going to give them a new Corvette or two new airplanes or anything like that. We had a \$5 million-a-year program. It was small stuff.

Q: Did you have any instructions when you went out or was it just go out and do your best?

STEIGMAN: One always starts with a basic set of U.S. policy guidelines for the country which in the case of a place like Gabon basically was , "Keep them friendly, keep them happy, keep them on our side." I don't even remember if it was in there specifically but certainly understood, "Don't get the French riled up because we're not going to replace

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them. Don't raise expectations too high because you're not going to get any major resources." This was supposed to be a low-key holding operation to the extent that if the Department did not have to think about Gabon, you were a success.

Q: How did you find the embassy staff when you were there? Was it an effective one or not?

STEIGMAN: Reasonably. It was a very small staff. I had three other State Department officers, one USIA officer and a Peace Corps director. That was the American staff plus two secretaries and two communicators. In fact, we went to a third communicator because we became a relay point on communications. But, otherwise, the American staff was minute. So it was probably fortunate we didn't have an awful lot that had to be done.

Q: What were your relations with the Gabonese government and with President Bongo?

STEIGMAN: Relations with Bongo were excellent, very, very good personal relationship. The only way to get anything done in Gabon, obviously, was to go see Bongo or call Bongo. I had a direct number. He gave me his direct phone number so I could actually call up and get the President directly which I only used, I think, a couple of times when I needed to get to him. But I could see him whenever I wanted to. He would call up and ask me to come over. I probably saw him about every couple of weeks and talked about everything under the sun. He would sometimes have requests. We would just chat at times which was always fun. I rather enjoyed it since he made all the real decisions. I mean, you could talk to ministers about other things. We would go talk to the Foreign Ministry once a year on the UN laundry list and things like that. But if you really cared about a UN issue, you would go directly to the Foreign Minister, not anybody under him, before you would go directly to Bongo. If it really, really mattered, if Washington really cared about something, you knew that you had to see the President. He was the only one who could pick up the phone and tell the guy in New York to do something. Then you knew it would be done. If

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you left it to the Foreign Ministry, it went through channels and if you sent a cable you had no hope.

Q: How were your relations with the French ambassador there?

STEIGMAN: The French ambassador was the second power in the country, Maurice Delaunay, who had been there for 12 years and then had gone off to Madagascar for a couple of years and then at Bongo's request had come back. He was really a pro-consul in many ways. He was, for example, the only French ambassador who commanded French troops and could, in fact, order them into action without consulting Paris. But we got along very well, I'd say.

Q: He didn't feel that you were an intrusion into his turf?

STEIGMAN: No, but one had to recognize this was the dean of the corps and a man of great power and treat him with respect. That was fine. It was a very cordial relationship. I certainly never assumed he was telling me everything that he knew, but I felt we really had very little that would be secret from him, anyway, so I could afford to be quite candid. I assumed that anything that we did with the Gabonese he would find out about. So I figured I might as well get the benefit of telling him myself. As a result, I think we developed a fairly open relationship.

Q: Were there any particular problems when you were there that you had to deal with or was it a relatively tranquil time?

STEIGMAN: It was relatively tranquil. The problems were very petty ones. We had a USIA third country national employee who was detained at the airport and not allowed to enter. I had to get the President to spring him. It was one of these weird ones. The man was a Haitian based in Morocco who repaired all the audio-visual equipment and made a circuit twice a year to repair and service our audio-visual equipment. Madame Bongo had had an amorous fling with a Haitian a month before, and Bongo had ordered that all Haitians

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were to be banned from Gabon. This guy showed up with a Haitian passport. So I called the head of the S#ret#, who was the President's brother-in-law. He said he was sorry, he couldn't do anything about it. The order had come from the President. I had to talk to the President.

So I called the President and said, "Mr. President, your brother-in-law says that he can't do anything about this. We need this guy to come and fix our cameras. Can he come in for just a few days? I guarantee he will leave then."

"All right, 72 hours."

I said, "Thank you, Mr. President." And I called back. I said, "I just talked to the President. He said he could come in for 72 hours. Would you like to confirm it with him?"

Q: Such is the business of diplomacy.

STEIGMAN: Such is the business of diplomacy.

Q: Well, then let's move on. Do you think we should move on now?

STEIGMAN: I think we may have to cut off for today because we've run our two hours. [Tape recorder turned off]

Q: Andy, we wanted to cover some more about Gabon. What was the name?

STEIGMAN: I was also credited to S#o Tom# and Principe, a former little Portuguese colony.

Q: How did you cover them, and what was the situation of those two? One's an island . . .

STEIGMAN: They're both islands. No, you're thinking of Equatorial Guinea which is split between the island and the mainland which was covered out of Cameroon on and off and now is back to having its own embassy. But S#o Tom# and Principe are so small that

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there's hardly any place to put an embassy. The total population of the two islands is only about 100,000. They got their independence at the beginning of July, 1975, just before I got out to Gabon.

I missed, in fact, the delegation that went through for the formal independence that was headed by Charlie Diggs, who was then Chairman of the House African Affairs Subcommittee, who I gather behaved rather badly when he stopped over in Libreville in the sense he was terribly arrogant and demanding as he tended to be on trips.

When I arrived, there was a delay in obtaining my credentials so that I could start the process of presenting credentials. The Department put S#o Tom# on the hit list because in their early days in the UN they voted against something we cared about. Being very new to the business and very dependent on the advice of the others, they had simply voted along with Angola and Mozambique. They voted with the other Lusophones, and Angola and Mozambique tended not to vote the way we wanted them to vote at that point. All of them having just come out of an independence struggle, they tended to be anti-Western. The Sao Tomeans just followed their lead. So we were mad at them, and I didn't get to present credentials until, I think, the beginning of 1976. So we were doing it by indirection. We were sending messages back and forth. They had a representative in Libreville who could pass messages back and forth to them. Finally, it was arranged for me to go over and present my credentials.

Q: Well, you know, this brings up an interesting point. A UN vote—we've got plenty of people voting against us—is it just easier to pick on a small, an almost infinitesimal country than it is on a big country?

STEIGMAN: I would think it would be easier to behave negatively toward a small country where the relationship isn't wildly important to you. There was presumably an assumption in Washington that the relationship was going to be of greater value to S#o Tom# than to us, and my assumption was that they wanted to deliver a message to S#o Tom# that you

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could not with impunity thumb your nose at the United States. There was a hit list around at that point. I can't remember what the issue was. It was something we were exercised about at the UN though.

Q: Probably Israel or . . .

STEIGMAN: Oh, who knows?

Q: . . . also China at one point.

STEIGMAN: But they had a hit list and they simply added S#o Tom# to it fairly early on as a country for which you weren't supposed to do particularly nice things. We wouldn't have broken relations if we had them. But accrediting an ambassador was considered a positive gesture, and they did not think that was timely until emotions had cooled a little. So it was held up. When we finally got over there, I must say, they are two of the most beautiful islands, at least the main island of S#o Tom#. I never got to Principe. The only ambassador accredited there who I know went to Principe was the French ambassador because he had his own plane that would take him over and then could fly him up to Principe. He had a French military aircraft.

But at the time I was accredited there was still commercial service. Air Gabon flew twice a week, and we went over there for three or four days, the time between flights. They had a very nice ceremony. It was a rather colorful ceremony in which the entire S#o Tomean army marched. All three platoons marched up and down in front of the palace while I stood on a little soap box reviewing the troops in the blazing sun. It must have been about 97 degrees. My wife and a couple of embassy colleagues and my son were standing in the shade in the gate behind me. The problem was I could hear them giggling as this went on and on and I had to keep a straight face. The army band played the "Star Spangled Banner," and that occasioned some of the giggles because they kept hitting wrong notes. Then they played the S#o Tomean national anthem which seemed interminable because every time you thought it was about to end the music would sort of come to a climax and

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then swoop upward and it would start again. And the sun beat down, and, as I say, it was the giggles behind that were the most difficult. But basically the S#o Tomeans were trying to put on an impressive ceremony within their limited resources. And considering what they had available, they did. They did it right. It was a very warm ceremony.

The whole government was assembled inside for the little exchange of speeches, and then I spent half an hour with the President, —I can see him, Miguel Trovoada was the Prime Minister. The President is still there, da Costa, who is a very bright man, spoke good French. He has a doctorate in economics from East Berlin and has good French and German as well as Portuguese. French was the working language because the center for their exile movement had been in Libreville, so almost all the ministers had spent time in Gabon and all spoke French, and that was the language in which we could do business since I didn't have Portuguese.

Q: Did they allude to being frozen away from the United States a while when you talked to them?

STEIGMAN: No, they were very, very cordial. I think I was the second ambassador to present credentials after the French, so I was the third after the French and Portuguese.

Q: So do you think they were even aware of the fact that we were doing something to them?

STEIGMAN: No, probably not. They probably attributed it to bureaucratic slowness on our part, if they thought about it at all.

Q: So much for diplomatic lessons for somebody in the corridors of power in Washington.

STEIGMAN: Yes, I don't think the message came across loud and clear by any means particularly since it became obvious right from the start that we weren't coming running

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in with any aid programs or anything else. They just wanted a cordial relationship. They wanted to play in the big leagues and have normal diplomatic relations with major powers.

Q: The fact that the President went to East Berlin to get a degree, was this happenstance or was it a Marxist government?

STEIGMAN: It was Marxist in the sense that they tried to restructure the economy toward state ownership. The mainstay of the economy prior to independence had been large Portuguese-owned and -run plantations for coffee and cocoa. They were nationalized, and there was an attempt make to run a sort of central Marxist economy which didn't work very well. I gather they've shifted back to a great degree of free enterprise though with some central control. With a country of 100,000 you're not talking about a very big economy.

Q: No. But we had no particular interest in the country for any strategic purposes or anything of this nature?

STEIGMAN: Only the usual Washington concern that the other guys not get their toehold. But, no, the country had no particular strategic value, no particular mineral value, not even a good port.

Q: About this time you were due to leave, was this . . .

STEIGMAN: Well, we weren't really necessarily due to leave. We were in Gabon just over two years, about two years and three months, and left at my request because we had problems, as so many Foreign Service officers do, with schools. We needed schools for our kids. It was not an ideal time to leave because President Bongo was about to become Chairman of the OAU for the next year, and it would have been far more logical for me to have stayed on and presumably I would have stayed had I not asked to be replaced. But I asked to go wherever there were schools for the kids. One was at junior high level and the other the high school level, and that was a pretty important time to get them into American schools. So we asked to leave, and not surprisingly we wound up back in Washington.

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Q: You spent a year with the Senior Seminar?

STEIGMAN: I spent a year with the Senior Seminar. I was offered a couple of jobs in the African Bureau office director jobs and I had said to them, "Look, I've done nothing but Africa. I really would like to work on something else." And, as I mentioned, before we went to Gabon, I was supposed to go back to work in Policy Planning with the assurance that the job would be only part Africa, and I could also work on other issues. I really wanted to get some breadth. And I said, "Please, I really don't want to come back into the African Bureau. I don't want to come back as Director for Central Africa. I've just finished two years in Central Africa. I don't want to come back as Director of AFI. I've been in AFI before. I really would like to work somewhere else in the Department on other issues." They couldn't figure out what to do with me.

So they offered me the seminar for a year, which was great fun. I learned an awful lot about the U.S. in the seminar. I learned about fascinating things like arms control problems and alternate energy. When I read articles in the paper these days about fusion, I have some idea of what they're talking about. But that came out of the senior seminar. I learned about everything, from riding with police in the north side of Chicago to talking with fishermen in New Bedford. It was most valuable in learning about this country, and since we had been overseas for eight years, it was a wonderful re-Americanization. But I don't think the Department gets very much value out of it.

My own sense is that it provides the Department relatively little return except in so far as it broadens a dozen or so senior State Department officers each year and permits them to interact with colleagues from other agencies. But I think it's a high price to pay for it, if you consider the salary costs involved for the officers. On the other hand, if you don't have any other jobs for 12 or 13 officers, that's probably a constructive way to use them, and basically they couldn't figure out what else to do with me.

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Q: Well, then I suppose that, maybe, there was, you might say, almost the rest factor which is not inconsiderable.

STEIGMAN: No.

Q: I found my senior seminar year also gave me a lot to draw on about the United States, and I think it was useful later on with normal representation abroad. Well, after that . . .

STEIGMAN: After that, I was detailed to the intelligence community staff. The Department had suggested my name to Stan Turner, who was the Director of Central Intelligence, for something they were setting up called the National Intelligence Tasking Office. Turner was concerned that the intelligence collection effort of the entire intelligence community was badly coordinated, that in fact individual agencies to a great degree set their own priorities as to what should be collected, and he wanted a central mechanism that could try to coordinate it so that all agencies would direct resources toward targets that were of particular priority importance to the Director of Central Intelligence and to the policy planners who expressed their views to him. He got an Executive Order from President Carter setting up the National Intelligence Tasking Office. He created a Deputy Director for Collection within the intelligence community staff, and under that Deputy Director he set up the National Intelligence Tasking Office.

I was asked if I would be willing to head that. Essentially they wanted a neutral. They did not want a professional intelligence officer because of the rivalries among the major components of the intelligence community: Central Intelligence, the military services, DIA and National Security Agency. To get somebody in from the State Department who was essentially not a part of the community meant that they had a neutral who could go around without being accused to trying to aggrandize his own agency.

It was an interesting exercise. It was the first time I ever had a chance to create an organization, to hire all the staff, to figure out how we could fulfil this mandate. We never

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were able to exercise effective coordination because that kind of authority was never really given to us. What we did put into place were mechanisms to tell the Director of Central Intelligence on very short notice what resources were available against targets of particular interest, if there was a crisis in a particular area and there were reports of military movements. The question was, what could the various agencies actually hope to collect on that subject in the immediate future if their resources were retargeted, and what would the costs be of retargeting those resources.

We developed a mechanism that within 24 hours, really, we could get that information. We could pull that together from the whole community and get it to the Director. That mechanism had never existed before. Then he could then make a decision as to whether to instruct the agencies to go after this.

Q: Obviously this is an unclassified interview, but I wonder if you could talk a little bit about here you are the outsider and one of the most important commodities that the entire executive apparatus has is intelligence. You've got all these different people collecting including the FBI, the various defense agencies, the National Security Agency, and on and on. What are some of the motivations that you saw from some of these people, both rivalries and those of cooperation?

STEIGMAN: By and large, they worked pretty well together when it came to addressing national priorities. But they all had their turf. I mean, they were very jealous of doing what they did, and each one felt that it did very well what it was charged with doing, did, and it didn't want other people poaching on its turf. NSA was very jealous about the communications business. They were the principal source clearly, as everybody knows, of communications intercepts and of the intelligence derived from communications.

On the other hand, they were also jealous, however, of CIA and DIA which were able to do analysis based on information from a variety of sources. CIA and DIA, in turn, didn't want NSA trying to do too much analysis because they said, "Look, all you guys are supposed

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to be working with is communications intercepts, and analysis based only on a single source is likely to be misleading. You should not be in the analysis business. You should be collectors, and you should be passing on your raw intelligence data to the people who can do an all-source analysis.” So you would get that kind of rivalry.

Within CIA you had, of course, rivalry between the operations people and the analytical people; that is, the collectors and the analyzers, again very jealous of their turf. The operations people liked to tell you what the information they collected meant. But, again, they were single source. They were dealing with human intelligence, human source.

My own impression is that of the analytical capabilities within the community, CIA and State had the best. CIA obviously had the advantage of having a massive analytical setup. They had a lot of people in each area, so they could do the sort of in-depth analysis that was a luxury, by and large, at State where INR is a small operation. But in terms of quality and political timeliness and thoughtfulness, the INR product very often matches that of the Agency. In fact, I thought INR's morning summary, by and large, was a better one than CIA's.

Q: Maybe you wouldn't have run across the same problem because it was a different setup. But I was in Athens, and we would have the country team meeting. It was a time when the colonels were there, and it was a difficult period. The political officer would speak and give her interpretation. Then the station chief from CIA would say, “Well, we have other intelligence.” It all sounded so much fancier because it was so-called covert, you know. And it seems sometimes to carry more weight than it probably should have, particularly in that case where it was being somewhat soured because of our too-close relationship to the Greek government.

STEIGMAN: I think there's a certain fascination on the part of a number of people with the James Bond syndrome. I think you're absolutely right, Stu, that there are people who tend to look on covert intelligence as something special. I'm just reading a history of the

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intelligence business since World War I, and it's fascinating the way a number of political leaders have become totally enamored of their intelligence apparatuses and have come to rely on them to an excessive degree as the source of all that is true and beautiful. Generally it has not helped.

Even the CIA daily intelligence summary that goes to the President and other top officials is based over 50% on overt diplomatic reporting, and that's a small part of the total flow in competition with all the NSA intercepts and all the overhead satellite photography and all the human resources collection through covert means. Diplomatic reporting is still over half of the content. So all that stuff doesn't necessarily produce great breakthroughs. Clearly it provides information of a type that you cannot get through going around to the foreign ministry or going down to the union hall and talking to people. None of this will give you a picture of where the army is actually spread out in maneuvers and what they're doing.

None of this will necessarily tell you what the terrorist organization is going to do next week as these other sources can. But you've got to use them together. You've got to use them in balance. I've known CIA people who played the game, the same game as your colleague in Athens, who didn't tell you what his information was or where he had gotten it, and nobody was willing to challenge him because it was too secret to ask. So, I mean, it's a great game. You know, "I know something you don't know. I can't tell you what it is, but you've got to take my word for it, I'm right." Come off it, guy. You can't tell me what your information is, I treat it with a great grain of salt.

Q: Did you find, at least where you were, that there was an effort to try to balance these off or that wasn't your task?

STEIGMAN: No. But I was very impressed by the analytical capability, as I say, of CIA. On the analytical side, they are an exceptionally bright bunch of people who do very good work. As I say, CIA and INR I thought had the two most solid bodies of analysts in the

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community. The NSA was working single source. They were good on what they did, but they tried to do too much with it.

DIA tended to have a fairly narrow and rigid military mind set, and when they got into anything beyond order of battle analysis they tended to look a bit silly. But I found you could generally rely on CIA, and I found, at least in the Stan Turner period, that their analysis was honest. There have been reports that under Casey there was an awful lot of rethinking of intelligence when the Director didn't like the conclusions they came up with. But at least in Turner's period, he would sit down with the analysts and the collectors at times when there was a major subject. He would get 30 people up in his conference room, and they would have an open discussion of what the hell was going on. Turner wanted to hear all sides. The lower-level analysts were there and they could chip in. They could say what they thought and tell the Director that they didn't agree with the way that this was coming out. And national intelligence estimates would be footnoted with disagreements. So, as I say, the product that I was seeing then was honest.

Q: Shall we move on now?

STEIGMAN: Yes.

Q: To really a very productive period in your career, wasn't it?

STEIGMAN: It was an interesting period. I spent four years in personnel.

Q: You were there both at an interesting time, and you played a good, solid role in that.

STEIGMAN: Yes, we are fated to live in interesting times, as the Chinese say. I had had a minor run-in with Personnel when I was staffing the National Intelligence Tasking Office. As I say, I had gone over there at the Department's request. The Department had asked if I would be willing to take this detail because they thought it would be useful to have a State officer in this position. They had promised me full support. I wanted a couple of State

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people as part of the mix of the National Intelligence Tasking Office. I was drawing on all agencies to put together a multi-agency group.

I had been promised a State officer to be my Middle East guy. I had one officer for each area, and I wanted people who understood the area so when they talked to the analysts they would know what they were talking about. There's always a problem because you get somebody from State to come over to CIA. This guy's got to get a new clearance. So it took a couple of months, anyway. And just as the guy was getting ready to report, the Department reassigned him to something else. So I raised the roof with the late Nancy Rawls, who was then the principal deputy, and Harry Barnes, who was the Director General.

I went over and had a friendly, stormy meeting with them and said, "You know, that's a hell of a way to deal. I go over there at your request. You promised me full support. We agree on the guy I want. You pull him from me at the last minute to send him off to detail in the Defense Department. That's dirty pool." They found me an outstanding replacement, and we moved him in fairly quickly. But, again, there was a two-month delay because he had to go through the clearance process. I guess because I was willing to go over and fight with them, the next call I got from Harry Barnes was offering me a job, asking me if I would come over and be the head of FCA.

Q: Which was what?

STEIGMAN: Foreign Service Career Development and Assignments which was the largest office in the personnel bureau. It's about one-third of the total bureau staff.

Q: This was when?

STEIGMAN: I actually went over there in January of 1980. Normally my detail should have run through the summer of 1980. It was a two-year detail in the intelligence community. In fact, the call must have come in the early fall of 1979 from Harry, and I said, "I can't. I

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can't walk out. We've got a going operation here." I said, "I think I could leave toward the end of the year if you can identify a satisfactory replacement by then because I will not walk out and leave the agency in a lurch. You know, you pulled somebody out on me, but I won't walk out on them." Because Ron Palmer was moving up to be Deputy Assistant Secretary, and Ron moved upstairs, I think, in September. I think that's when they wanted me to come over.

So we went through the process of getting a replacement. The National Intelligence Tasking Office was pretty much established and the procedures were going and the staff was in place, so it was not a bad time for a turnover. We identified a satisfactory replacement, a very good one, in fact, John Burke, who had come back from Guyana and was later to go on to head the Freedom of Information operation.

I went over in January to take over FCA. It was a real learning process because I had never been in personnel. But, as I said to Harry at the time, "I felt I had an obligation to do this. Having gone through 25 years bitching about the personnel system, I felt if I didn't take the job I lost my right to bitch in the future."

Q: Well, what were your responsibilities?

STEIGMAN: Well, FCA is responsible for all assignments, for career development advice, for tracking people so that their careers develop in a logical way, for making sure that assignments are carried out in the balance of the interests of the bureau or post and of the individual officer or staffer, that everybody's interests are taken into account and balanced as best you can.

What you've got is constant tension. You've got posts and bureaus that want x, y or z, and you've got a, b and c who want the job and need it as the next logical step in their career development. You try to be sure that a, b and c get good jobs in their terms, and you that the post and the bureau get people who can do the job for them, if not X, Y, and Z, then you persuade them that A, b, and C really are just as good. That's an awful lot of

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everyday negotiating going on and balancing of interests and trying to run a system that meets the needs of the Service and yet will be perceived as fairly honest and equitable by Department personnel.

Q: I might say, having served in Personnel on promotion panels, too, that the personnel function, at least for the Foreign Service, in the operational side, is much more important than it would be in any other organization. For one thing, since we move around so much, whereas the promotion system is fair, the assignment process is the key to promotion. A person is immediately judged by the job they have, not by themselves. I mean, this is a fact of life.

So if you get the right job, you get the promotion and you move up. Yet there are only so many good jobs. How did you feel about the balance? I mean, there are certain jobs that have to be filled, but they are basically dead-end jobs for people.

STEIGMAN: The best you can do is to try to insure that the people who get jobs that are not terribly competitive for one assignment get something better the next time, so that everybody has a fairly equal shot. It never works quite that way. I mean, in the ideal world, if you had total control of assignments in the central system and the central system were endowed with sufficient wisdom, you would do it so that everybody had an absolute equal shot.

On the other hand, your personnel are not totally equal in their abilities, and some jobs at any given moment will be more critical than others. You may have to go for the very best you can get for a job because it's a critical place at any given moment, and maybe the person who really wants it and who needs it in career development terms just isn't going to be able to do it that well. So you have to take into account, again, the needs of the Service. The need of the Service is to get each job done in the best possible way. We like to think that everybody in the Foreign Service is a water-walker.

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Q: A water-walker, you might say according to our terminology, is somebody whose abilities are such that they . . .

STEIGMAN: That they walk on water. That's right. Actually that they are superhuman and divine and walk on water. But some of them, in fact, do get their feet wet quite regularly, and some of them get wet up to the waist, and some of them barely keep their noses above water. And you have to take their abilities into account as well.

Sometimes people think that they've been discriminated against when they don't get an outstanding job for which they really aren't as well qualified as one might wish they were. I was in FCA for about a year and a half. One thing I was able to accomplish, at least we institutionalized in a formal way the assignment mechanism. We negotiated a formal labor-management agreement on the open assignment system which had been operating under a sort of tacit agreement with the union up to that point. So the individual protections were codified and formalized. As I say, we were able to codify the open assignment system and formalize it in a labor-management agreement which, I think, was important because that was, in a sense, a legacy to leave that protected the individual to a considerable extent against arbitrary treatment in the course of the assignment process. It still doesn't guarantee people the jobs they want. I mean, you can't guarantee everybody is going to be happy with every assignment. But at least it provided a minimum level of protection against arbitrary treatment, and I think that was helpful.

When the transition came in 1981 after Reagan's election, Joan Clark was designated to replace Harry Barnes as Director General, and Joan asked me to move up and become the principal deputy. It happened that my predecessor had done the same thing. So I moved up to the front office at that point. Harry ran an interesting system. When one of the deputies was away, he used to move one of the office directors up to sit in the front office just to get the feel for it. So I had had the experience of sitting up there and playing deputy a couple of times. Also Harry had what we used to call vespers. It was an evening meeting at which he met with his personal assistants, his two deputies and the director of FCA,

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who was sort of a third deputy without the title. We would meet every evening at close of business and talk over what was going on and the directions for the next day and for the coming weeks.

So I had been involved in all the business of the front office right through that period when the Foreign Service Act was being drafted and the bugs worked out of it and all the rest. So I was really quite well prepared so that moving upstairs was a very easy transition.

Q: Let's talk a bit about Harry Barnes, because Harry Barnes has been one of the major players in the diplomatic field, I guess, for some time. He was Director General at the time. How at that time did you evaluate him, and how effective do you think he was within the Department of State?

STEIGMAN: I find that a hard question to answer, interestingly, as I stop to think about it. I don't have a clear impression of Harry's effectiveness. We were taking a lot of interesting initiatives. I mean, Harry was an idea man more than a manager. Harry tended to generate ideas and leave the day-to-day management to others. Let's look at one of the problems. For example, I dealt mostly with Ron Palmer, who was at that time the principal deputy, and we were trying to run as equitable an assignment system as possible, and we kept getting sort of undone by the front office yielding to pressure from one or another assistant secretary or bureau to give them somebody they wanted even though we didn't think it was a totally equitable assignment.

So we kept getting overruled on issues. We had the impression, in particular, that Ron wanted to be well-liked so that if an assistant secretary came to him and said, "Look, I really have to have thus and so for an office director" or "thus and so to go out to this post," Ron would say, "Let me see what I can do," and he would tell us to do it. And Harry sort of let this happen. That level of individual management Harry left to his deputies. See, Harry was primarily interested in ideas, in structures. He supported us on the open assignments. He wanted to run a totally honest system. He wanted the system to instill confidence in

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the people it was serving, and he certainly saw it in those terms. How effective he was in making it happen I find very hard to judge.

Q: One of the arguments in the personnel system has been that the pressure from the various bureaus, particularly the assistant secretaries and all from the European bureau, let's say, will say, "I want so and so." Well, the Director General or his deputy or her deputy, we'll say, all of whom are looking forward to becoming ambassadors or having other onward assignments are really very susceptible to pressure. Whereas, if you put a civil servant in who could be doing that for 20 years, they might not know the Foreign Service but at least they'd say, "Well, that's the way it is, fellah!"

STEIGMAN: Well, I think George Vest, who is about to retire, put it correctly. He (and another Director General before him, Carol Laise, is another notable example) said directors general should be on their last assignment with the intention of retiring out of the post. I think the ideal formula is to have a respected senior officer who is planning to retire out of the post serve three or four years as Director General. Neither fear nor favoritism; not looking for any onward assignment and really doesn't care if he offends somebody in the interest of running the system the way he or she feels it should be run. I think George Vest has done a superb job.

Q: This is one of the problems. If somebody is on their way up, they're susceptible.

STEIGMAN: That's right.

Q: The pressures are enormous.

STEIGMAN: Oh, the pressures are terrible.

Q: There is a certain amount of prot#g#ism that develops within the Department. I mean, people may be asking for the right person, you have to have somebody for a job, but you also ask for prot#g#s.

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STEIGMAN: Oh, yes. Absolutely. When I was in the Deputy Assistant Secretary job, there was constant pressure in favor of prot#g#s. Larry Eagleburger, who has just come back, I'm sure is going to drive Personnel crazy. We've discussed this on occasion. I know his views, and he knows mine. Larry believes you have to identify the outstanding young officers and push their careers and all the other people be damned. I kept saying to Larry, "That's fine for the couple of officers you meet and identify, but there may be other officers just as capable whom you don't know who are being seriously disadvantaged because you're pushing your prot#g#s."

And Larry said, "Yeah, but the ones that I know are good are good! They've got to get the advantages." He was trying to push an old O-5, now O-3, at one point to be a DCM in a small post. The guy had been a staff assistant. He said, "He's very good. He needs it. It's the next thing in his development."

I said, "We won't put him on the list." I said, "If you want to go talk to the ambassador and get the ambassador to come in and insist that that's who he wants, we can't stop you from doing that. We may cave in in the end to the ambassador." Because at that point there was no formal mechanism for DCMs. I said, "But we're not going to put him on the list and recommend him for it. He's too junior. That's not fair to him, and it's not fair to other officers who need that as the next logical step in their careers."

A couple of times I argued with him. I know perfectly well it didn't do my career any good because I've known Larry for years. We'd been staff assistants together, and I think I made the mistake of thinking I could talk frankly to him. But I know Larry was not supportive thereafter when my name came up for things.

A couple of other people who were involved in decision making on my onward assignments were also people I had crossed. Along the way I said no to several other people who could have had an influence. I had an argument with Chet Crocker at one point about an assignment in the course of which we had some fairly sharp exchange.

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Charlie Hill, who was then running the Executive Secretariat, wanted to hand-pick secretaries, but they had just agreed to list certain executive secretary positions on an open assignments cable for secretaries coming back to Washington. That having been done, we couldn't then deny it to a qualified bidder. But he wanted to hand-pick another secretary, and he said, "You don't know how important these are!"

"I know how important they are." "But," I said, "we're trying to run it on a system. We've got a qualified bidder. We can't deny it to a qualified bidder so you can hand pick somebody else." These are all people who had an influence over my future, and I'm sure it didn't help that I turned them down for things.

Q: Well, it does show that within the system it doesn't mean that there's a corrupting thing, but there is an ability to corrupt because you can't tell somebody no as easily who is going to judge your career later.

STEIGMAN: Well, you can, but you pay a price for it, and I knew there would be a price to pay for it. But there was only one way I could run a system, and that's the way that I thought was honest.

Q: Well, we're talking about what?

STEIGMAN: This is the '80s. This was '81 to '84.

Q: There has recently been a suit that was won about a woman in the Service being denied particularly just what you're talking about, the DCM jobs. Did you see this, to be a deputy chief of mission particularly for a political or an economic officer, as the way to become an ambassador and move on? It's the testing position.

STEIGMAN: Usually. Not always. I'm the exception.

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Q: Not always. But it's often a critical step. Looking back on it, but at the time, did you see the equivalent to a filtering operation that was working, maybe, against women or blacks or Hispanics?

STEIGMAN: Well, the problem with DCMs is that for many years a DCM was considered to be one of the two positions that any ambassador could choose. An ambassador essentially could have any available officer that he or she wanted as DCM and any available secretary that he or she wanted as personal secretary. These were the two positions in which there was considered to be total ambassadorial discretion. It was about the time that I was leaving Personnel that we began to put some limits on ambassadorial discretion and to send ambassadors lists of DCM candidates. That was put in during the time that I was there.

The formal committee mechanism to approve or disapprove came into place just about the time I left. But we began making up lists of DCM candidates and sending them to ambassadors. And we tried to be sure that we included at least one woman on each list. But it was, nonetheless, the ambassador's choice from the list. And I think that most male ambassadors were negative and probably most female ambassadors would probably tend to say, "Well, you don't want two women."

So I suspect that a number of female ambassadors—there weren't that many—would probably pick the male DCM for balance, and most of the male ambassadors, I think, probably felt uncomfortable with a woman DCM and picked males. So the way the system was structured, that right of individual choices, when that choice was left to ambassadors, tended to certainly operate to the disadvantage of women in the Service. There was no mechanism to force women into DCM positions.

Now I would still argue that you would not do any woman a favor by forcing her into a DCM position in opposition to the ambassador's wishes. The popular wisdom has it that, "fifty percent of all DCMs fail." It's never been proven to my knowledge. It's never been

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documented. Nobody has ever done a serious study on it. But the popular wisdom has it that about half of all DCMs essentially get downgraded by their ambassadors for not having done the job the way the ambassador wants.

A lot of the problem, I'm sure, is a communications problem. Unless the ambassador and DCM sit down and very carefully spell out the role the ambassador wants the DCM to play, it's very hard for the DCM to satisfy an ambassador. One ambassador wants a DCM who will be quiet, sit at home and manage the mission and the DCM adopts a high-profile posture toward the outside community, the ambassador may seethe about it and bad-mouth the DCM in the efficiency report, but never have told the DCM in advance what he or she wanted. Supposedly this is a problem.

Now my guess is that if you force somebody, male or female, on an ambassador, the odds for failure go up even higher, that the ambassador's resentment of having this person forced on him is going to be reflected at best in a lukewarm efficiency report. Therefore, the DCM position, rather than being a stepping stone to higher things, is going to be a millstone that drags down the officer and dooms the career. I suspect that most women officers in the service recognize this and would not want to be pushed into a DCM position unless the ambassador genuinely wanted them.

Q: The awareness has at least been raised now.

STEIGMAN: Sure. I have not read the decision. I don't know what the judge is going to order the Department to do. But any judge who orders the Department to place X numbers of women in DCM positions, I think is going to do the women a disservice is my own sense unless they are genuinely wanted in those jobs. The ambassador-DCM relationship is such a personal thing that there's got to be good chemistry, and if the chemistry is wrong, I think it's a recipe for disaster both for the officers and for the post, for that matter.

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Q: How about the other factor, looking for minorities, essentially blacks? Was this part of your responsibility?

STEIGMAN: Only indirectly. The other deputy had the direct supervisory responsibility for REE which is Recruitment, Evaluation and Employment. But I was involved from time to time, and, in fact, I was the one who on behalf of Personnel agreed to work out an agreement with the Equal Employment Office that we would, in fact, reserve 20% of all junior Foreign Service officer slots for minorities. We had set a 20% goal in order to try to bring the Service as a whole up to a more representative character. Twenty percent is higher than the minority percentage in the population, but we were trying to overcome the past under-representation of minorities. I was the one who signed off on the 20% thing.

There were people in Personnel who thought I was crazy for it, but I thought it was the appropriate thing to do. At that point, during the four years that I was in Personnel, the recruitment effort was not as effective as it should have been undoubtedly, but it was attracting a sufficient number of minority candidates so that we could, in fact, achieve that 20% goal with qualified candidates.

Now I gather in the next couple of years after I left, whether it was a failure of the recruitment effort or a loss of appeal of the Foreign Service or what, that the percentage of minority candidates actually hired dropped substantially below 20%. That goal was met during the four years that I was in Personnel. I gather it ceased to be met by 1985-86. I can't tell you what happened after I left, but I think it's appalling that it happened because the mechanisms were in place and they simply had to be pushed.

Q: You moved up then with Joan Clark. What was your assignment then?

STEIGMAN: In 1981, I moved up with Joan as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and remained in that position for three years until spring of '84.

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Q: Joan Clark became Director General when?

STEIGMAN: She became Director General in early '81 after the Reagan election.

Q: Now in Personnel did you notice any change? I mean, you were in the office dealing with the professional side of the Foreign Service essentially, but did you notice any great change with a rather drastic change in administration? How did it impact on you?

STEIGMAN: The most dramatic changes were a sharply heightened suspicion of the career service on the part of the political management, a dramatic rise in the number of non-career appointments and, of course, we were also preoccupied with the initial implementation of the Foreign Service Act, all of which came at once.

So we had a chronic problem during those three years of senior office surplus to deal with which had multiple causes, and we were not getting an awful lot of sympathy from the political leadership which really didn't think all that much of the career service to begin with. Some of it is inevitable, I think, with any presidential transition. A new administration comes in and says, "If these guys worked loyally for the last administration, how can they possibly be loyal to us." They really don't understand the career service. They were, as you know, quite vindictive about the people who had served in Central America which became the ideological touchstone for the Reagan Administration.

We've seen some of the spitting recently in the "Letters" column of the Foreign Service Journal in Frank McNeil's article and the responses. But certainly it was a much more ideological administration, one where you had to be a true believer really to be acceptable. You saw it in a variety of ways. You saw it even in somebody who was as knowledgeable about his area as Chet Crocker in Africa. I never discussed it with him so I can't tell you whether this was his motivation, but he certainly seemed to be deliberately excluding from major policy jobs in Africa as he had the option to make appointments, people who had worked on African issues under previous administrations. He seemed to be looking for

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very able officers who did not know anything about Africa or African policy in the past, and who, therefore, would accept the gospel according to Crocker as the only possible gospel.

We did an analysis at one point, for example, of the major ambassadorial appointments in Africa over the first three or four years of the Reagan Administration. The career people chosen for the major posts were all people without prior African experience who wouldn't know enough to question Crocker's judgment and decisions and policies. They were very able officers, but the Africanists were being systematically excluded.

Q: Expertise goes down.

STEIGMAN: And this certainly seemed to be the case, for example, in Central America where again some of the people chosen were knowledgeable in the area, but a number of very able people who really knew the area thoroughly were systematically excluded. You had people like, for example, Myles Frechette, who had been one of the deputies or an office director and had been working on Central America, really knew the area thoroughly, was due for an embassy, and he was exiled to Cameroon. You know, that sort of thing. There was somebody else later on in the Administration who was sent off to Algeria—this was in '84 I guess—because they didn't want him anywhere near Latin America because he had worked on it.

So there was a devaluation of experience and knowledge and a substantial upgrading of ideological loyalty and commitment. Ben Read had been the Under Secretary for Management under Carter. Ben knew and understood the career service. I mean he was a political appointee, a lawyer originally from Philadelphia, but had been Executive Secretary under Johnson working for Dean Rusk, and understood the Department. Ben was not the greatest of managers, but at least there was an understanding of the career service. There was not an instinctive hostility. There was a recognition that loyalty was a two-way street. If you were loyal to the people underneath you, you could count on them being loyal to you.

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What you got suddenly in the transition from Ben Read to Dick Kennedy, the first Under Secretary for Management in the Reagan period, was “who are these people are how are they going to try to cut my throat today?” Kennedy, who was a nuclear expert from the NSC staff, was an even worse manager than Ben was. Ben wasn't really a bad manager, but Kennedy was a terrible manager. He had a special assistant who is still with him on the nuclear side, who is quite frank in expressing his distrust of the career service, and his feeling that the career service was sort of pampered.

That was the attitude coming from above. So Joan Clark had a fairly difficult tightrope to walk. Joan's a very conservative type, anyway, in terms of her behavior, in terms of the way she operates. She's very good in the bureaucracy but very low key. She doesn't make waves. She's sensitive to the instructions coming from above and will not generally do strong battle with them. One has seen this, for example, in her more recent career as Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs. She has had to go up and testify on all kinds of unsavory things, these exclusionary visa policies and all sorts of bizarre things. Having known Joan now for several years and having talked to her a little bit about this, she doesn't believe in a number of these things, but she's very loyal and she will follow the guidance from above. This is not somebody who is going to make waves. So the career service in those early years did not really have a strong defender either on the seventh floor or in the Director General's office.

Q: The seventh floor in our jargon refers to what?

STEIGMAN: The Secretary and the principal deputies, right. There was no strong defender up there at that point. As I said, Larry Eagleburger who was up there—I can't remember whether Larry was up there initially or whether he came in shortly afterwards—but Larry, again, is not strong for the career service in a generic sense, but rather very much for Larry's view of the career service; that is, Larry's prot#g#s should get the advantages. So you did not have a defender up there of running an equitable system.

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Q: I might point out that we had President Reagan, who ran for eight years basically attacking the career people in the entire government.

STEIGMAN: Yes, absolutely. And, of course, his first Secretary of State, Al Haig, a very bright guy but not particularly interested in the management of the Service or of the system, left that to his deputies. So you didn't get any support. It was not, in fact, until George Shultz came in that you had a Secretary of State who began to pay serious attention to the management of his personnel resources and to really come out publicly in support of the career service, to go up on Capitol Hill and fight for the career service. I think Shultz was quite remarkable in that and made a real contribution. I think once Shultz arrived on the scene . . .

Q: He came when? About '83?

STEIGMAN: He came in about late '82 or early '83, I guess. But the change was not immediately apparent. It took him a while to take hold. It was really, I guess, in the second Reagan Administration that he began to become quite outspoken in support of the career service. Again, after I left Personnel, but there was at least some change in attitude at the top. Kennedy moved on. We got a businessman from Chicago who came in as the Under Secretary for Management. He only lasted for a year. He was frustrated by the career service. He couldn't make changes the way he could back in his business. He couldn't control the people. He couldn't hire and fire people the way he wanted to, and he was very frustrated by it. He decided to go back. He was retired, anyway. He said he would go back and spend his time worrying about the Opera Board. Jerry Van Gorkom. He was a nice man, not instinctively hostile to the career service, but just frustrated by the bureaucracy. So there was an awful lot of management drift.

Q: We now have a new Foreign Service act which was the Foreign Service Act of 1980. What was the motivation or what was the imperative that got this act done first and then some of the repercussions?

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STEIGMAN: My impression is the motivation came primarily because the Civil Service was being restructured. One of the biggest problems was that a Senior Executive Service had been created, and in the course of looking at the restructuring of the Civil Service, there was an awful lot going on on the Hill, "Gee, we ought to look at the Foreign Service, too, and, maybe, do we need a Foreign Service after all or should it just be part of the Civil Service? Should Foreign Service people be folded in? Should they be part of the Senior Executive Service?"

I think it was partly to stave that off, to rebuild the Foreign Service nearly parallel to the Civil Service with the Senior Foreign Service built into it, that the changes were instituted. There was also a feeling that if the Foreign Service was going to justify itself as a separate service, it was going to have to be more up-or-out and less lifetime security. If you were just going to have the life security the Foreign Service previously offered, then in what ways was it really different from the Civil Service? So it was made deliberately a more competitive service with real thresholds, with a Senior Foreign Service that had limited tenure, to justify keeping, I think, a separate service.

I don't know whether they really had to go that far, but certainly Ben Read, Jim Michel and Bill Bacchus felt they did as they consulted around on the Hill. That was their conclusion that this was the only way to really ensure the future of the Foreign Service as a separate entity.

Q: You got there when it was a fait accompli.

STEIGMAN: Pretty much.

Q: But how comfortable did you feel with it as you looked at it and were going to have to put it into operation?

STEIGMAN: I was reasonably comfortable with it at the time. I thought it was legitimate to put a greater degree of competitiveness into the Service. I don't think any of us foresaw

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clearly or accurately what the real implications of it would be five to seven years down the line when this started to bite. I don't think the information put out by the Department at that time was fully accurate, not out of malice in any sense, but simply because I don't think we really understood how this was going to play out.

For example, in advising officers on the senior threshold, I think the information that was provided to people who had to make a decision as to when to enter the competition—there's a six-year window—once you declare yourself in competition at the senior threshold, either you're promoted in six years or you're retired. Most people signed up in the first year to compete assuming that they would be promotable within six years. Some of them should have waited two or three years. But we really didn't understand how that was going to happen and why they should wait and what the numbers were going to look like and what the impact of all these changes was going to be on promotion numbers.

So many things were happening at once that I don't think we were really able to evaluate all of it as effectively as we should have and provide people with better advice. As I say, I don't think there was any malice. I think we just didn't see what was going to happen. For example, I don't think we foresaw the extent of the senior surplus that would develop as a result of the growth in the number of political appointments, the raising of the retirement age from 60 to 65, so a lot of mandatory retirements stopped happening for five years, the prospect of substantial salary increases which encouraged people to hang on so long as you had a high-three annuity, if you hung on to those years, obviously you've boosted your annuity substantially. I mean, nobody was leaving, and also the economy wasn't in very good shape. There were very few jobs out there.

So for all kinds of reasons we built the senior surplus. That had an impact on promotion numbers, that made it harder to cross the senior threshold and people who had signed up for six-year competition, assuming that they would be promoted in four to five years which was the norm, suddenly found it was taking seven or eight years and they just didn't have seven or eight years. They only had six and they were out.

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When this came up, a number of people obviously have filed grievances and law suits because they feel that they were misled by the Department. They were misled in the sense of being given insufficient information, not of being given wrong information. But the Department, in fact, was at the time reporting to Congress under Foreign Service Act on its projections of promotions for future years.

The actual promotions fell short of the projections reported as estimates to the Congress. So some of these people are arguing, I think with a degree of validity, that, "Look, the only information we had to rely on in making our promotion assumptions were the numbers that the Department itself provided and the Department failed to meet those targets and that's why we didn't get promoted." I think they can make a case for an extension for a year or two.

Q: It was a very, very difficult time. Much of the pressure came from young, middle level, eager political officer specialists who always looked at everybody above them as dead wood, to get them out, and yet very quickly they have become part of the dead wood.

STEIGMAN: Yes. They became part of the problem, not part of the solution. It's interesting. I think you're absolutely right because the impact has been spread fairly widely. Middle-level officers and senior officers have shared the pain of the transition to the new system. I think the biggest loss under the new system has been the loss of confidence in a career.

I think whereas in your day and mine, you went into the Foreign Service with the confident assumption that you had found your career, that you were secure in that career until you were ready to retire so long as you performed well, that you did not have to be the star who walks on water to survive to your own choice of retirement date, but that as long as you were a good Foreign Service officer, by God, the Service would repay your loyalty by assuring you an honorable career until you felt it was time to retire.

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Q: Another part of this is that you could accept an assignment you'd rather not, but you could say, "Well, I'll accept this really for the good of the Service."

STEIGMAN: That's right.

Q: Today, I take it, it's almost an outmoded phase because the good of the Service may not mean your good.

STEIGMAN: Yes. Since people are now competing for survival first at the senior threshold and then at several stages in the senior ranks when they run out the limited time in class, assignments become critical. You're quite right, unless you have an assignment in which you can be judged as not merely a good Foreign Service officer but one of the outstanding Foreign Service officers, you risk seeing your career come to an end. People are reluctant to commit time to training. People are reluctant to commit time to out-of-agency details which could be fascinating and broadening and very helpful.

I gather people are reluctant to do anything that isn't considered mainstream. And also people are cutting each other's throats to a greater extent to get the jobs they feel will advance their careers. The sense of collegiality has been lost. The sense of top-down loyalty has been lost.

The sense, as you say, of doing things for the good of the Service, I gather, has been seriously diminished if not lost. That is an unforeseen consequence. I don't think anybody saw that it would do this at the time. I don't know how you reverse that. Having built this structure, I don't know how you can now rebuild a sense of loyalty when people's careers are constantly at risk. The junior officer doesn't feel this quite so immediately. I mean, you come in, if you get your tenure you've got 20 years ahead of you.

To the extent that people come in in their early to mid-30s and are assured of being able to stay in until their mid-50s, that may be good enough for a lot of them, and you're getting a lot of very good people with that kind of background who are going to have a

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very satisfying career and leave comfortably in their early or mid-50s feeling, “Okay, now I can go do something else. I've had a good honorable career. It's been fascinating.” I think you presumably will have more people leaving for family reasons because the great unresolved dilemma is still the two-career family, spouse employment.

So I just think it's going to be less of a lifetime career, less of a family, less of a sense that we're all in this together, and more of a sense of, “How do I get ahead in this?”

Q: Well, this brings up a question that I ask at the end of all of these interviews. Andy, you, of course, are right in the middle of this, but what do you say to young people—you must get this everyday—about the Foreign Service as a career?

STEIGMAN: I still encourage people to try it. If they are interested in international affairs, I encourage them to consider it as a serious career option with the caveat that it is no longer a guaranteed lifetime career, that it's not going to be right for everybody, that they may have serious problems reconciling Foreign Service career with a successful marriage and family life, and that they have to look on it as one among a series of possible options and have to feel that they can leave it if it doesn't work out for them without a sense of failure. They have to go in with their eyes open that this is a job.

It's not a guaranteed career. It's no longer as it was for many of us, I think, sort of a vocation like the priesthood. It's a job, and most Americans change jobs eight or nine times in the course of their working lives and change career fields two or three times. So it's a job. Maybe it will work for you, and you will stay in it, and maybe it won't. But don't feel bad if it doesn't work.

Consider that it's been fascinating experience, you've had the opportunity to live abroad, you've learned something from it. Take that experience and put it to work somewhere else. And if it works for you so much the better. Then stay with it.

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We have a lot of Georgetown kids who are going into the Foreign Service still, good kids, and I'm very encouraged by this. The Foreign Service is still getting quality applications and recruiting quality candidates, at least the ones that I see. They are good, and they will be good Foreign Service officers. How long they'll stay I don't know.

Q: Well, Andy, the last question. Looking at your time in the Foreign Service, what gave you the greatest satisfaction?

STEIGMAN: I can't pick out any single thing. But as I look back at five overseas posts and several different jobs in the Department, a number of them had particular highlights, had things that were particularly exciting about them. The Congo in 1960 was seeing history in the making. Working for Dean Rusk for two years was a unique overview of the foreign policy process working for an absolutely wonderful human being. Three years in Paris were exciting. It was a lovely, fascinating place to live.

I had what I thought was the best job in the embassy because I was a one-man band dealing with half the world. Nigeria was great fun because the Nigerians were wonderful people to be with, lively, sophisticated. It was not an exciting time politically in Nigeria, but it was an interesting place to be. And being an ambassador was fun. Again, Gabon was not a terribly exciting place to be politically, but the experience of running an embassy is an interesting one even when it's not very much of an embassy. A year and a half with the intelligence community was interesting. I used to tell people there it was the most alien culture in which I'd ever worked which amused them but it was basically somewhat true.

Personnel was fascinating but frustrating trying to make the system work smoothly, honestly and equitably, not always successful, and as I say, I think if you really cared to make the system run equitably, you should be prepared to retire afterward which I hadn't expected to but I think it was the smartest thing I could have done because I certainly blotted my copy book. And then what turned out to be perhaps in some ways one of the

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most useful things I ever did, I came over to Georgetown as diplomat-in-residence and found a new home.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very, very much.

STEIGMAN: Stu, thank you. It's been fun.

End of interview