

## BURUNDI

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**JULIUS W. WALKER, JR.**  
**Political Officer**  
**Bujumbura (1961-1963)**

*Ambassador Julius W. Walker, Jr. was born February 21, 1927 in Plainview, Texas. After serving in the United States Marine Corps, he received his bachelor's degree from The University of Texas. His career has included positions in Malta, Burundi, Chad, England, Liberia and Upper Volta. In 1962, Burundi gained independence and changed the name of the capital from Usumbura to Bujumbura. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: You left Malta in 1961.*

WALKER: Yes, I came back and was assigned to the mid-career course. I couldn't believe that after one assignment abroad I was already in mid-career. But I was in that course and then went to Bujumbura. The post had been open about eight or ten months when we arrived. Herbert Olds was the first Consul General. The staff included Walter S. Clark, and David Doyle was there for the Agency. Charles Cuenod was doing administration. The offices were in the end of a bank building. We began to build up so much that we had three or four people in an office. We were desperate for more space.

I was sent there as political officer, but we only had one person to do all the administration, he was supposed to do the secretarial and communication work as well. Our communications section was equipped with a Mox II, a very difficult and slow means of encrypting telegrams. It ended up that all of us had to write our own telegrams, had to put them in final on green telegraph forms and take them back to the code room and encrypt them on this thing which required physical labor. You see, the keyboard was manual and each key had a strong spring. Our hands felt as though we had been milking cows after typing a couple of pages with the thing. The Mox produced a strip of five letter random groups on a strip which then had to be pasted onto a paper and set up for transmission. Then we had to type these five-letter nonsense groups into a telex machine and get that perfect. The telex would make a tape which we would use to actually send the message. It would be received in Brussels because Bujumbura...it was then

called Usumbura, Ruanda-Urundi...was still under Belgian tutelage as a UN Trust Territory. So our communication was through Brussels. This was all laborious, slow, hard work.

*Q: It must have been a good solid inhibitor on writing?*

WALKER: It really was. And if you think that is an inhibitor, try it with a one-time pad. We used them when the Mox broke down. That was when I learned the truth of the expression that you can't make love on a one-time pad.

Anyway we had all that to do. Dozens of people came out, Soapy Williams and company among them.

*Q: He was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.*

WALKER: The Honorable G. Mennen Williams. He came with a group of 17 people, as I recall. We didn't have enough mattresses for everyone. Literally, there were not enough beds for those assigned to Usumbura to sleep on. Children slept two and three on a bed. When Williams came there was no room in the hotels, such as they were. They were almost jokes anyway. So we had to put up most of the party in our homes and many of our people slept on the floor. They were there for three days and administratively, it was a mess.

Williams was a wonderful man. He was one of the most well-motivated individuals I had ever seen, but he was not as quick to pick up things as some of the other people I worked with. Nevertheless part of the trip was successful. He met the proper people. The Belgians were still in charge then. I don't think he met the king, Mwami Mwambutsa, was his name. He did meet some of the black politicians. But overall, that visit was a mess.

Another visit we had which was really a mess was from Allen Ellender, a Senator from Louisiana. Ellender made his trip to visit Africa because he felt the United States was making a great mistake by recognizing all those independent African nations. The trip wouldn't cost the American taxpayer anything because he would use American facilities everywhere. And he did. He was flown all around the continent on Air Force aircraft that were assigned to the Defense Attachés. They were old DC-3s. He made it a point to stay in the homes of Foreign Service personnel, never with the chief of mission or the consul general. He wanted to see how the common people were living.

Savannah and I were the only two in Burundi with southern accents so we were automatically chosen to be his host. Before he got to Burundi he visited Rhodesia. There he spoke to the Rotary Club and said, inter alia, that the black African was incapable of governing himself. Well, the Rhodesians loved that. The Rotary Club was 100% white. Later, Ellender was astounded when he flew into Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to find that Julius Nyerere would let him land to refuel but he couldn't get off the plane. They flew to the next stop, Usumbura. He got to us a day early.

Meanwhile, I had spoken with the government to see if they were also going to object to his visit. Burundi was independent by this time. They weren't upset. I asked if they had heard about his statement. They said, "Oh, yes, we know what he said. We think he is wrong and would like him

to come here to see how wrong he is.” So he came. We met his airplane. In Washington his press officer had lived next door to Savannah and me in a little house across the street from the Department. We knew the press officer quite well. His name was Mario Fellom.

The Chargé was named Ernest Stanger. Ernie introduced Ellender to all of us. And the last one, of course, was me. He said, “Now here is your host, Julius Walker.” Ellender broke into a smile, embraced me and said, “Walker, God damn I am glad to see you. I been looking all over Africa for you. Mario Fellom gave me a pound of pinto beans to bring to you.”

While in Bujumbura he sat in the office I shared with Phil Bergstrom and read the telegrams sent to him from Washington concerning his statement. It had caused quite a stir at home. We had just gotten the text of his speech from Rhodesia. When he got through reading the speech he looked up and said, “Walker, I just want you to tell me one thing. Was what I said wrong?” Two thoughts raced through my mind. The first was “Oh, Lord, here goes my career.” The second was, “Why in hell couldn’t he have said ‘Bergstrom.’” I said, “Senator, that is a direct question and I am not sure I can answer it directly. But let me say this, I am a protestant from Plainview, Texas. I can stay in Plainview and say just about anything I want about the Catholic church, true or not, and it won’t make any difference. But if I go to New Orleans and say those same things, I may get in trouble.” He looked at me for a minute and said, “By golly Walker, you are right. I just said the right thing in the wrong place.” I said, “Senator that is not what I said.” But from then on he said, “It’s just like Walker says, I just said the right thing in the wrong place.” I tried to correct him, but it did no good.

Later we were in a car going somewhere. He was sitting next to Savannah and he said, “You know, I just don’t understand why it is people make such a fuss about all this. It is just my idea. Just one person’s opinion.” Savannah said, “Sir, you have to remember, you are a senator of the United States and what you have to say is important.” He looked at her and said, “Little lady, I guess you are right. I may not have helped my country very much.” That was the first time it seemed to dawn on him he had caused trouble.

We were under great pressure to get him to say something to take the edge from his statement. I sat down and worked on a suggestion. Finally I had it in good enough shape and I gave it to Ernie. He said, “You will never get him to say that.” I said, “Well, I’ll try. Maybe he will.” I gave it to him and he read it. I said, “Senator, if you would say this it will really help us here and also your country. And it is not going to hurt you at home. I have written something you can say and not look like you’re backing off. He grunted and stuck it in his pocket.

The plane finally left and went to Nairobi. The Kenyans wouldn’t let him off the plane either. He called the embassy staff to meet him on the plane in the noon-time heat. The plane was like an oven. He chewed them up blood raw. As they were leaving he pulled the statement from his pocket, gave it to the Chargé and said, “I understand the press wants a statement from me. You can give them this.” I had asked Ernie to send the statement to the Department because Ellender could have changed it then said that was what he was told to say. I thought we should report what we had done. Ernie’s reply was, “No, no, we may be in trouble for having done this.” Thus no report was sent from Bujumbura.

Nairobi released the statement and it really did help. It was a good statement. It backed up enough that the Africans could see that he was making a gesture. However, Nairobi got the credit. They were showered with accolades for this. And damn it, we were the ones who had done all the work. Sometimes, that's the way it goes in Foreign Service.

*Q: Was there any reflection of the Congo crisis when you were there?*

WALKER: Oh, there was a lot. Not too long after we got there our public affairs officer, Darrell Drucker, returned from a meeting in Europe. We met him at the airport. He had been seated next to a well dressed, nice looking, black American. He learned this was Colonel Harlin Julian, the Black Eagle of Brooklyn.

*Q: Served in Ethiopia at one time.*

WALKER: Served in Ethiopia.

Julian told him openly that he was selling planes to Tshombe. This is when Moise Tshombe was leading the rebel group in Katanga Province in an effort to split Katanga off and make it a separate nation. It was a mineral-rich area. The UN, the Belgians and the US were all trying to stop him. When Darrell got off the plane he pointed the guy out, "That is Colonel Harlin Julian, the Black Eagle from Brooklyn." And he told me the story Julian had told him.

Public affairs folks don't always see the political importance of things. This was just a story to him. Boy, I was taking notes as fast as I could. We sent a telegram to the Department and to Elisabethville about Julian and what he said he was doing. Later, he was picked up by the United Nations forces and incarcerated for dealing in arms. But we were the ones who blew the whistle on him.

His activities were of great importance in Burundi. This was before Independence and the Belgians were worried about what might happen there. They remembered what had happened a year and a half earlier in the Congo and they didn't want to be in Burundi for something similar. As Independence got closer, more and more Belgians left.

Savannah was pregnant with our second child when we went to Burundi. She was going to a Belgian Ob-Gyn. The baby was due early in January. At a Christmas party somebody asked, "Mrs. Walker, who is your doctor?" She gave the name. the person replied, "Oh, he couldn't be your doctor." She said, "Why not." "Well, he left the country."

Indeed, that doctor had departed without saying a word to us. This was a genuine problem. Everyone was leaving. Where could we get a doctor? It was too late to put her on a plane, even to Nairobi or some other nearby place. Before Independence there were good hospital facilities in Burundi but there were worthless without a doctor. Finally I discovered there was a Belgian doctor at the African hospital. (As was the case in most African nations before independence, there was a European hospital and an African hospital.) This guy ran the obstetrics unit. He had been there for four years doing public service in lieu of military service. The Belgians had that option and I think they still do. It is a good program.

I asked the doctor if he would deliver the baby and he said he would be glad to. So it worked out fine. When it was all over and I was paying him for the delivery he said, “You know, I really ought to pay you.” I said, “Why?” And he said, “This is the first normal delivery I have seen in four years of practice in Burundi.” So he was the perfect guy for it, having dealt with every possible emergency. It worked out beautifully. But a strange thing happened, at the moment the baby was born a bat flew into the octagonal delivery room and circled it. I couldn’t remember the French word for bat. I finally said, “There is a false mouse in here.” He said, “A what?” I said, “A ‘faux souris.’” He looked up then said, “Oh, no, a ‘chauve-souris’ [a bald mouse].” I said, “Oh, yes.” He said, “In a minute you can turn the light out and it will fly out.” And it did. Our second child was born in Burundi and it was a wonderful experience.

*Q: Did you get observe the various tribal conflicts?*

WALKER: Between the Tutsi and the Hutu. Yes. We were very much involved in that, both in Burundi and Rwanda.

*Q: At that time did we have one post that covered both Burundi and Rwanda?*

WALKER: Yes, you see before Independence we were only allowed to open a consulate in Usumbura. Usumbura was in the Urundi side of Ruanda-Urundi. But we could send an officer to Kigali which was to become the capital of Rwanda about a year before Independence. He could live there and begin renting property before Independence. We were not allowed to officially open there until after Independence, we did open an office as soon as we could. That meant those in Usumbura covered both places.

They had an election in Rwanda not long after I arrived. Dave Doyle and I covered it. We drove up. We had a big government van and went from polling place to polling place to see what was happening. Things seemed to be going well enough then we stopped at a Seventh Day Adventist mission and found the Americans in a panic. They were frightened within an inch of their lives. It is hilly country and across the valley from the mission, facing them, was a Hutu village. Those people were yelling across the valley that come night they were going to cross the valley and kill the missionaries because they supported the Tutsis.

Although Dave and I were diplomats, not soldiers, we decided to spend the night to help those people in case anything happened. All night long we walked the top of the ridge so we could be seen. We were wearing khakis. We couldn’t do anything if people came. I think one of us had a pistol. We patrolled until about 4:00 in the morning when some Belgian troops finally came and took over. I remember at one point about 2 AM we sat down. Dave had a small bottle of whisky which we passed back and forth. It got cold there, up in the mountains, it was uncomfortable and we were dog tired. We had gotten up about 4:00 AM the day before to begin our trip. We had a hard ride over the unpaved mountain roads so we were really worn out. We were sitting down there swigging from this jug--not much, but a little bit--and I said to Dave, “You know I think it’s funny, ironic really, that a couple of WWII vets are out here patrolling to protect a bunch of conscientious objectors.” He said, “Do you mean to tell me that these people are conscientious objectors?” He said, “I never would have stopped had I known that.”

Earlier I was somewhat surprised at the meal. I had forgotten they didn't eat meat. The lady of the house put on the table what looked like a beautiful meat loaf and I was starved. We had eaten nothing all day but sandwiches. The "roast" turned out to be ground up lentils. Anyway, I filled up. The missionaries appreciated our presence. I felt their relationship with the Tutsis was innocent enough. The Tutsis had been the ones who responded to their presence. The support for them was not made on a tribal basis. The Tutsis simply had been open to the Adventists and more available to them.

*Q: Which were which?*

WALKER: The Tutsis were the minority group. They were inclined to be tall, thin with aquiline features, long thin noses and thin lips. Very elegant people and great athletes. The Hutu were the majority race and were stockier, stronger, inclined to be heavy set. Also a fine looking group of people, but quite different. Their differences were racial rather than tribal because they spoke the same language and lived in the same villages.

We saw a Tutsi killed during this visit. We were driving and saw a Hutu walking behind a Tutsi ahead of us. The Hutu threw a spear into the Tutsi. As we came alongside he pulled his spear out. The other man seemed dead. The numbers that were killed were quite high. They estimated between 25 and 35 thousand were killed. The bodies floated down the Rusizi River and into Lake Tanganyika, not far from Usumbura. But that really wasn't anything compared to the killings in 1969-70 of the Hutu in Burundi where they estimated between 2 and 3 hundred thousands were killed. The Tutsis ran out of bullets. I wasn't there at that time so I shouldn't talk about that.

But we saw a great deal of the inter-racial problem. We had a man at the embassy who was a Tutsi from Rwanda. He had asked us to see about his parents while we were there. We drove to the place where they lived and found the village burned. Our driver asked about the parents and learned they were all right but were hiding at some distance in the bush. We sent him to get them. He was gone most of the day and went most of the distance on foot. He brought the two old people out. They had a few possessions with them including a sack of beans weighing about 20 pounds.

We put them in the back of the van for the drive to Usumbura. When we got to the frontier between Rwanda and Burundi - even before Independence there was a barrier there - the Rwandans stopped us and wanted to know who the people in the back seat were. Dave, whose French was really impeccable, he had been raised in Belgium, handled it. He said, "They are just some people we are taking to Usumbura." "Who are they? Do you have permission to take them?" He said, "Yes. I have permission from the Governor," which we didn't have. They said, "Well, where is your permission?" He said, "We don't have any papers. The Governor just said we could take them." "How do we know?" Dave said, "All you have to do is to telephone him." That stopped them. I am not certain they knew what a telephone was, but if they did they knew darn well they didn't have one there.

With that, Dave told the driver to go. Off we went. The Rwandans had two 30 caliber machine guns pointed right down the road we had to travel. We drove about a half mile toward the Burundi side and then doubled back toward the guard post. We were still on the Rwanda side until the road went around a hill. For a good 3 minutes we drove with those machine guns aimed right at us and we didn't know but what they might be fired at any minute. Fortunately, they weren't and we got out of there and saved the man's parents.

*Q: What were our interests there?*

WALKER: Our basic interest was to encourage stability. We wanted to see independence come quietly. We wanted the countries to develop. And they have basically, although with some setbacks. Largely, what we wanted was achieved. The Burundi never forgot that the Americans were the only ones who didn't leave the country or send their women away at Independence. We were all there for the event. It was calm and a wonderful, thrilling time.

I got to see Independence come to two African countries--Ghana and Burundi. It is one of the most exciting things you can imagine. People so happy, so full of themselves. We were invited to the Mwami's Palace for a party at midnight when Independence actually came. Only two white couples were there that night. One was an old Belgian colonialist who had grown up in Katanga and Burundi and was married to an Egyptian. The other, Savannah and myself.

*Q: What was the feeling of the Belgians? They had done nothing to prepare the Congo and when it blew up it was and remains an absolute mess. How had they been dealing with Rwanda and Burundi? And what was their attitude towards the Americans?*

WALKER: They had done less in Rwanda and Burundi than they had in the Congo to prepare them for Independence. There were three or four Tutsis from Burundi who had gone to university in Belgian. One was still in university and came back as a medical doctor while we were still there. The others were executed because of their implication in the assassination of the first elected prime minister. The Belgians did very little. They did not intend for the Africans to be independent. Ruanda-Urundi (RU) was part of Belgium and was to be run as a colony. The Belgians were scared to death when they found that Independence was coming because they knew what a mess the country was in and that the people were not ready to take over. They also were worried because they knew they had been tough taskmasters.

Even so, they had not been as tough as the Germans. R-U had been a German territory before WWI and there were still some Burundi who remembered the Germans. They said the Germans were the best colonists because if anyone did anything wrong, the penalty was death. For most Burundi, the choice was easy enough to make.

*Q: What was there about the Belgians that made them sort of odd man out as regards...you know you have the French and the English working at it? Why did the Belgians go this course?*

WALKER: I think neither the Belgians nor the Portuguese had any idea Independence would ever come. The colonies would remain their territory and would be run as the masters saw fit. R-U was developed really beautifully. Usumbura was a beautiful city and there were wonderful



towns. They had great facilities. Although few of the roads were paved, they were beautiful. Most paved roads were in the Congo. The best roads in Burundi were those which had been established by the Germans. What the Belgians had done was to keep them up. They had put in a few new ones, but most of the roads had been made by the Germans.

The Belgians had beautiful homes, wonderful lifestyles, wonderful hospitals, etc. The hospital that our little girl was born in was excellent. It was for the Europeans. When Independence came it became an African hospital. It is still a good hospital, but not as good as it was.

The Belgians knew they hadn't prepared these people the way they should have and that they were not ready for Independence so they were afraid that Independence would be a disaster.

Later I got a good comment on the various preparations of the French and the English from a Nigerian. This was in Chad a few years later. His comment was telling. He said, "When I was growing up I hated the British because they came to my country but they did no work. They wore their white gloves and white uniforms and the doors were opened for them and the floors were swept for them, the beds were made for them. They didn't do anything, we did every bit of work." He said, "But now that I am in a former French area, I thank God for the British, because although Chad is independent, look who is the mechanic, it is a Frenchman. Look who bakes the bread, it is a Frenchman. Look who operates the telephones, it is a Frenchman. Look who sits and tells the ministers what to sign and when to sign - Frenchmen." He said, "When the British left us all we had to do was to replace the man at the very top. We knew how to do the rest of it."

The Belgians were in the same position. They had not taught the people to do anything other than to serve as houseboys. That was all.

*Q: One last question about Usumbura, can you give me a feel of the spirit of the African Bureau?*

WALKER: The African Bureau had great spirit, great elan. However, the Department did not have the same feeling. It was not ready for the challenges we were to face. For instance, Savannah was pregnant when we went to Burundi. Before she could go we had to sign a waiver that the Department of State would have no responsibility for anything, that the birth of a baby was our own responsibility. When we got there we found the water not fit to drink. The Department of State would not furnish filters for the water. About all the Department would so was give us anti-malarial medicine and advise us to wash vegetables.

Now, it is turned around totally. The Department looks after people. You take your pregnant wife to a post like Bujumbura and if she has to be evacuated for a birth, the Department does that. Now they furnish everything. It was the strength and determination of the people in the African Bureau that turned the Department around. They got the Department to understand that we were working in some pretty darn tough conditions and needed all the help we could get.

We in the Bureau, both in the field and Washington, felt we were on the edge of something new and something important. An area in which we were going to establish a positive pattern or we weren't and it was up to us to do the job. It was most exciting. G. Mennen Williams had been the

first appointment of the Kennedy administration--the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was Kennedy's very first appointment and Williams had been a presidential contender. He had been Governor of Michigan. He was an important political figure. This put a lot of focus on the African area. Jackie Kennedy was quoted in the press as saying that she wished that she and Jack could be in Africa the way Ed Gullion was, (then Ambassador to the Congo.) We felt Africa was on the front line, the cutting edge and we were doing important things for our country and our host countries.

We got to know the top people in host governments and knew them well. They were personal friends. We had meals with them. It was relaxed, it was open shirt diplomacy in many cases. The Mwami would come by our home to see us. To take us fishing. To go dancing. He loved to dance. It was a thrilling time and was great to be in that group.

We complained, we chipped our teeth about a lot of things, but at the same time we were awfully proud of what we were doing and of the people we were doing it with. It was a great time.

*Q: I take it you have a feeling of rapport with the African Bureau?*

WALKER: A very close feeling. We felt the African Bureau was doing everything it could for us, that they understood our problems. That we would be working in Washington, supporting them when they were in Africa in the future. It was a supportive bunch. It was a wonderful feeling. We felt the bureau was the best in the business.

*(We are still speaking of Rwanda-Urundi and of the problems in selecting personnel for African assignments. The following is an example of an error I felt the Department made in its assignments to Africa. Julius Walker)*

WALKER: There was great pressure to get people assigned to these new African posts. Not all the assignments were as well thought out as they should have been. One such was in the assignment to Kigali of David J. S. Manbey as Chargé, DCM. Shortly prior to coming out David had taken a bride. It was the first marriage for both although neither would have been considered really young. The wife was a charming woman who had been in the British Foreign Service, but was delighted to become an American and a part of a Foreign Service couple. However, I think they were both startled to find that they were sent to deepest, darkest, Equatorial Africa for a first assignment.

David's character is loaded with positive assets. But he is not the most adventurous type person and I think the assignment was really a shock to him.

He arrived in Bujumbura on his way to Kigali shortly before Independence. There was one pouch waiting for him. He had no basic instructions or anything except to go and open the post. I think he was hoping there would be a letter of instruction, some sort of guidance he could use for the task ahead. He opened the pouch, it was classified, and found a sawed off shotgun and a few boxes of buckshot. Nothing else. This did not help his morale.

He and his wife were terribly worried about food and water. They ate nothing except what came from a can. Before they would drink water it virtually had to be distilled. They were edgy about being in Africa. And this didn't improve. It was that way until they left.

Well, David got to his post. Then Kigali was a minuscule town on the side of a hill. It had two streets running up the hill and three streets that crossed them, one was paved for about three blocks. The quarters they found when they first arrived were above a bar. The bar had a pet monkey on a very long leash. The monkey would climb up into their room and take things or throw them around. The office had been opened in a former meat market and retained the odor of its former service for several years.

They had been there only a short time when the monkey got in and destroyed a number of their personal items. They were frightened about malaria and worried about other strange diseases. David sat down and wrote a compelling telegram...number 13 from Kigali...saying the U.S. was making a terrible error to establish relations in Africa. That nothing good could come of it. That it was a waste of time, effort and money and that he, for one, should be gotten out of there immediately. He concluded there would never be any reason to have relations with Rwanda. The capital city was so minuscule, the office stank of rotted meat, monkeys climbed into the rooms at night and destroyed things, they were frightened for their health and that there was a racial tension in the country. Everything was bad. It was a longish telegram, particularly when you consider it had to be done by hand. So rather than classify it and further complicate things with encryption, as I recall it went out unclassified.

When it hit the Department of State it caused a furor. Mennen Williams' office, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, was up in arms. He was irate. But higher up in the building, in the Under Secretary's office, George Ball was delighted with the missive because it said what he had been saying all along, that we shouldn't squander our few resources by going out to such places as Africa. To him the only place of any importance on the globe was Europe. There were a few places in Asia and possibly something in Latin America, but Europe was the place.

This telegram caused great confusion and consternation and a lot of problems for quite a while. Of course, I have to add that it didn't do the career of David Manbey any good. He subsequently became the Deputy Principal Officer in Frankfurt, and not too long after that he retired from the Service. He and his wife now live in England.

But it is the sort of thing that was happening at the time Africa was "opening up." While almost all of us were delighted to be on that cutting edge, not everyone was. Those of us who were there could certainly understand David's feeling about this. Although we giggled about the telegram in Bujumbura, when we thought about the impression it was making in Washington, we decided we'd better not giggle about it too much.

*Q: It is one of those things that everyone should be able to write, but then you put it under your pillow and tear it up the next morning.*

WALKER: That is right. This one obviously had been under the pillow, but probably came back out after the monkey attacked Mrs. Manbey's goods.

*Q: What was your impression at the time that you were in Bujumbura of the “Soviet menace?”*

WALKER: Well, I always looked upon the Soviet menace as something of a joke. It was obvious to any of us who were out there that the Africans would do everything they could to play the Americans and Soviets off one against the other. The thing was that many of the Soviets were racists and the Africans realized it. The Soviets were afraid of Africa and, as most of the Africans said freely in private conversation, all they were interested in doing was to provide arms the Africans could use to kill one another. They didn't have much else.

The Soviets weren't in Burundi until well after independence and when they came in they turned out to be reasonably good colleagues. I had some friends at the Soviet mission. But they were very edgy and antsy about being in Africa. They were almost as worried about it as David Manbey, some of them probably more so in the privacy of their own homes or offices.

I never understood what the Soviet threat to Africa was because the Africans, themselves, most of them, by far the vast majority, took the Soviet presence of something of a joke and something of an experience that had little relevance to whatever they were doing. I remember, once again this was in Chad, the first things the Soviets there did was to build a tremendous iron fence all the way around their compound, which, of course, became known as the iron curtain in Chad. The Africans got what they could from the Soviets. They were only human and they needed so much. It made very good sense for them to get anything they could.

But any time an African got a scholarship to Lumumba University, or to anywhere in the Soviet Union, the first thing he did was come to the American embassy to see if he couldn't get a scholarship to the US, because he really didn't want to go to the Soviet Union. The reports from there as to how the blacks were treated were bad. Soviet society was racist. Blacks had such a hard time that they would even put up with segregation in the United States much more willingly than take that on. They also felt a Soviet education was second rate and vastly inferior to what that was available in the United States and elsewhere.

**JACOB GILLESPIE**  
**Assistant Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Bujumbura (1963-1964)**

*Mr. Gillespie was born in Illinois and raised in Illinois and Maryland. Joining the Foreign Service of the United States Information Agency (USIA), he served several assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC in which he dealt with various aspects of USIA's operations in the U.S. and abroad. His foreign assignments include Accra, Bujumbura, Leopoldville, Montevideo, the Hague, San Salvador and Madrid. Mr. Gillespie was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

*Q: Alright, then you left there in '63 -*

GILLESPIE: In the middle of the summer of '63, the African Area Director of USIA, Ned Roberts, came on one of his periodic visits through the area. Mark Lewis, the PAO, had a dinner party for the staff and Ned would get up and move around and talk to everyone. He sat down next to me and said what are you doing here still? You're supposed to be in Burundi. No one had ever said anything to me. He told me that I had to get over there in the next week or two. The PAO is sick and has to go on medical leave. Well, this was always a problem. Information filtered out of Washington. I went to Susan and I said we're going to Burundi. and you know, we'd always, I guess we had sort of hoped we could go to Senegal or Abidjan, but my God, it wasn't Conakry, thank goodness.

The first problem, as I looked at it, was that you couldn't get from Accra to Bujumbura in two weeks. First you had to get visas and you had to get visas for all the places you transit. The easy route would have been to fly on Pan Am down to Johannesburg, then back up to Nairobi, then to Entebbe and to Bujumbura. But it was very difficult to get visas from the South Africans. I think it was complicated. So we went another way and that was we flew via Lagos and Khartoum on a DC-6, bless its heart.

*Q: That's a four engine-*

GILLESPIE: -propeller driven but actually quite a comfortable airplane.

*Q: It's a nice airplane.*

GILLESPIE: It was very comfortable. It was such a long trip, of course, that we got to go first class and we were the only ones in the small first class section on Ethiopian Airlines-

*Q: Run by Pan American or TWA.*

GILLESPIE: TWA.

*Q: TWA.*

GILLESPIE: We flew Lagos to Khartoum to Addis, where we changed planes and we got the flight from Europe coming down that went to Nairobi. But that was altogether a long flight and the Ethiopian part was wonderful because the steward and stewardess who were both assigned to first class couldn't have been nicer. The stewardess became a babysitter for Jim. So it wasn't too bad. Of course we had so much. Someone had said to be sure to buy baby food and so we lined the bottom of the bassinet, basically with jars of baby food, which made it weigh a ton. We stayed in Nairobi for two nights; I had a good friend from Dartmouth who was at the Consulate General there. Kenya was not yet independent. We had dinner with him and he gave us some help. He said go do this, go do that. We got our first look at an African game park by going out to the Nairobi Park just outside the city. We sort of got our heads together and after two days the three of us got on the plane and flew to Bujumbura.

If for our families going to Ghana was going to deepest, darkest Africa you can imagine what Bujumbura was. I mean, Burundi was unheard of. No one knew what it was, where it was. We got off the plane and were greeted by the PAO, Darrell Drucker, who was not on his deathbed, although in a week or two he would go up to Naples for some medical treatment which he needed. The sky it was hazy. It was dry season and not very nice.

We went directly to our house. Darrell and Laddie Drucker were wonderful. I was blessed with my early bosses. They were wise, understanding, very capable and a lot of fun, all of them, but no nonsense. You know, I don't care how young you are or what grade you are, you're a body and we need a lot of work, which was wonderful. The Druckers took us to our house and he said you have one of the two two-story houses in the whole city. And it was, who knows, probably- it was a nice house, but he said wait, he said some day when it starts to rain again you will look out your balcony upstairs and you will see the mountains on the other side of Lake Tanganyika. He said just wait, that's worth coming here. All the way just for that.

But we checked in. I had been assigned to two countries, both Rwanda and Burundi. There was no USIS (United States Information Service) up in Kigali.

*Q: Both these countries were, by that time, independent?*

GILLESPIE: They had become independent in 1962. I think that Burundi was the last country where the chief of mission was a U.S. Minister. It was part of a very brief attempt to prevent the proliferation of Ambassadors and big embassies as all the former French and British colonies became independent. It didn't last long because the moment that Charles Withers in Kigali managed to be an Ambassador, Don Dumont in Bujumbura was terribly dissatisfied as a Minister and eventually was made an Ambassador. But it was a small mission, nevertheless. There was a DCM, Ernie Stanger, Joel Ticknor, who was the Consular Officer, Martin Bergin, who was Political Officer, Jay Katzen was a junior officer who was, I guess, a Political/Economic officer Earl Bellinger was the Administrative Officer and there was a GSO named Lindy Koga. Now, I am amazed because I think about four of those- five of those people I have not even thought of, Stu, for a long time, and I didn't read anything on this. But it was- Oh, we had a Military Attaché, Colonel Alexander. He had a warrant officer assigned with him. And there were three communicators. No, it was two communicators and three or four secretaries. That's what we had. Kigali was even smaller. I think that they had only five officers, a communicator and a secretary.

I got there in August and Darrell Drucker left in September for about a month, which was really a terrific experience for me. He said, "You're in charge." I was 24 years old, barely two years out of college. We had two very good secretaries here, one was Belgian, the other was an American who had been a Foreign Service secretary and married a Ghanaian UN employee. She was back and worked for us, sort of extended part-time but she was on the staff. And he said look, the two of them know everything. If you have any problems you go up to the embassy, they will help. You know, I knew who the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) were by then. They were a mixed group but interesting and pretty good.

And he left me with strange tasks. He asked if I knew anything about offset presses. And I said no. He said guess what? You're going to learn. He said we have a Davidson offset press. It

works. It was set up for us and then the experts left. There were by that time maybe a half dozen that USIA had put in Africa and he said because we put out the only printed daily news publication in this country. Darrell believed it was important that we keep doing that. So the press has to keep working and I spent my first late hours and Saturdays, and probably some Sundays too, at USIS, as Susan said, ruining pairs of pants with ink stains.

*Q: Well, an offset press, I mean, was this the kind that melted- I mean-*

GILLESPIE: You made a plate, we used photographic plates. You made a plate and put it on the press and printed from that. The trick was to calibrate the press all the time. And it was an aggravating. That was the main reason Darrell said he wanted no more to do with it. Darrell had opened the USIS Bujumbura. He was a perfect person to open a small post in Africa, I thought, a USIS operation. Darrell had a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a doctorate in American studies. What a great combination.

*Q: Sure.*

GILLESPIE: He had built the USIS center in an empty storefront, basically out of packing crates because there was no wood in Burundi. So as all the packing crates came in, they became walls. And so we had a great darkroom, we had this little press that operated and it was a pretty good little operation.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about the government and the people of Burundi and if it- and Rwanda but at that time?*

GILLESPIE: Yes. The two countries are virtually ethnically and culturally identical. They are both ethnically divided into three parts; Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. The Twa are a Pygmoid people who basically you didn't see very many of. Most of them were in Rwanda in the forest and there weren't really any forests to speak of in Burundi. Both had been, up until independence, governed in a semi-feudal system based on land and cows, and cattle. The Tutsis were the aristocracy and provided the royalty and the Hutus, in exchange for cattle and land gave them fealty and taxes. The Hutus raised coffee in both countries and food and produce; the coffee went into plantations and basically was owned by Europeans.

The governments were different. Rwanda had a revolution before independence and the Hutus overthrew the Tutsis. It was a real revolution in the sense that the lower caste overthrew the higher. A democracy of sorts came in and the only problem was they oppressed the Tutsis. I mean, later on I flew over parts of Rwanda several times with a Swiss pilot in his small plane that I used to go up to Kigali. He would say do you mind if we take some time, and I knew he probably was doing some kind of intelligence work for somebody, but he would go all over. We would see whole hillsides burned out. This continued to happen off and on. Tutsi refugees had fled to Burundi, the Congo and Uganda. The Hutu government feared their guerilla groups. It was like this up until the genocide of the 1990s. While we were there, although the same potential problems existed in Burundi, the Tutsis managed to maintain power.

In Burundi there was a constitutional monarchy, although it was much more monarchy than constitutional. The king was known as the Mwami, Mwambutsa the Fourth. He had been given as a gift at independence a white Edsel convertible by the business community and Mwambutsa liked to drive so he drove with his girlfriend seated next to him and his driver and bodyguard in the back seat with the top down and they drove all over town. He was quite a decent man, but while he had a great deal of power he didn't govern much. The government ministers had no backgrounds for government. The Belgians had, in many ways, prepared them very, very poorly. There were 12 university graduates in the two countries at the time of independence and then one of them, the Prime Minister of Burundi was killed in an automobile accident three or four months after independence. It was always a difficult situation. At the same time there was a rebellion in the eastern Congo that was a carryover from the war that started at independence and this had a great effect on both countries. One, a large number of the Tutsis who had been thrown out by Rwandan Hutus at the time of the revolution had settled in the Congo. They had been there for almost a generation, maybe two, by the time the most recent fighting has broken out, and that is their home now, for many. And this caused great problems. There were refugee camps in Burundi, several big refugee camps with Tutsi refugees. Our top FSN at USIS was a Tutsi refugee. He was an older man, the best that we had. He always claimed that he had nothing to do with the guerillas, but I always doubted that.

By September 1963, I'm learning many things by working on my own while Darrell was gone. And then after he returned in November that year, John Kennedy was assassinated.

*Q: I'm thinking this might be a good place to stop.*

GILLESPIE: Okay.

*Q: And we'll pick this up November 22, 1963, John Kennedy is assassinated; you've just sort of arrived.*

GILLESPIE: I'm now comfortable there.

*Q: You're comfortable but let's talk about what you were doing and what our attitude was, if there was any, and relations with diplomacy, with the Belgians, with the French.*

GILLESPIE: By this time the Soviets were there, the Hungarians were there and then in early 1964 the Chinese come in.

*Q: Okay, we'll talk about that and other reflection from the Congo and Tanzania and-*

GILLESPIE: And some about Rwanda.

*Q: Yes, and of course you've got- Anyway, it's a mess. Okay.*

*Today is the 26th of February, 2010, with Jake Gillespie, and Jake, you want to go back a little bit.*



GILLESPIE: Yes.

*Q: We're in Burundi in 1963.*

GILLESPIE: I mentioned last week that my boss, the PAO, Darrell Drucker, needed medical leave. I have thought about that because I had about four weeks where, at age 24, I was the acting PAO and in charge. This would occur later when Darrell was transferred toward the end of his tour, and I was acting PAO again for about a month in 1964, before his successor came. And what was interesting, as I thought about this, is I have thought of those times frequently toward the end of my career, when I was a PAO at an important post, a major one in one case, where I had senior jobs. In 1963 you had virtually no telephonic communications with Washington; telegrams were used but expensive and still at a premium. You didn't send a cable unless you used cable-ese and you would get it sent back frequently from the communications section if you used too many words. There was a PTT telex that you could use. I had occasion to do so later on for other reasons and it was so old and in such poor condition that you had- it would move frequently at 20 characters a minute. I was trying at that time to do a favor for a "New York Times" correspondent and send out his story and I ended up sitting there for two hours. But what this meant was you really were on your own. By 1990 I was virtually on the telephone with someone in Washington once or twice a day. And that was before wide use of email. Those weeks in Burundi were probably the most independent and freest that I ever had in my career in the Foreign Service.

By the time we got to October and end of November things were going rather well, we thought, in the office, and in November we had the visit from a wonderful, young Foreign Service Officer named Elton Stepherson. Elton had been hired while he was in Paris. He joined the Foreign Service and was sent to NASA and spent six months learning from NASA how to explain the U.S. space program. If you remember, in those days this was worldwide interest. It was terribly important. We were coming to the end of the Mercury program and going into the Gemini program with two astronauts in space. Elton was given a glorious traveling lecture/exhibit kit that came in four or five huge cases. He was sent to Africa, where he would, go to Francophone Africa. He spoke marvelous French. We were the second post he had toured. He had started in Madagascar and came to Burundi. We had a very full program set up for him and the first big kickoff night of his program was the 23rd of November, when John Kennedy was assassinated. We were in the USIS center; it was full of people. He had just finished his program and he was going to questions when Delores Aqua, "Doe", who was an American married to a Ghanaian UN official and a former Foreign Service secretary who worked for us, came rushing in. She went to Darrell Drucker who came to me and went to the Ambassador and others and said we're going to stop this right now. He said I'm sorry but there's been an emergency; we must stop here. And he didn't announce it, I think wisely. People left and the Ambassador pulled the Americans together and told us all what had happened.

This was a shock. It was for all of us, and I think for those of us who were isolated it was even more so. Doe had heard it on the radio. Elton Stepherson was staying with us and we spent virtually all night sitting next to the radio. We went into mourning as an embassy the next morning. I remember the memorial service at the cathedral barely. I remember the Ambassador

and Mwami Mwambutsa, the king of Burundi, coming- walking in together. For about a week we did nothing else but this.

*Q: "But this" would be?*

GILLESPIE: Dealing with the assassination, putting out materials-

*Q: Having people lining up from the country to sign the book of condolences.*

GILLESPIE: Yes. Everyone was charged with taking turns to be there at the book. At USIS we had an enormous amount of wireless file material that came from Washington to put out. Of course, we had no images for a long time. Eventually some came by air mail, perhaps four or five days later. And consequently for us, perhaps this stretched out longer and longer because we kept getting this, getting film, getting video, it all went on.

The PAO finally said to me you should go on with Stepherson's program because he's going to have to leave and we should get some things out of it. So I took him to the University of Butare in Rwanda, which was the first university in Rwanda. It was run by Canadian White Fathers, a wonderful group of people, and we spent two nights there while Elton lectured. He talked to virtually every student, I think. We talked into the night with the fathers and staff who were extremely generous and gracious to us. We then went to Kigali and back to Bujumbura for a series of other lectures. Elton was terrific. Elton passed away a couple of years ago. I never served with Elton Stepherson again, and saw him rarely. Our schedules never matched, we weren't in Washington together but because we shared that occasion, I think he and I always felt like extremely close friends.

There are two or three other things from Burundi that I would like to mention. The first is one I mentioned briefly the other day and that was the journalists, the journalists and the embassies that were there. For a little country in the middle of Africa Burundi became a diplomatic hot spot. It was loaded with- We had representation from the Belgians, the French, the Brits and the Germans, of course, and the neighboring African countries. But we also had representation from the Czechs, the Hungarians, the Soviets, and the Poles. Then the Chinese came to town, and the Chinese came in a massive way. They took over most of the rooms at the largest hotel in town, which was pretty big, and they moved in. It was an enormous embassy for little Burundi.

But the big occurrence was Tung Chi-ping, an Assistant Cultural Attaché at the Chinese Embassy.. About the third day he was there, he walked out early in the morning and hailed a cab. He got into the cab and asked in French if they would take him to the American Embassy and he defected. This was only the second time a Communist Chinese official had defected to the United States. And there we were. He arrived at the door of our Embassy and he was greeted by the Greek general services assistant who was opening the door. No one else was there yet. The next day we set up a schedule where each household in the embassy was responsible for feeding Tung, who became later known as Charlie Tung to us, and feeding him every day. So trays would arrive, they would be left outside the conference room where he resided during his stay and picked up the next day..

A U.S. Government Chinese speaker got there, actually rather fast to take care of him. There were problems with the Burundi government and we could not take him out. The Chinese had already done a great deal of financial cultivation of the Burundi government. So the government at the Chinese urging tied him up pretty tightly. We were stuck with him trying and negotiating to try to get him out of the country, and there was a second Chinese speaking officer who was sent out so they could alternate spending time with him. He took over the Ambassador's conference room, which is where he lived, and one of the intelligence officers came to me and said you've got to help us. He's going to go stir crazy. He speaks no English. He speaks French but he speaks no English. You've got to help us. So I went in and I scoured the film library for things I assumed might be reasonably entertaining and I took a number of those and a projector up to the Embassy, set it up, taught everybody how to run it and I hoped Tung Chi-ping would learn too. Then I took all the French language books from our book distribution program, took those up there. And I thought later, you know, for someone who, although I was very pleased with most of the things USIA did, I would have hated to have been stuck with nothing but those films and a few books in French to entertain me for about four weeks.

*Q: Yuck.*

GILLESPIE: We continued to feed him. The word came down one day, no more rice, please. He didn't care for American rice. And then, I think it was after we delivered his meals when we had the food detail, about three days later we were told he'd been gone for four days and they got him out. This caused a great difficulty with the government for us for a good while. Actually it's funny now the attitudes we had at the time but we were really frightened of the Chinese. We had no idea what they would do. That was a serious time.

The regular journalists came back for this and were nosing around, but we had nothing to tell them. Media interest in Africa in the early '60s was enormous. The "New York Times" correspondent in Leopoldville, J. Anthony Lukas, came to see us frequently because of the rebellion in the eastern Congo. Tony was an excellent writer and became a very dear friend. He won a Pulitzer Prize for a great book on Boston called "Common Ground," about busing and the integration of the South Boston schools. He also won a Pulitzer for his reporting of a murder in Connecticut. He did great writing about the 1968 Democratic Party convention. But there were others. Arnaud de Borchgrave, who was later editor of the "The Washington Times" for awhile, was with "U.S. News and World Report." Jonathan Randall, who was with "Time" magazine then and then later with "The Post," and then all sorts of others who would come in and out. The correspondents taught me a lot, from the structure of the Congolese rebel organizations to the idiosyncrasies of the American press to Evelyn Waugh's Scoop and its relevance to contemporary Africa. I think about their coverage because today it's almost impossible to get any news about the murder, rape and pillage in the Eastern Congo. In the '60s this was on the front pages of American newspapers regularly.

Those are the things that I remember the most out of Burundi. The other event happened while I was there. We took our first R&R (rest and recreation) while in Burundi. Since we were still relatively broke, instead of going to Europe we spent some money and flew to Entebbe, in Uganda, rented a car, went to the Uganda game parks, which was a thrill and then drove to Nairobi. We stayed with a friend for Kenyan independence ceremonies, which was a wonderful

thing to see, a great experience. And I think, again, something I will always remember, the emotion in the stadium as Prince Philip and Jomo Kenyatta walked to the center of the stadium and the light came up on the Union Jack flying at the top and then all the lights went out and when the lights came back on the Kenyan flag was going up the flagpole and the stadium was going crazy. I think Kenya then spent at least a quarter of its first year's budget on one of the greatest displays of fireworks I've ever seen.

We drove back to Entebbe and returned to Bujumbura after a long delay. In Entebbe we were supposed to take Air Congo to Bujumbura. The plane then would continue to Leopoldville. All the flights kept bypassing Entebbe altogether and wasn't picking up passengers and flying on because they had dignitaries from the independence celebrations. We waited several days before we could get a flight back.

It was a good tour and I think I learned a lot. In the summer of 1964 we prepared to go home on leave. As summer approached, we had been assigned to Conakry, Guinea, which of all the difficult places in Africa I think was considered the most difficult. Then just, about two weeks before we were to leave and before we had shipped anything, fortunately, our orders were changed and we were assigned to Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, in the Republic of the Congo. No one at home in the United States would understand why we were happy about going to the Congo. But we as went made our way home; we stopped for a few days in London, visiting with old friends, and then took one of the last opportunities that we had in the Foreign Service to sail home on the SS United States to New York.

**JAY K. KATZEN**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Bujumbura (1963-1964)**

*Jay K. Katzen was born in New York in 1936. He graduated from Princeton in 1958 and then received an M.A. at Yale the following year and entered the Foreign Service in 1959. He served in Australia, Burundi, Romania, and Mali. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 1990.*

*Q: Well, your next post really put you into the briar patch, where you stayed for most of your career--into Africa. And you certainly went into an area that was basically unknown by the Department of State. You were there from '63 to '64. What was it called at that time?*

**KATZEN:** It was Usumbura, and the country had just been renamed Burundi after having been part of the U.N. Trust Territory, administered by Belgium, of Ruanda-Urundi. Burundi was led by a feudal kingdom, people who had emigrated from Ethiopia in the Sixteenth Century with their cattle. They formed about 13 percent of the population and worked out a contract with the majority Hutu people whereby the Tutsis, the minority, would run the country. They had various functions for administering the cattle, a type of arrangement which, in one form or another, endures. Whereas in neighboring Rwanda, the majority Hutus threw off their kingdom and established a republic.

While we were in Burundi, it was run by a gentleman called Mwami (king) Mwambutsa IV, who prompted some rather amusing moments in an environment which nevertheless was characterized principally by horrible genocide by the Tutsis of the majority Hutus, who periodically stepped forth and wanted to become more represented in the government.

The king, for instance, would summon the diplomatic corps to the palace periodically. Curtains would open, and he would appear in a magician's outfit, loving as he did to show his latest tricks which he had learned while he was visiting Europe.

One greater surprise was a trip he made, in the one airplane which was designated that of Royal Air Burundi, returning from Switzerland with a young European lady, Josie Villacourt, whom he introduced as his new queen. Josie, who was chewing gum upon her walk down the stairs from the aircraft, chose to remain queen in Burundi for only several weeks and quickly returned to her previous incarnation, which was as a stripper in a Lausanne casino.

The period we had there also was preoccupied with a young Chinese diplomat who, on his first day in Usumbura found refuge in the American Embassy.

*Q: We're talking about somebody from mainland China, is that right?*

KATZEN: Yes, that's right. And he in fact was, as of that moment, the highest-ranking Chinese to come over. He appeared in front of the embassy on the one day of the week that a courier came in from the airport, quite by coincidence. He had been looking for the Soviet Embassy, was unable to find it, but located ours, in front of which was standing our Greek local, John Sotiropoulos. And John, having a wonderfully Greek philosophy, when this fellow asked for asylum in Chinese, thought, "The thing ailing this man is that he hasn't had a good Greek breakfast." So he brought Dong back to his apartment, introduced him to his wife, and went to the airport to pick up the courier.

He came back to the embassy and found it surrounded by Burundi's army--all with bayonets pointing inward. The chargé at the time came out, and John inquired of him what the problem was and learned that the Burundi government, responding to a complaint by the Chinese, had accused us of kidnaping one of their diplomats. And John said, "Sir, I think I might know what they're talking about." He went back and scooped up the Chinese, who became our guest at the embassy for, oh, I guess it was in excess of three months time before he finally left. The Burundi government at that juncture asked a number of us to leave as well. That was when I moved to what still was Leopoldville.

*Q: You were persona non grata, I assume?*

KATZEN: Well, what happened was, the government asked us to reduce the size of our embassy; we reciprocated with their numbers in Washington.

*Q: Your ambassador there at the time was Donald Dumont?*

KATZEN: Yes.

*Q: How did he deal with the Burundi government?*

KATZEN: Don suggested to the department, in the person of Governor Harriman at the time, that as a gesture of goodwill both to China and to Burundi, the young Chinese be returned to his embassy. And that was not received well by the department, which said no, that will not be what is going to happen. And the Chinese, who had very good relations with Burundi at the time, kept at the Burundi government over this issue and it obviously exacerbated our own relations.

*Q: The time you were there, did you see this, other than this particular manifestation, as a center of East-West competition between the Western powers and the Communist powers?*

KATZEN: Curiously, in a very primitive way. The Chinese at the time literally had a window at their chancellery to which unsuccessful job applicants would go to collect an envelope which had some local currency in it, which was distributed with the good wishes of the Peoples' Republic of China.

When you compare that as technical assistance, as against road-building and education and health projects of the ensuing years, you see really how far back we were in less than 30 years. We were focusing on poultry and livestock projects, and distributing milk and PL 480 grain. Yet the Chinese, for their efforts, although they too got into agriculture and health thereafter, were probably making a lot more headway than we, by getting to what they really could describe as basic human needs. So that human relations, American-Burundi relations, I think were quite good, and this irritant was brought about by a third power rather than by any behavior on our part.

*Q: At the time (you know, we're always trying to recreate the time), did it seem sort of that any of you thought: What the hell are we doing in the middle of Africa in a small country that has no particular influence, fighting the Americans and the Chinese over influence over this place?*

KATZEN: Well, I think that certainly was something that occurred periodically to a number of us. Yet an enduring result of that experience for me is the realization, which you certainly share, that the uniqueness of Burundi is in fact not an exception, it's the rule.

That, while you and I got up at whatever time we did this morning to an electric alarm clock, had a warm shower and shave with an electric light as these days become shorter, went down and had coffee and eggs, and got into our cars and said goodbye to our wives, who have jobs, and (if they're still young enough at our age) to our, God bless them, healthy children as they went off to school, our experience rather than the Burundi experience is the rare one. The lesson of Burundi was that their life pattern, unfortunately, is the rule.

For them, is no electricity for that alarm clock. There is no hot water. And, in a number of subsequent assignments, for many people, I saw that there was no water. There were no roads. There were no vehicles. There was no job to go to. There was no education. And the health was

lamentable. So that, while we could wonder what we were doing there, the inescapable conclusion had to be that that was nevertheless the real world.

*Q: Were we doing what we were doing there in the way of aid under sort of the cover of an East-West conflict, or were we doing it because it should be done?*

KATZEN: I think there was probably a little bit of both. I would say that the people who were implementing the aid programs were doing it because they felt that roads needed to be built in order for people to get their products to the market, in order to get them on the cash economy, in order to improve their life and so on. I would say that there was, though, on the level of the people who were more politically oriented, the feeling that: We help these people and they'll like us more than our adversaries, in the larger scope of things. So I would say that probably on the political side, there was less interest in calorie intake, and on the level of the people who were implementing the programs, probably less concern on the political side.

*Q: When you left there because of this conflict over the Chinese diplomat... He did get out, is that right?*

KATZEN: He did get out and I think he's somewhere in the States now, I'm just not sure where.

**THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1964-1966)**

*Thompson R. Buchanan was born in California in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University in international relations in 1947 and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Mr. Buchanan entered the Foreign Service in 1948. His career included positions in Paris, Frankfurt, Moscow, Bujumbura, Libreville, and Leningrad. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 15, 1996.*

*Q: Then you went to Burundi and you were there from the fall of 1964 until January 10, 1966*

BUCHANAN: I went back to Washington after Moscow and was on the promotion boards three months. Then I left for Burundi arriving at a time supposedly there was to be a coup but nothing happened the first two weeks. It was simply idyllic. During the third week, someone assassinated the Prime Minister, Ngendandumwe, who was Hutu. The Government first arrested a Tutsi on our staff, who handled our budget problems, accusing him of the murder. We were told that the screams we later heard from a nearby jail were his, but he was later released. In retrospect, he appears to have been involved in Tutsi émigré politics. Then the Mwami (king) blamed the murder on the atmosphere of violence that the Chinese Communists had helped create in Bujumbura by their sponsorship of radical Tutsi politicians, and he expelled the Chinese. A period of martial law ensued for perhaps eight months

*Q: Who was your ambassador?*

BUCHANAN: Don Dumont was my ambassador. I must frankly say it was rather difficult. We were an eleven man post and I was always Mr. Buchanan to him as his DCM. He never invited anyone from the staff, so far as I knew to join him on the boat which he maintained on Lake Tanganyika. It was my impression, certainly, that the boat had been provided him by the US Government. We used a tiny, unseaworthy motor boat belonging to the Embassy for weekend picnics, ourselves. In short, Dumont was a complex, certainly quite intellectual, and I sensed perhaps an insecure person, but very much a qualified Africanist. His wife shared his approach to life, or he hers, I do not know, She was a *pièd noire* from Algeria. The fact that he did not want me to have anything to do with the African ministers made life difficult for me on those occasions when I was Chargé. When relations were heading rapidly downhill after the abortive Hutu coup, and I was Chargé, I sought out the radical Minister of Education, whom I knew by reputation only. I asked what we could do to stop this dangerous trend in our relations, and he advised: "you should get your ambassador to go and see Defense Minister Micombero", who at the time was the power behind the scenes and the future President of Burundi. When I told Dumont this upon his return, he said that "Micombero knows where I am, and he can come and see me, if he wants." Whether a meeting would have done any good, I do not know. Probably not, because as you know Burundi is divided into the Hutu serfs, who were 85 percent of the population and have been for centuries, and the ruling warrior class Tutsi...the shorts and the tall. The Tutsis were basically paranoid because in Rwanda, the Tutsis had had eventually risen and massacred, literally cut down to size, thousands and thousands of Tutsis, and they were afraid this would happen in Burundi. The result was the anomaly of a feudal autocracy that allied itself with the communists against NATO, in the belief that NATO powers were on the side of the Hutu serfs. They blamed the Belgians basically for the massacre in Rwanda. It was a time of civil war in the Congo. Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary, was based for a time in neighboring Tanganyika, and he used to come across the border and recruit Tutsis in our Rwandan refugee camps to send into the Congo to fight the civil war there, as they saw it, against NATO. There were reports that guerrilla training films were also shown in the main hotel in town, the Greek-run Paguidas.

It was a peculiar atmosphere. My first night in Burundi I went down to the Paguidas bar and found myself, the only white person there. Everybody was sitting around reading the Chinese, Information Bulletin. A man came over to me and said, "Oh, Mr. Buchanan, how did you like Moscow?" This told me that this was a rather small town!

The tension built up as the Hutus won the election to parliament in the spring of 1965, and basically became the predominant political force in the country. The radicals then convinced the moderate Tutsis that either "we hang separately, or we hang together".

We were convinced at the time that the Tutsi had plotted to provoke the Hutu-led police to try to overthrow the Mwami in October 1965. The fact that the army arrived within seconds of the Hutu attack on the palace was just too fortuitous. I woke up about 2:30 a.m. to hear firing over our house. The police had retreated to a military camp behind our house, and the army was using our garden wall as protection to try and retake the camp. Happily, the police did not know how to use the mortars in the camp.



The Tutsi radicals used the *coup manqué* as an excuse to seize every Hutu of any importance: a former Prime Minister, heads of the parliament and trade unions, etc.; officials without any connection to the attack on the palace. They were driven past our house three nights in a row and machine-gunned in the central stadium, where they reportedly stood holding hands and singing Catholic hymns.

Then civil war started in the hinterland. Our main concern was the American missionaries in the interior, who, unlike the Catholic missions, were not part of a radio. There was particularly one attractive couple, whom I had given up for lost, when they appeared under guard in Bujumbura. The Pastor had almost been killed for possessing a hunting bow which his captors were convinced he had imported to give to the Hutus. He saved himself by succeeding, on his second time using the bow, to hit a distant target the Tutsis selected to test him.

The piggy Twa, who had been the traditional allies and “enforcers” for the Tutsi, were now reported allied with the Hutus and advancing on Bujumbura. There was panic and plans were made to evacuate our embassy to the Congo. A period started of threats against the embassy, threats to kill the Ambassador, me or the Public Affairs Officer. Dumont refused to be intimidated and insisted on riding his bicycle to work. The newly arrived station chief then picked up the rumor that the politburo had met and we were to be given 24 hours to leave the country, a day less than the time given the Chinese to leave.

So, on Saturday, January 6, I went over to the Paguidas bar and was lucky to find a Congolese, who worked in the Foreign Ministry, and who had tried to con me into sending him back to the Congo with some immunity. Even the Tutsis’ radical friends suffered from their xenophobia. Well, I bought our Congolese friend a drink, he reciprocated, and after a few more he slurred: “Mr. Buchanan, you must understand me. I do not hate America. But if the Foreign Ministry gives me an order to write a note telling the Americans to leave in 24 hours, what can I do.” I said, “thank you.” went home and told my wife to cancel a party we were giving the following day and to begin packing.

On Tuesday we left, ironically driving between a row of the jeeps, which we had given to the police to improve security. I’m still puzzled why the radical Minister of Education, whom I had visited, went out of his way at the airport to shake my hand. My wife, and my daughter, who had spent the year between high school and college as the only white student at Bujumbura University, and a volunteer at Rwandan refugee camps, stayed on to do the packing..

*Q: You were PNGed, or was it the whole embassy?*

BUCHANAN: The ambassador, I and the PAO and a Greek employee, were PNGed. We were all accused of being spies. The irony was that the Chargé d’Affaires became the CIA station chief.

*Q: When you arrived there, what were American interests there in Burundi?*

BUCHANAN: Basically to report on what was happening in the Congo, and to try to prevent Burundi from drifting further left. If you ask me whether we really had any US interests, I would say no. Nor did we in Rwanda. But we had a policy at that time of having relations with all the countries of Africa, instead of doing as the British did, for example, and having regional ambassadors accredited to a several countries. Burundi was basically a listening post and part of our general effort to prevent Africa from falling into the communist lap, as we then feared.

*Q: Now you are an old hand with communism, what was your impression while you were there of Soviet influence?*

BUCHANAN: The major impression that I had was that the Soviets first of all hated Africa. I used to meet with the Soviet Ambassador on the golf course, which he complained was the only place he could walk in safety. I should say in parenthesis that Burundi was the most overcrowded, perhaps poorest country in Africa where families literally disfigured their children as they did in the Middle East to make them beggars. In our house we had a large metal gate leading into our bedroom so that we could lock ourselves in the bedroom at night. Crime was rampant. From that standpoint, Burundi was not a pleasant place.

The Chinese remained substantially more influential than the Soviets. Before the Chinese were expelled, following the assassination of Ngendandumwe, they would hand out money every Thursday to radical Tutsi politicians. So naturally, the radicals were furious to be deprived of their weekly hand-out, and accused us of having inspired the expulsion order. We certainly weren't unhappy to see the Chinese leave, but if any was behind the expulsion, I suspect it was the Belgians and not the Americans. Since I was not privy to Dumont's discussions with the CIA station chief, I cannot, of course, be sure. In any event, the radical Tutsi continued to look to the Chinese rather than the Soviets for inspiration.

*Q: What were the Chinese after?*

BUCHANAN: As I commented earlier, to extend their own influence, the Chinese were concerned to demonstrate that the Soviets were a "paper tiger" and didn't know really how to carry on an anti-imperialist struggle. The Soviets for their part were embarrassed. They were not able, or willing, to put the sort of money into Africa that they had originally. And, of course, with reduced money they had reduced influence.

*Q: I think the Chinese also had this feeling that they were a poor country and had been raising from the bootstraps, etc. and they were also of a color and thus much more attuned to places like Africa than the Soviets would be.*

BUCHANAN: Yes, they certainly did, and many Africans, at least those who hadn't spent extensive time in China, felt the same way, because the Soviets had the reputation among Africans of being standoffish, certainly not proletarian.

*Q: What would you be doing? Ten days after you arrived you had this real nasty situation which continued a good part of a year.*

BUCHANAN: Well, initially, of course, I was trying to get my bearings in this environment, and make sense of a tumultuous situation: the arrest of our local, who incidentally apparently was absconding with some Embassy funds; the ouster of the Chinese, and the beginning maneuvers in what was to become a rather fatal parliamentary election. Fatal in the sense that it triggered the radical Tutsis.

Once the civil war started, I was preoccupied with trying to locate various missionaries, using a private radio station in Bujumbura. We tried to persuade every missionary we could to leave the country. There was one missionary family from the Congo, with some eleven children, who insisted on returning to the area of Stanley where whites were at great risk following the intervention of Belgian paratroopers sent in to rescue the white population. My wife and I both have missionaries in our family. Her grandfather was a missionary in China and my aunt taught and then ran St. Hilda's School for Girls in Wuchan from 1919 to 1927. But we had no appreciation of missionaries in any contemporary context until serving in Africa. There we learned how important a role they continued to play as teachers and, notably in the case of the 7th Day Adventists, as providers of medical services. In Rwanda, we were invited by a Canadian Adventist doctor to watch a hysterectomy operation on a woman who decided, after three years, that the huge tumor in her stomach was not a baby. It was painful and humbling to see how he was managing to operate, even using string as sutures.

The ethnic violence only intensified after our departure in 1966, as Hutu refugees made forays across the border to exact revenge. Having decapitated the Hutu leadership, the Tutsi radicals escalated their repression, murdering virtually every Hutu of any education. Literally thousands were murdered. When Hutu or Tutsi leaders have tried to overcome the ethnic hatreds and become rulers of a single nation, they have been denounced as traitors, and often murdered by radicals on both sides. It was such a murder that triggered the real genocide in Rwanda.

*Q: Did we have any influence there at all? I assume we were trying to cool things*

BUCHANAN: Well, not much. We had influence in the sense that we were perceived by the Hutus as supporting them, and consequently seen as a threat by many Tutsis. We tried, of course, through an AID program and through the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund to make friends in Burundi. I developed a rice project and one of giving a trust to a little agricultural cooperative. We failed to persuade AID to rebuild a North-South road, linking the two halves of the country together, after it was swamped by the rising Lake Tanganyika. We also gave the jeeps to the police, as I mentioned. But ultimately, what was more important to the Tutsi leaders was not their appreciation for our limited bit of aid, but their fears of a Hutu uprising.

*Q: Were the Belgians playing any role there?*

BUCHANAN: They were certainly involved in major decisions like that of the Mwami to oust the Chinese. There were also Belgian troops in Bujumbura to provide security. But it was my impression that the Belgians were much less effective than the French in using their resources to protect their former colonial assets. The largely Flemish colonists were also basically more racist than the French.

*Q: Belgium's role has not been very impressive in Africa.*

BUCHANAN: It certainly has not. One reason, as I just mentioned, was attitude. The favorite Belgian pastime in Burundi was running down the Africans. We tried at one of our early dinner parties to mix the guests, inviting a very attractive Tutsi Minister of Finance and his wife along with some Haitians from the World Health Organization. The Belgians did not know what to say with Africans present, and the Haitians, who were as black as the Tutsi, did their best to disassociate themselves from Africa by loudly contrasting Africa and Haiti. The evening was such a disaster it was positively funny.

*Q: You were very enthusiastic to go to Africa. How did you feel about Africa when you left?*

BUCHANAN: I was very happy to get away from Burundi. The British and we had a competition as to who would get thrown out first. They, because of Rhodesia and we, because of the general impression people had of us as the defenders of the Hutu. We won. Well, I still found Africa fascinating but I certainly didn't want to go back to Burundi. Within 24 hours of being PNGed, I was reassigned as DCM to Libreville, Gabon, which led me to believe that this must be one of the hell holes of the world, if Personnel could act so promptly. But, in fact, I found it a very pleasant post and certainly an enormous contrast to Burundi.

**JOHN D. STEMPEL**  
**Acting Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1965-1968)**

*Dr. John D. Stempel served in Guinea, Burundi, Zambia, Tehran, and Madras as well as at AF (Ghana), Operations Center, DOD, and NEA. This interview was conducted in 1993 by Kristin Hamblin.*

*Q: From December, 1965 to April, 1968, as you said, you went on to Burundi and there I believe you were the acting deputy chief of mission. What were your responsibilities in the embassy?*

STEMPEL: Well, it was a very small embassy. We need to back up a little bit. In late 1965 there had been a coup d'état in Burundi and the Hutu majority tribe attacked the Tutsis and they had repressed this. In the meantime they threw out four of our embassy officials, allegedly for messing around or plotting internal interference. Well, my then boss, who was the Chargé d'affaires, we did not replace the ambassador as a sign of our displeasure at this unjustified dismissal of our people...but they had been playing footsie with the Chinese, particularly the Tutsi leadership that then overthrew the king... But things were kind of tough. The king was on the throne throughout 1966 and my boss said, "Look, we need somebody else. We can't replace all four of the people, but I need a good junior officer to help me out." Well, I was chosen. It looked like a good choice for a lot of reasons. My wife was pregnant and would have to be evacuated, but if we moved to Burundi she could have the baby there. So after this delay in Guinea, we left for Burundi. We were in Kenya and ready to leave for Burundi when the word came through that the Tutsi army officers had overthrown King Mwambutsa and ended the 300-

year monarchy. Well, we wound up staying four more days and being the first foreigners flown into Burundi after the revolution. Now, the man who took over was a colonel named Michel Micombero and he was exactly the same age I was. So I went into an embassy as acting deputy chief of mission as well as acting head of USIA, AID and a number of things. I was in a sense an upper level gofer. But it was a good job for me because I got to see how the other agencies worked. I helped to untangle their affairs. I got into a lot of interesting kinds of things that I never would have been able to do as a junior officer at a much larger post, or one that was more organized. My boss, who remained the chargé d'affaires, was a very good person to learn from. He had had a good bit of experience including being an ambassador's assistant in Paris before he got there. So this was a chance for me to learn to do all kinds of things.

And the pressure wasn't very great which was good because two months after we arrived, the day after they canceled the curfew, our first daughter was born at 7:01 in the morning. The doctor barely got there before she was born. It all happened much more quickly than it was supposed to. So Amy was born in Burundi. And then later on the second daughter was born in Zambia, six years later. So both my daughters by my first wife were born in Africa. The younger daughter will graduate from college in two years. The two of them would like to go back to see where they were born.

*Q: Are young Foreign Service officers usually sent to a hardship post to learn for that same sort of reason?*

STEMPEL: Well, in my case I was sent to French West Africa to perfect my French. But also because I had done my doctoral thesis on Vietnam and it was becoming quite a controversial issue in the fall of 1965. The Department thought that it would probably be better if I were not around. It was bad enough that Senator Fulbright had gotten a microfilm copy of my thesis and was using it to badger the government. It was felt that it would not be very good for either my diplomatic career or the State Department if I were around and got involved in this business.

**L. MICHAEL RIVES**  
**Chargé d'Affaires**  
**Bujumbura (1966-1968)**

*Michael Rives was born in New York in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1947 and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. Mr. Rives' career included positions in Germany, Vietnam, Laos, Guatemala, France, the Congo, Burundi, Cambodia, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

*Q: I see you received a Superior Honor award. Was that for getting everybody out of there?*

RIVES: I think that was from Burundi, wasn't it?

*Q: Oh, that was later, then. OK, so then where?*

RIVES: I was in Washington for about six months, and then I went to Burundi, where everybody had been PNGed. So I was there again as Chargé. And I was also AID director, and USIA. The only man left there was the CIA station chief. The Department was so appalled at having CIA in charge that they shot me over there.

*Q: You were in Burundi from when to when?*

RIVES: Let me see, now... about '66 to '68.

*Q: What was the situation? It was a former Belgian protectorate?*

RIVES: Yes, a former Belgian protectorate. Independent. It was still a kingdom.

*Q: What had happened to the rest of our people?*

RIVES: Don Dumont was the Ambassador. Don was a very conscientious guy. Very nice, very pro-African, very pro-democracy... I think the thing that broke the camel's back there was that (I'm a little vague now on who it was), but there was this person there who had to be gotten out. I think it was somebody from either the Russian or the Chinese Embassy who had defected. Somehow, Don got [the person] out. But he was caught, you know, they knew who had done it, so he was thrown out, the DCM was thrown out, the PAO was thrown out, the AID director was thrown out. I arrived there, and there was a station chief, one AID engineer left from working on the roads, and some secretaries... that was it. So I ran the Embassy for about a year before they started it up again.

*Q: What was the Burundian attitude towards this?*

RIVES: Rather unfriendly. Well, yes and no. When I first got there it was still a kingdom. The king was Mwame Mwambutsa the Fourth. But he resided in Switzerland with his girlfriend, and I never met him. So the kingdom was run by a prime minister (I can't remember who it was) until the king's son, Entare the Fifth, overthrew his father, thinking he was going to take over. Shortly thereafter, he went to Kinshasa on an official trip and while he was gone, he was overthrown by an army captain (whose name I can't think of right now). During my stay there, we also had the Six-Day War. That was really the worst part of our relations.

*Q: The Six-Day War being the '67 war between Israel and the Arabs?*

RIVES: And Egypt, particularly. By then, my Embassy had been strengthened again. I did have a junior Political Officer. I had a Public Affairs Officer. When the Six-Day War came, the Egyptians organized an anti-American demonstration. We were warned about this. The Embassy was attacked. The reason I say the Egyptians organized this, we could see the Egyptian Chargé's car going round and round in circles round the Embassy while all this was going on, directing things. Fortunately we had an Embassy that was all glass but had cement things on the outside, like the Embassy in Delhi, you know...

*Q: Oh yes, like a facade...*

RIVES: Yes. They couldn't break in the steel doors, but they broke all the glass. Then they walked down the street and attacked the Cultural Office. That they did sack, and they burnt the books. Meanwhile I had called for extra help, but it wasn't forthcoming. So I called the Belgian Ambassador, who was a retired general, and he was sick in bed, poor guy, but anyways I said, "Look, you've got to do something." Of course, the Belgian officers still commanded the [Burundi] military, so I said, "You've got to help us." Anyway, by the time they got around, everything was over, and I drove down to the Center. There was smoke coming out of the Center and burning books were on the sidewalk. The Foreign Minister arrived, and then the Interior Minister arrived. And they expressed condolences. Then the military arrived... And, I must say, I wasn't very diplomatic.

So all these people arrived and I gave them a piece of my mind about what I thought had happened. I said, "Your military are only good enough to pick up garbage. [Now they] can do that, and burn the rest of the books."

The next day I went in and saw the Foreign Minister. By then I'd had people come and make an estimate of the damage, of course, and I gave him my bill... He expressed regret, again, said he hoped I'd get things in order again so that the place would look nice.

I turned round and told Washington what had happened, and I said, "I'm not going to reopen this conference center until I get my money." Washington came back -- I must say, sometimes I think we're too gentle... big countries don't do that, we rise above that -- and said, "You'll never get your money back, you'd better open the center. I said, "I won't do it."

So I sat there for months with this eyesore. The Government kept calling me and saying, "When are you going to fix it up?" I said, "When you give me my money." So then the Foreign Minister asked me to come in one day and said he was going to Europe and America on a fund-raising trip, to get some money to help Burundi. He said, "What do you think I'll get in Washington?" I said, "You're not going to get anything. I won't even give you a visa." He said, "Well, What do you need?" To which I replied, "I want my money!"

The next day I got a phone call, and I sent a clerk over, and we had two suitcases of cash. So I gave him a visa, and I sent a telegram to Washington saying, "Money received. Visas issued. They're coming to get financial aid. Don't give them a penny." And they didn't get anything.

*Q: Did we have any interests in Burundi?*

RIVES: No. It was just one of those countries where we put some money in, built some roads, which we shouldn't have done... Well, we had one slight interest, Folgers Coffee. We used to buy 90 percent of the crop. It was very high-quality coffee. Mountain coffee, you know the folks... I don't know if they're still doing it now.

*Q: What about the Hutu and Tutsi?*

RIVES: When I was there, fortunately, they were quiet. The Tutsis were in charge, and still are... the officer class, royalty, you see. There were none of the horrors that happened after I left.

*Q: Did you see this as an endemic fora?*

RIVES: Oh, yes, it was waiting to happen all the time.

*Q: Were the Hutus really kept down?*

RIVES: Yes, pretty well. The thing that kept things going, don't you see, were the Belgians. As long as they were in charge, no nonsense.

*Q: What about your contact with the Burundi Government?*

RIVES: It was always proper, official. As far as social things go, there wasn't too much. They would come to dinners, but like in so many of those countries -- I don't know if you've ever served in countries like this-- you never knew who was coming to dinner. It was almost impossible to have a sit-down dinner, because you might have ten acceptances and two would come, or maybe twenty would come. It was always nerve-racking for a bachelor, I can tell you that. But we did have some [contact]. They didn't invite you to their houses very often.

*Q: You just mentioned the fact that you were a bachelor. It must have made you a pretty movable person. You went to a number of rather difficult places. Do you think this was...*

RIVES: Oh I think it was a factor, yes. Firstly I was a bachelor, and secondly, I spoke French. Of course, a number of these places were French-speaking.

*Q: They put you on the short list!*

RIVES: And you pay for that, too, I noticed. When I went to Burundi, there wasn't enough silverware, so I had to bring my own. I asked for more silverware from the State Department... never got it. When George Renchard replaced me as Ambassador, he immediately was given two full sets of extra silver... Mrs. Renchard, did, let's put it that way...

*Q: Did we see in Burundi at that time the "Soviet Menace" or anything like that?*

RIVES: The Soviets were very much there. I don't think the Chinese were there at all, if I remember... I don't think so. But as I remarked earlier, that's where I saw the real change in both the Soviet and the American attitudes toward Africa. We cut our aid back to nothing at one point, except the Ambassador's twenty-five thousand dollar emergency fund. And the Russians also cut way back.

*Q: Was this a mutual assessment that this wasn't going anywhere?*

RIVES: I think we and the Russians reached the same conclusion at the same time, is all I can figure out, because it was really quite startling.



Burundi was very much against us on the Six-Day War. They would never admit they were wrong, even when the Egyptians said that...

*Q: Why were they taking sides in the Six-Day War?*

RIVES: Because it was part of Africa. The Egyptians said, "You're our brothers... All Africans together..." You know, that kind of stuff.

*Q: The Egyptians were basically part of the slave-trading class.*

RIVES: Not in Burundi. Burundi never had slavery. None of the slave routes went through Burundi. They all had to go around it. They couldn't get through there. The Tutsi warriors wouldn't let them. No, they were never part of the slave trade.

**THOMAS P. MELADY**  
**Ambassador**  
**Burundi (1969-1972)**

*Thomas P. Melady was born in Norwich Connecticut. He served in the Army during WWII and attended Duquesne University and the Catholic University after the war. He served as the Ambassador to Burundi and Uganda. Ambassador Melady was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 13 1995.*

*Q: Going to Burundi, was this just something that came out of the blue? or had you asked...*

MELADY: I had worked for Nelson Rockefeller as a consultant at the time he had presidential ambitions, and I did this part time kind of thing, and I did various things there on the staff, one was position papers on Africa.

*Q: People talk about part time consultants on Africa. What did you do?*

MELADY: For example, I would do think pieces that could be the subject for a potential speech, or point of view, or conversation. Generally speaking in that period I was advocating recognition of the phenomenon of independence, supporting pro-western parties, and a liberal AID program. That would be the thesis, and then I would take a particular country like Nigeria which we all had great hopes for as the major power. I must say, he seemed to like it and he and some others recommended me to President-elect Nixon as one of his non-career candidates. It seemed that that administration wanted to continue the tradition established by President Kennedy of bringing in several academics. So I was contacted by the President-elect and his staff. We actually discussed Botswana, then still known as Botswanaaland, which was just becoming independent. I had written on the Kalahari Desert, and I knew Dr. Khame, the president. Peter Flanagan, an assistant to President Nixon asked me if I would like to go there. I said yes. I was told to see Mr. Mitchell...this is the office of the President-elect, and "get the forms." I filled out the forms. It

was my first major federal appointment and the clearances took several months. The inaugural took place maybe a month or so afterwards, or several months afterwards, I received a phone call from the New York Times saying they wanted to interview me because they saw on the wire service that the President had named me as Ambassador to Burundi. And I accepted to go to Burundi, and I was very happy about it because I benefited from the very excellent State Department training program in languages. I had what they call Ph.D.-French, I could read but I spent three months over there in their language program and I was able to speak French after that three months. I was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to Burundi in November 1969.

*Q: A little about getting ready to go. How did you get ready to go?*

MELADY: I had been through that thing really twice, Uganda followed Burundi, and then 15-16 years later, to the Vatican. There has been a great improvement, it was far more comprehensive in '89...there was the Institute, I guess there always was one, very definite briefings on high policy matters, the protocol matters, the Ethics Act, and all kinds of things. It was very well programmed, and I thought it was quite well done. Whereas in '68-'69, I definitely attended classes in French, and that was quite good, but from the standpoint of being briefed on lots of other matters, I got briefed by the desk officer and you couldn't compare the preparation of '69 with that of '89.

*Q: You were just sort of tossed out there. If I recall the genesis of the real ambassadorial course came from Shirley Temple Black.*

MELADY: That's right, in fact Ambassador Black was involved in the '89 program, and she later was appointed ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

*Q: But she originally went to Ghana, and I don't think you had much by the time you went out.*

MELADY: That's right. She certainly played a role in designing it. And then a separate program for wives, the spouses. There's no comparison between the program of '89 preparation and '69. The briefing in 1989 was comprehensive and the briefings were excellent.

*Q: You were in Burundi from 1969 to '72. What were U.S. interests at that time as you saw them?*

MELADY: The U.S. interests were...remember it was a historical period, I remember the one detailed briefing I got...Burundi was a member of the Security Council, a non-permanent member of the Security Council. And we were pretty upset that Burundi was attacking us verbally in the Security Council. We had no vital interest, and I'll tell you about that in a moment, an incident I had with President Micombero. But we had about 400 Americans there, mostly Protestant missionaries who had worked there historically. We bought their coffee, a mountain grain. Of course, it was 1969, and as you remember we regarded the then Congo, now Zaire, as an area of vital interest and it was a major source of confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. A lot of the arms for the anti-government rebels, communist inspired, were being funneled through East Africa and Burundi over Lake Tanganyika. So therefore, we regarded the government as unfriendly, but not totally unfriendly. We had some concerns about

the background of ethnic tensions between the two principal communities, the Tutsis and the Hutus. I remember about a year later, maybe two years--I have it in my book, Burundi, the Tragic Years--we had an incident of where I was called back from a long weekend in Kigali, Rwanda, and my deputy chief of mission, Mike Hoyt, said, "We've got some real problems. The Foreign Office called me that they had picked up a secret document of a letter written by the head of the CIA to you outlining a plan to overthrow the government of Burundi." And it was going to be done, that the CIA was going to fly in submarines from Mozambique, then still under Portuguese control, up to the southern part of Lake Tanganyika. The submarines would come up to Bujumbura, emerge, and overthrow the government. They were taking it quite seriously. We were under notice that we might all be asked to all be expelled within 72 hours. So I had a meeting with Colonel Micombero, the president, whom I had gotten to know--I used to see him at church on Sunday, and various things--and I could see it was a serious matter. So I asked for 24-48 hours to look into the thing, and I'd be back to see him.

I went back the next day, or maybe it was two days later, and I declared the document to be a forgery. We wanted to send over a person to convince them of that, it was an office in the State Department. It was a forged document by the Czech embassy in Kinshasa to one of their agents. And not very well done, a couple of misspellings in it, etc. But anyway, I could see that I wasn't totally convincing, so I had to make a judgment call. I said, "Your Excellency, you're very proud of your country, and it's a lovely little country here in the heart of Africa. But you know we have no viable interest really." I said, "I happen to know something about how things work at the White House. If something happened to anyone of eight to ten countries, the Soviet Union, Germany, Japan, like a coup d'etat, the President would be awakened and told about it." I said, "Another group of countries, about 30, that if something had happened that could be adverse to our interests, the President would be briefed on it first thing in the morning before he came down to the Oval Office, or depending on his style, in the Oval Office." I said, "There's another group of countries where he'd read about in the papers, because it made no "god-damned difference." I know we don't use that language, and Burundi is one." I said, "We have a few people here. We buy your coffee, mostly one company, Folger, they could buy a mountain bean from other countries, the mountains of Africa." I remember he laughed. He said, "You're right, [French]. Somebody is trying to break up our friendship," and he embraced me. That ended the incident. It was unusual diplomacy. It was a judgment call and it worked.

*Q: This, of course, points out very much the role of the ambassador. There's talk about, well, things can be run from Washington. It's very obvious they can't be run from Washington.*

MELADY: No. Certainly the impact of modern communications, instant telephone, and faxes, plus the end of distance--I mean long distance, has changed diplomacy. I could see the change in 1989 in comparison to 1969. You're subject to more control from Washington. I would think in the old days, 50 years ago, the ambassador had a broad mandate and implemented it based on judgment. But you still need a person there. I mean my dealings in the Vatican with the Pope, I certainly had a broad mandate, but some things are very immediate where the Pope would see me in a ceremony and call me over and tell me something to tell President Bush, and I really had to make a judgment.

*Q: Also, I think, something that is of historical interest is the fact that you had both, particularly the Czechs and the East Germans were producing these documents to try to upset things that are known as disinformation.*

MELADY: By the way, that was established. After President Micombero embraced me, then, "By the way, send a specialist over." I've forgotten the name of the gentleman, and he came over. He was a specialist in the field, and he fully documented with other documents, traced it right back to the embassy in Kinshasa, and almost down to the name of the agent who brought it to Bujumbura.

*Q: How did you deal with the government of Burundi?*

MELADY: It was a highly personalized relationship. You dealt with the sources of power. I mean you have on the one hand, the sources of power, and that was essentially the controlling clique of Colonel Micombero, who relatively speaking was more moderate than others, represented the minority Tutsi, the controlling group. And then you had technocrats under, and so on a little thing of trading out something with Folger coffee, or helping missionaries with their visas if they had difficulties, it was a rather traditional kind government-to-government at an operating level. When it came to the top, they were governed by their own vital interests, operating in an era of psychological insecurity. And now I think it's probably easy dealing with some of those countries that don't think they're so important. That wasn't true in the '60s and '70s. So it was highly personalized. I got a few gifts from President Nixon to give, a hunting rifle, and so forth, and that would come up in conversations. And then we sent people to the moon. I remember some ambassadors got the moonstones, and I got one and I called the president, and he rushed over to my house to get it.

*Q: You're dealing with something which turned into, well, continues to turn into a tragedy, this Hutu-Tutsi thing, which we're just seeing in Rwanda.*

MELADY: It may regarding it in Burundi.

*Q: Did we have anything to do except just to sit there and...*

MELADY: Well, let's look at the facts. The facts were, I remember I studied it at the Institute of African Affairs in Germany. The Germans arrived in 1894 after a military operation in the then Tanganyika. They arrived in the mountains, and they found what they thought was a monarchy, the characteristics of a monarchy. There was an obvious leader who was tall, he had warriors around him, and then there were the subordinate types who were short. They were the Hutus. So after a military expedition in Tanganyika that was expensive in terms of lives of the Germans, they had malaria and other things. They, I think gleefully, signed a treaty in the then Rwanda-Burundi area with the local leadership. So the Germans practiced indirect rule from 1894 to the end of World War I. Indirect rule meant you kept the local leadership. They found what had been going on from probably the seventeenth century, was that the warrior class maintained a predominant role and they were the land owners and the warriors, and the Hutus were the serfs. Some may say in a situation not too far from slavery. But anyway, there was certainly a significant class distinction between the two. Even the Germans recorded there also was a dislike

bordering on hatred between the two, and there were outbreaks of fighting, immediately put down by the German colonial government. Along came the end of World War I, the Germans lost, the League of Nations assigned Burundi-Rwanda, then named, to the mandated authority of Belgium since Belgium had a colony next to it. There was a fine line of distinction between a mandate and a colony, and the Belgians followed indirect rule, and it went on to the '20s and '30s. And you go to Brussels and look at the documents there, and you find that also there were troubles. There were always the Tutsis maintaining control and perhaps became the favorites. There was a clear physical distinction, and there was a lot of folklore about them. The facts are that they were Hamitic-Semitic peoples like the Amharics of Ethiopia, and had distinct physical characteristics, tall, the average height was about 6'1", an Aquiline-Semitic profile. And the first that would get some education, would be of course that class. It wasn't necessarily planned as a conspiracy to keep them in power but this is the way it worked out. The first ones went off to Belgium, the Germans didn't have any that I could see in the records. But Belgium did have a few who, thanks to the Catholic missionaries, would have schools and they would end up in Belgium. Not at high university studies but some sort of secondary or technical studies.

Alright, so we go to the '60s, and Belgium saw the realities of the early '60s of what was happening in the rest of Africa. So they arranged for democratic elections. Elections in Rwanda elected a Hutu government, and then you had the slaughter of about 400,000 Tutsis with another half million taking off to Zaire and Uganda, and the children of the ones in Uganda organized this last invasion in 1994. In Burundi, then a kingdom, the elections didn't take place and the Tutsis remained in control.

I remember in studying it there was deep, deep alienation. I never realized it was so deep until I got there. I remember once I was giving a speech, I had a visiting congressman, Congressman Charles Diggs, now deceased, then chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa...

*Q: And of African descent too.*

MELADY: Yes, an African-American, and several other house guests. I was speaking in French to a group, you might say the elite, and since it was known that I was a non-career diplomat for Republicans, Charlie Diggs was Democrat, we talked about the role of the opposition. I was under instructions to preach democracy, you always have an opposition. And we respect the opposition, we protect the opposition.

I had to work on my French when I got there, my wife was perfect in French and was interested in anthropology, worked in the local language. She said, "Tom, no one understood you." And I said, "Why?" "Because every time you said opponent, the word is enemy." So the translation would be, you respect your opponent, you do everything to have your opponent speak. And they would say, enemy. So what do you do to enemies? You kill them. I remember I was there for two years and it was going on to almost my third year, and I knew the history was that every so often the Hutus, 85%, would attempt to change things. Then came the classical thing. We should have known the moment it happened. The economy was bad, and the coffee production was way down, it dropped, a major source of earnings. So there was a Hutu rebellion on a given day in April of '72. I had already received my transfer orders to go back to Washington and go on to Uganda. In the first three days, or perhaps five, it was relatively successful as an attempted

revolution. And about 10,000 Tutsis were killed, the exact numbers none of us have although I have it in more detail in my book, Burundi, The Tragic Years. And then the Tutsis who were in control entirely, the military retaliated and eliminated in about a three week period about 150,000 Hutus, including anybody who had any kind of education beyond what would have been their elementary of about seven years. It was brutal, the tragic years, and deep alienation.

I came back, and in the book where I was spanked by various reviewers, because I said the alienation is so deep, and I documented various illustrations of it, and so much a part of the culture. It's in the folk tales that Hutu mothers will tell their little babies, beware of the awful Tutsis. If you're not a good boy, they will come and get you. I recommended the separation of the two communities as the only way out in both Rwanda and...and I really hate to come here and say, "I told you so that the alienation is so deep." They lost a half a million Tutsis in Rwanda. And in Burundi we've had several outbreaks since I left, one very bad one four years ago. Five hundred people just a month ago. I'm convinced that for a temporary phase there has to be a separation of the two communities because of the very deep rooted nature of the alienation.

*Q: You and your staff were in Burundi at the time of this outburst in '73. Could you tell us what the staff of an embassy does when this sort of thing is going on?*

MELADY: Of course, we were a small staff, no military attachés, no Marine Corps, etc. Once the fighting started what were we going to do? Our first interest was to protect our own staff, and I was concerned about the Americans who were there. I remember I went to see Colonel, Micombero and indicated that. The tragedy was that only one Belgian was killed. The saying was, "if you're white, you're safe." So our interest was to protect the Americans. This was our only "vital interest." We must remember the historical period of the early '70s. You had people then, and less so now, who advocated that we should have taken a more active role, maybe military force. I recommended against that. While it was a tragedy in the historical period of 1972, the sending of any troops for any purpose other than actually to save our own people, as we did in Zaire previously, would be misinterpreted as another form of American imperialism.

*Q: Yes, we were just coming out of the Vietnam War. How about with the American missionaries?*

MELADY: I remember they had to make some judgment calls. The American missionaries, predominantly of two protestant denominations, very heroic people, they essentially were assigned to areas that were predominantly populated by the Hutu peoples. I used to worry about that. So my constant visits during that period before I left in May, was to assure their safety. We got them through that tough period of mid-April '72 to mid-May. We didn't lose any Americans. They were scared, we didn't lose them. I remember some commentators thought I was a little bit over concerned about the Americans. It's always a dilemma. Protecting the Americans paralyzed us in terms of recommending United States military intervention. I was totally opposed philosophically, and I held that point of view, to military intervention, and also held it in my book and in subsequent articles. Now you haven't got a...because there's no one today...very few people who are responsible in academic establishments who would recommend military intervention in areas we have no vital interest. In Somalia, under President Bush in 1992, we

went in in answer to humanitarian appeal. It was later modified by President Clinton. But it was a trying period for about three to four weeks.

**MILES S. PENDLETON, JR**  
**Political-Economic Officer**  
**Bujumbura (1970-1972)**

*Miles S. Pendleton, Jr. was born in New Jersey in 1939. He graduated from Yale University in 1961 and received his MPA from Harvard University in 1967. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1967, his postings included Burundi, Tel Aviv, Brussels and Paris. Mr. Pendleton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: Today is the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1998. We're off to Burundi. Did you ask for this, or how did this come about?*

PENDLETON: Well, it was slightly a surprise in terms of timing. It came about, I think, for the because I had read in the Yale Alumni Magazine that Dan Simpson, my Yale classmate with whom I'd taught in West Africa -- who now in 1998 is finishing a stint as ambassador to the Congo, formerly Zaire -- was serving in Bujumbura. I said to my wife, "Oh, poor Dan, he must be lonely down there. I will send him a note." I wrote him a note, never got a response, but received quite soon thereafter a cable assigning him to move on to South Africa and me to replace him. We remain great friends but I've always accused him of organizing that particular response to my attempt to be pleasant. At that time I was too naïve to think about how to go about working your next assignment, but I had wanted an assignment in French-speaking Africa. Burundi had been a Belgian mandate and was French speaking. So we were ordered to go there immediately, and my Ambassador in Tel Aviv was very helpful to organize it so that not only could we delay long enough so that our daughter would be born in Israel but that we could go to my brother-in-law's wedding in Portland, Oregon. And then we flew directly, at the end of August, 1970, from Portland to Bujumbura, Burundi -- not really stopping on route until we got to Uganda, and I can tell you, that can screw up a little child's clock and an adult's clock.

*Q: When you arrived in August, 1970, can you describe what the situation was in Burundi, you know, political-economic, as you saw it then?*

PENDLETON: Well, one of the great fortunes for me was that Dan Simpson was still there, and he had a very refined view of the tensions under the surface between the 85 per cent of the population that was Hutu and the 12 per cent that was Tutsi. The Tutsi actually ran everything. The Hutus were frequently described as "the short people" and the Tutsis as "the tall people." If you were a newcomer and had not had a guide to tell you to keep your eye out for potential conflict between the tribes I think you would have been very much inclined to let it drift off your radar screen. The country, for all intents and purposes, seemed quite tranquil, and one had a sense that the various ethnic factions were trying to get along and work together to a certain point. And that proved before we left to be a total miscalculation.

*Q: One's mind sort of boggles at trying to separate the various conflicts that have happened there, but at that time, in 1970, had there been the Hutu-Tutsi explosions yet? Had there been any of those?*

PENDLETON: There had been in particular explosions in Rwanda, the country to the north which was the other Belgian mandate of Ruanda-Urundi, and many, many Tutsis had been slaughtered by Hutus, and Hutus had taken over control of Rwanda in the '60s. This absolutely traumatized the Tutsis of Burundi, who were in power. They controlled not only the government, even though there were a couple of Hutu ministers, they controlled the government and the army. And they were determined that they were not going to allow to happen to them what had happened to their cousins, the Tutsis of Rwanda. That isn't to say that they were very generous to the Tutsi refugees from Rwanda who were living in Burundi, but there was this background and backdrop in everybody's mind about what had happened not too long before. That proved to be quite significant as events unfolded.

*Q: What were American interests as sort of described to you when you went out there at that point?*

PENDLETON: American interests in Burundi were really fairly minimal, to say the least. That was reflected in the fact the Country Director for Central Africa couldn't make time to see me before I went to post. One of the principal concerns was that we had missionaries there in the interior, because they were Johnny-come-latelies, way behind the Catholics in terms of impact on the country and the elite. They tended to be fundamentalist Protestant missionaries who were working amongst the Hutus. And when fear of the Hutus increased among the Tutsi elite, there was a normal tendency to become convinced that somehow the missionaries, who after all were teaching these people to read and write and think and know of the larger world, were involved or causing or sparking some of the potential for violence.

As for the economy, Burundi raised some coffee and tea. It has a vote in the United Nations. And indeed, the Burundi ambassador to the United Nations represented Burundi on the Security Council while I was there. So Burundi took on a slightly larger role than would normally be the case through the happenstance of history. I used to remind Washington that the entire national budget of Burundi in any given year at that time would only run Harvard University for three months. So we were dealing with a relatively minor country to which our largest export was used clothing, which is the case in large hunks of Africa. When we were asked to find somebody to represent Burundi at a convention in Pittsburgh on tall buildings, I think supported by the elevator industry, we were able to report that there weren't any buildings over two stories, but we'd heard rumors of one being built that would be three stories and might have an elevator. I was assigned as political-economic officer; I was also the consular officer, the backup USIS officer, the science officer in a very small embassy with an ambassador and a deputy chief of mission and myself and a tiny CIA station and a USIS operation. We did have an interest in what was going on in Eastern Zaire as well, which I should mention. We also kept an eye on the Russians and Chinese in Burundi. Indeed, a PRC diplomat had defected prior to my arrival and remained in the embassy for months before being smuggled out.



*Q: First, let's talk a little about the embassy. Who was the ambassador, and how did he or she operate?*

PENDLETON: The Ambassador during my tenure was Thomas Patrick Melady, who was a political appointee of all things. He'd originally been a supporter of Nelson Rockefeller's, and was very much enmeshed with and devoted to the Catholic Church. He later became our ambassador to the Vatican. And he had moved from being a Rockefeller supporter to a supporter of President Nixon, and he had taken with him a fair amount of influence within the Catholic Church vis-à-vis the American political party process. I wouldn't say it was an extraordinary amount or he wouldn't have been given little Burundi as a political payoff. But his style was a bit unusual. He'd been an academic. He'd written a lot of books which, when I was in graduate school, I had skimmed and found, to my regret, to be superficial. I sensed even before I arrived that this could be a potential problem of analysis in terms of what the embassy was going to put forward as its political analysis. Melady was an extremely nice man with a pleasant and interesting wife, but he was a bit confused about the difference between a tiny embassy and a large bureaucracy. He, for instance, tended to have a great many formal staff meetings, with agendas and note takings, so you would be burdened with a good deal of in-house work and false deadlines which, on top of the terrible amount of tasking from all of the bureaucracies in Washington, tended to make life a lot more frantic than I would have expected it to be. It was hard to get out and deal with the people, whether they be expatriate or Burundi.

*Q: I wonder if you could comment on this tasking. Where was this coming from and how did this tie you up particularly?*

PENDLETON: Well, I think a fair bit of it was self-generated in large part by the Ambassador, who was very anxious to make a good mark in Washington. As a result, there was a lot of demands to meet artificial deadlines. We had only one American secretary who could type anything classified, a superb person, Dawn Loberg. But the Ambassador wrote a great many letters, all the time, back to friends and acquaintances in Washington, so it was hard to get help from her. And then the tasking within the embassy tended to be related to formalizing activities which should probably in that particular environment have been left simply to get done in the normal course of events. I mentioned, for instance, if you had a staff meeting, why did you have to have promptly on the ambassador's desk a full readout of what had transpired at the staff meeting a few hours before when, really, nobody was going to be interested in reading it -- not even the Desk officer in Washington, who would get it by pouch three or four weeks later. We sent a lot of information by airgram and relatively little by cable at that point. The tasking was not of the sort that I thought was important, unfortunately, in terms of getting outside the embassy and analyzing the internal dynamics of the country as much as would have been wise. I found that I had to fight to carve out time to report what I thought we should in terms of US national interests. What came from all over Washington in the way of tasking frequently was simply not relevant as well. I remember being asked by the Commerce Department how many Samsonite suitcases had been sold in the shops the previous year. I discovered one that had been. One of the things which is positive about the Small Embassy Program, is that you now don't get the amount of tasking from every agency in Washington that you used to if you are at a really small post.

*Q: Well, how do you find dealing as sort of a political-economic officer (with the Burundi Government, which you say was basically Tutsi at the time. Were they easy to deal with? How did things work with them?*

PENDLETON: They were not particularly easy to deal with. They were suspicious of the United States and suspicious of almost everybody. You could have a useful discussion, but whether it would mean anything in the long run was hard to say. There were some areas in which I put an undue amount of energy perhaps, because Washington at that point was very concerned about them. One was securing votes for the Law of the Sea Treaty. Burundi is landlocked. But I found a fellow at the foreign ministry who professed to be interested (I think he wanted a scholarship to the States) and I devoted a lot of time to allowing him to understand the issues and encouraging him to telephone his mission in New York and his embassy in Washington to tell them to vote the right way. Sadly, he was killed in the "events," so-called, of 1972, and so that effort went for naught. A great deal of my interaction was aimed at convincing Burundi to join with us, particularly at the United Nations, on issues which were of significance to us. These ran the entire gamut of American strategic political-economic issues. It was in large measure an educational process on our part with Burundi officials. I'm sure we made no particular impact time and time again, but we tried.

*Q: Did the Belgians still play a major role there?*

PENDLETON: Belgians played a very major role. Ambassador Melady and Mike Hoyt, the deputy chief of mission, paid a good bit of attention to the Belgians. Mike had quite a reputation in Bujumbura because he'd been through Stanleyville and had been captured and the Belgians knew a lot about him. Mike was chargé at many intervals, and they paid attention to Mike in particular, and Mike encouraged Ambassador Melady to keep in close contact with the Belgians. I tried to pay attention to the Belgian military which was heavily involved in training the Burundi Army, and that proved to be useful, again, during the massacres of '72. The Belgians were much better plugged in across the board than we could possibly be because they had a large number of citizens permanently living in Burundi.

*Q: Well, what about dealing with the American missionaries prior to the '72 crisis? Were they approachable, or were they a problem?*

PENDLETON: No, they were very definitely approachable, but I think that they saw themselves as having a calling which was not necessarily in any particular way akin to the calling of those of us who were working in the embassy. We had a Desk officer named David Rawson at that point, who is now our ambassador in Mali and was previously Ambassador in Rwanda. He grew up in Burundi, where his parents were missionaries, and David helped to introduce my wife and myself to a number of missionaries, including his parents, and to encourage word on the net that we were okay people. We also met several Brits who were working at missions and got to know them. Ambassador Melady also spent a good bit of time in contact with the missionaries. This all became extremely important during the crisis of '72 because the missionaries were in real danger, and I helped a number of them leave the country quietly, in the trunks of cars and by other means.

*Q: We'll come to that, but prior to this, Mike Hoyt had been through operation Dragon Rouge and the whole thing, and missionaries in Zaire were very much at risk at that point, and some of them had been killed, particularly Belgian. But was the embassy working to develop a plan to get everybody the hell out? I mean, were we realistic about the Hutu-Tutsi equation in Burundi?*

PENDLETON: No, I don't think any of us were as realistic as in hindsight we should have been about the imminent possibility of a massive tribal conflict. I believe that I had, thanks to the prodding of Dan Simpson, better instinct that things might fall apart than most. And because Mike Hoyt had been through hell, we paid careful attention to such things as planning how to escape ourselves and making sure that we were hooked into the missionaries on their own radio and telephone nets. And the American missionaries had a cascading radio capability amongst themselves, even when they weren't always from the same church. They would contact each other, see how everyone was doing and be protective of each other. We did not have a totally refined plan to the degree that we would no doubt have today, in terms of the best way to help protect American citizens in distress, but I can tell you, they were never far from my mind. We didn't convert it into a set-piece plan such as David Rawson later could draw on to lead people out of Kigali, Rwanda, in the mid-1990s. By then we'd learned many lessons which I, as a relatively inexperienced officer, had not yet digested when I served in Burundi.

*Q: Again, my question is prior to the explosion. What was happening in Zaire at that point, because we'd had also the Shaba revolts and everything else in Zaire, and were there any repercussions during the time you were there?*

PENDLETON: Zaire was an immense country, and I used to say it was the size of the United States east of the Mississippi. The roads were increasingly decaying, so that when you were along the eastern frontier of Zaire, you were very far removed from Kinshasa, the capital. The governors had a very large say in things. But there were rebels, for example, under Kabila on the peninsula on Lake Tanganyika called Fizi Baraka. A group of us went down to Fizi Baraka to see what was going on at one point in Boston Whalers, down lake Tanganyika through very rough water.

*Q: Boston Whalers being a type of motorboat.*

PENDLETON: Of motorboat, yes. And it was really quite fascinating. It seemed to me it was like visiting Vietnam. The government of Mobutu Sese Seko controlled everything by day, more or less, and at night there was no control. Those who went down I went down included John Stockwell, our CIA station chief, who later turned against the Agency over Angola and other things; our consul general in Bukavu came down bearing gifts, Ray Seitz, who later became the first Foreign Service ambassador to the Court of St. James's in London. We stayed overnight with some Italian missionaries, who were later killed in the church. We went around with some of Mobutu's generals during the day in jeeps with machine guns on them. But at night, rebels burned down the huts around the church in which we were staying, and you could see who was in charge. And Laurent Kabila, the rebel, later became the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mobutu was very afraid of him and had asked Nixon in a surprise request during a White House visit for ships that could be placed in Lake Tanganyika to guard against rebels coming over from Tanzania. Those rusting hulks of ships which we had flown out to Lake

Tanganyika were there during this visit, really an outpost of American imperial interests, I would say.

*Q: One has to read Forester's The African Queen in World War I. Anything from Tanzania?*

PENDLETON: Everything that reached Burundi, by and large, came either by Sabena from Brussels, such as the *moules*, or mussels, which were eaten by the Belgians and wiser Europeans twice a week. But all the overland stuff was shipped from Dar-es-Salaam up the railway to near Ujiji, where Stanley met Livingston, and was then put on barges and brought up Lake Tanganyika to Bujumbura. This is why our household effects took nine months to arrive from the Israeli port of Eilat, which, when you have a baby, isn't easy. But there were refugees, some from Burundi, along the border. When Tanzania wanted to make life difficult for Burundi, for whatever reason, they just had to stop or slow down shipments, which were bad enough anyway, of the things that the people in Bujumbura and the interior needed.

*Q: What about relations between Burundi and Rwanda?*

PENDLETON: Yes, very cool, although there was some effort to make relations seem better than they were. Rwanda was led by Hutus and Burundi by Tutsis, and the underlying suspicion ran very deep indeed so that it was hard to think of relations between those two countries warming to any great degree despite efforts to encourage them to look at each other as part of a larger whole in the region.

*Q: Was there much consultation or visiting with our embassy up in Rwanda?*

PENDLETON: A certain amount, but not a great deal. I think that we went there for professional reasons, to better understand the dynamics involved, and because they were our neighbors. I went to Kigali once and more frequently to our consulate in Bukavu, Zaire, where U.S. military planes would land from Kinshasa with APO packages, including holiday turkeys. But there also came a time when people would have to vacation with their families, which tended to be not to go to Kigali, Rwanda but to go to the Serengeti in Tanzania or the coast in Kenya or Murchison Falls in Uganda and get a change of pace and a slightly wider view of the world. I think that we could well have afforded to have spent more time linking Rwanda and Burundi in our own minds, so that we would understand it better, and the Desk officer, David Rawson, was responsible for both countries, as you might well imagine.

*Q: How was family life at this point, again prior to the troubles?*

PENDLETON: Well, for my daughter, for instance, who arrived there at age two months, it was kind of a Garden of Eden. We had a reasonably large house; we had a large garden. She almost got eaten by a big lizard once, but other than that it was pretty good if you stayed healthy. There was actually a pediatrician, of all things, in Burundi and a couple of doctors. There were only six miles of paved road in the country when we arrived.

It was hard to get to know, on a friendly basis, the suspicious citizens of Burundi, from whatever side they came from, no matter how hard you worked at it. If we gave a representational dinner, I

always set a couple of tables but had others ready to go depending on who turned out to be in prison that day. One would make adjustments right up to a point after the first guest arrived and told you who wouldn't be showing up because of events in their political and personal lives.

Bujumbura is at a relatively high elevation, and the weather isn't all that bad. I didn't think so as somebody who had really sweated it out in Ghana previously, and you could go out on Lake Tanganyika and sail. You didn't want to get into the reeds and get bilharzia, but you could drive up into the mountains to a tea plantation and have a picnic. However, you did tend to trip over the same people over and over and over again, whether they be UNDP (United Nations Development Program) aid workers or the few foreign businessmen. Many of them were very interesting. One was James Ross who ran two BP (British Petroleum) petrol dumps, or gas stations, and sold kerosene. The next time I saw him in London fifteen years later, I said, "What are you doing now?" and he said, "Well, I'm in charge of all of BP's downstream operations." And he later became president of BP North America in Cleveland, sitting in John D. Rockefeller's old office and looking after North and South America and the Alaskan slope and all of Africa, out of Cleveland. So you never quite knew whom you would meet, and that's one of the interesting things about Africa. People who have served in these conditions tend to stick together for life, practically.

*Q: Can you tell me sort of the narrative of what happened, how you observed what led up to the '72 occurrence.*

PENDLETON: Well, I saw very little in the months ahead that would suggest that we were facing an explosion.

*Q: Question before we get there. You mentioned that when you'd throw a dinner party, people were being thrown in jail. Who was throwing whom in jail, and why?*

PENDLETON: Well, usually it was President Michel Micombero, who was about 31 or 32 years old who had been president for five years. He would throw potential enemies in jail, but they didn't have to be Hutus, and it could be for whatever reason. One would never figure out totally what was going on, but people at a certain level in the government or the military with whom we had some dealings (I taught English to military officers) led a life that had its ongoing uncertainties. And I didn't think too much about people being jailed because they seemed to be released quite promptly. And that was one of the things that led to a slightly numbing sense of tranquility, that in terms of the underlying Hutu-Tutsi problem. And, indeed, David Rawson, who's no dummy, and as I say, speaks Kirundi and Kinyarwanda, was out visiting us in the spring of 1972, and he and I went around the country and went through some roadblocks and didn't recognize them as being precursors to the "events" (and in French they're called "événements") of '72. And the word "events" disguises the fact that 200,000 people were killed, most all of them horribly and systematically with sledgehammers in a genocide during that period.

This was in April of 1972. My wife and I gave a dinner party in late April in David's honor, and we tried to balance it very carefully between Hutus and Tutsis. He knew more Hutus than he knew Tutsis. As far as we could figure out later, within three weeks, all our guests were dead,

both husbands and wives. People we thought were Tutsis turned out to have one Hutu grandparent, and *à la* Hitler became at the outset of the fighting from the wrong side and were killed. I was reminded how, in a sense, naïve I was about what was going on and how hard it was to really fathom what was going on. I had a number of rather unattractive people practically on my “payroll”. I would give them a little bit of money, and they would give me gossip. But it didn’t seem to suggest an explosion.

At the embassy, we did not know that a rebellion or coup by Hutus was being prepared for the end of April, 1972. And one thing that happened that I probably should have paid more attention to was that a distinguished Hutu who had studied in the United States and whom I knew quite well, relatively speaking, and with whom I could converse in English, called me on the phone, and asked me if I knew any way to help get outboards for some friends of his that would survive the choppy water of Lake Tanganyika. He knew that we had Boston Whalers and whatever. I was sufficiently tranquilized that this didn’t mean anything to me, but upon reflection, it may be that I was being asked for help in terms of this Hutu uprising, which started in late April in the south and reached Bujumbura, but we didn’t have word of it, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April. Micombero, the president, had dismissed his government at midday, and in the evening one began hearing noise that sounded like rifles and machine-gun fire around the town. I went around on my *mobilette*, which was a motorized bicycle, and didn’t see anything of great note. We got word, however, that something was going on which might be an uprising.

*Q:* How about your missionary net?

PENDLETON: Well, that’s partly where we got some of the word, and then the Ambassador got word from the Zaire ambassador that a coup or whatever had started. I went to the embassy and sent a cable to Washington, after talking with some of the key missionaries on the phone alerting them to get their heads down and then asking if they had any reports of anybody caught up in it, and the answer was no. Our first focus -- and this is something which I can remember stressing to the Ambassador-- was on the American citizens and trying to make sure that they were all safe and well. So the first little cable we sent (we didn’t know what the hell was going on) (was to that end. We sent another cable at midnight, and then in the morning at first light I went around on my *mobilette* again which was probably a bit stupid. I saw a place where we’d heard something had happened, and it was clear that there were burned out cars and gutted cars and blood on the ground et cetera. There had been some kind of skirmish. And we began to put more and more pieces together to the effect that there had been a Hutu uprising of sorts and that the Tutsi army had pretty well controlled it.

Actually, it took them quite a while to control it, and it was very hard for us to get information from the hinterland. And it was very hard to tell where the combat ended and reprisals, systematically, began. But the Hutus were beaten almost immediately, it seems to me. I haven’t studied this perhaps as intensively as I should to get the dates right, but it was clear within a week to ten days that systematic reprisals were starting. And these reprisals really became genocidal and went on for a couple of months. Every Hutu over eleven who could read or write was rounded up if he had not fled, and an attempt was made to kill them. Many, many thousands were buried out at the airport, and you could see the mass graves as you flew in. In order to save ammunition, they were sledgehammered, usually, and pushed into mass graves and then covered

with a bulldozer and suffocated to death if they hadn't died from the earlier blows. A curfew was started at six in the evening, so we couldn't see what was going on at night, when in the capital city the trucks were going around loading the literate Hutus up. And we all had to be in our houses, or somebody's house, by six o'clock. I was trying to collect as much information as we could all day every day and get a report to Washington at 4:30 in the evening so I could have time to get home. As the days went on there were more and more overnight curfew parties to keep up the spirits of the foreigners in Bujumbura.

The daily events were really quite traumatic. For instance, we had a Hutu gardener who hid in our house. We stashed him even at one point in our bedroom. And then he went crazy and went out and killed his mother and escaped from our garden compound. We had Hutus and Tutsis working for us. One is here in the United States now, is an American citizen, who helped raise our children for many years, a Rwandan Tutsi. Her son is my godson and in the U.S. army out in Oklahoma. So life has its complexities, but trying to keep even those who worked for us from ratting on each other or whatever was not entirely easy.

And as time went on, the Catholic Church began to get very good demographic studies. They had census takers in Burundi who had been there before. And you began to get consolidated reports from parishes as to how many Hutus had died and how many had run into Tanzania or Rwanda. A lot didn't go. The Hutus frequently have a kind of subservient mentality, and we heard stories, which I believe, of a truck coming and soldiers filling the truck with Hutus and telling those who couldn't fit, "Come back tomorrow at 10 o'clock and we'll get you in." They would come back and get in the truck even though they must have known they were going to die. And they were only six miles from the border with Rwanda(I mean, really, quite astonishing to see this. And in the months that followed, between 150,000 and 200,000 people were killed, and we had a pretty good fix on that through the work of the census takers of the Catholic Church. Washington, quote-unquote, did not wish to hear about this. It was inconvenient. And that's another part of the story.

*Q: Well this, of course, is during the Nixon period, and Kissinger, when Africa was sort of off their radar.*

PENDLETON: Human rights were definitely not an American issue in the way it is today, institutionalized as a matter of concern no matter what else is in play, as we're seeing in China at the moment. And our reporting, which really was, I think it's fair to say, seen in Washington as inconvenient because we had no particular interests there as long as our citizens were okay. And there was a real question as to what could be done about it. The OAU (the Organization of African Unity) didn't seem to know what to do. They were encouraged to send a mission to Burundi, and about three weeks into the reprisals, they sent a mission of three people, as I recall, other heads of state, who did not leave the airport and met with Micombero, to our shock, and expressed their "solidarity" with the President of Burundi. That was the last thing he needed at that point. It just encouraged him more and more. He was reported to be going up in the French military helicopter, which was provided by France as aid, flown by Colonel Biot of the French Air Force, to machine-gun Hutus from the air. And there was a joke that went around, "What do Hutus do when they hear the president's helicopter coming? They take an *anti-Biot-ique*."

The only communication from Washington that I remember just got me quite riled up was when we got a telephone call from the country director for Central Africa telling us that it was hard to believe that so many people were being killed and would we kindly tone it down. And when I got back to Washington in September after this stint to work in the Op Center and I went into the editor's office (the events started in late April (there was a June "morning report" to the Secretary of State hanging on the wall which had a little summary of how many people had been killed in Burundi and what was going on. The executive secretary of the Department of State had written on it: "Do not waste the secretary's time with such a thing again." And so this was the kind of non-human rights guidance which prevailed. And it was very frustrating. The Ambassador was also named to go on to be ambassador in Uganda, and he had a terrible time, in my view, recognizing that Africans can kill Africans. And he left about three weeks after the initial outbreak, having been the day before his departure given a medal by President Micombero. The Ambassador Melady flew to Greece, where he was going to spend a couple of weeks on the beach, and frankly, to those of us who were left, it was kind of a relief, because he simply couldn't and wouldn't agree that there was anything horrible happening. However, he then heard on the radio that things were continuing, so he left the beach and flew to Washington and helped follow Burundi events from there. But I found it absolutely astonishing that the Department let the Ambassador go when this thing was in full flood.

*Q:* Well, sometimes when there's an ambassador for whom they have no great regard, it's best for them to stay away.

PENDLETON: Well, I don't know whether they had regard or not. He had enough political clout to get another embassy at that time and one some years later. He also became Assistant Secretary for Higher Education at the Department of Education, and president of Sacred Heart University in Connecticut.

*Q:* If I recall, he left Uganda under some questionable circumstances too, didn't he?

PENDLETON: You know, I don't even remember at this point. I have very mixed emotions about it because here was likable person who wanted to be liked and whom I genuinely did like but whom I didn't respect, and I hate to say this in what will be written down.

*Q: Well, I think it's important because this give a flavor for the times. When something happens today, which it did not too long ago, we're all over ourselves trying to figure what to do. It's very difficult for the United States to do something, but at least we play an active role in trying to organize and to tone down something like this. And here is something of this magnitude happening, and essentially we were told to stay out of it.*

PENDLETON: Well, part of what happened was that there was no TV. There were no reporters; no foreign reporters were allowed in for months. But there was somebody in Dar-es-Salaam who would get our cables about five or six in the evening and give them almost lock stock and barrel to BBC, and when I'd get home for the curfew, I'd listen to the BBC News 6:00 pm and you could hear whole paragraphs and phrases that you'd written an hour and a half earlier coming out of London back at you. But there simply wasn't a feeling in official Washington that anything could be done, and it was a sad moment, and we haven't learned totally that lesson. I'm proud of



the reporting, by and large. Sometimes it was that we had no leverage, and today we have that same problem. With people having seen what happened to some of our troops in Somalia, we have as much of a burden about committing troops today as we did then, which I think is very sad. I disagree with that a lot, but it's core to where we are.

*Q: What about the American missionaries?*

PENDLETON: The missionaries wanted desperately to hold on, but there were a number who were threatened and endangered. I worked with a number of them, as I mentioned earlier, to help them to get out, usually overland, into Zaire, from which they could go to Rwanda and out to Uganda and Kenya and what have you. Some had to be essentially smuggled out. But for them it was an absolutely horrible experience because they saw that systematic destruction of the people in whom they had invested their lives, and it took a certain kind of bravery to live with that. I came away from the events of '72 with a great deal of respect for the missionaries and their nature. I'm probably not the one to ask about the missionaries. Some day you should snare David Rawson because he would see it from both the family and human side as well as the institutional side.

*Q: You mentioned taking some people out in the trunk of your car.*

PENDLETON: No, I didn't take them in the trunk of my car. We had a car. My wife drove a little VW [Volkswagen], which arrived eventually from Dar es Salaam. But I was helping with the paperwork and related plans to get some of the missionaries across the border in missionary cars. But of course they knew Burundi much better than I did, and it was kind of a joint effort.

*Q: I would have thought that if the Tutsis were going after those that had learned to read and write and the missionaries were the teachers of the people who were learning to read and write, that the missionaries would have been targeted by the Tutsis as well.*

PENDLETON: Yes, well, you're getting at a very good question, which is that it is clear that the Tutsis did not wish to do anything which would involve the world community. They therefore were very, very careful to try to avoid having anybody hurt who was a, quote, European, unquote, which might get the industrialized countries upset. They cared about public opinion. Teddy Kennedy got up and made a brief speech in the Senate one day about what was going on, and the military really stood down for a day when they heard it on VOA and BBC. They were afraid that the Kennedys somehow were going to mobilize against them, but then they figured out that that wasn't going to happen. It was one of the few public comments that had an impact. It showed that if you could speak out, you might have had some impact. At the end of it all, I ran into the Bishop of Bujumbura, who was also head of the collège, the Jesuit school. I'd heard a lot of rumors that he had really turned from being a Catholic into being a Tutsi during this period. And I said, "I want to talk with you about this." He said, "Come to lunch and bring your wife." Therefore, we went up to his house and had a horribly frank discussion about what had happened. He basically admitted to me, despite his eight years of training in Rome, that he believed the Tutsis had no choice but to defend themselves and that he was involved in this process. Otherwise the Tutsis would be exterminated. My wife and I left feeling that this man of

the cloth had just betrayed the cloth almost totally, because he could have played a dampening role, I think, if he had chosen to do so. But he was totally frightened, totally frightened.

*Q: What about the Belgians?*

PENDLETON: The Belgians were in quite a difficult position because they had, I think, about 1500 Belgian citizens in Burundi, many of whom had lived in Zaire and had escaped, many from Stanleyville, and had migrated to Burundi. They were doing the kind of jobs that in a British colony you would not have seen Brits doing. They often had shops, and if they had a restaurant, they might just as well wait on you if they were having staffing problems that week; and they put a tremendous amount of pressure on their embassy to protect them. There were also a lot of Hutu students in Belgium who were very outspoken about what was going on in Burundi, and the Belgians were extremely anxious to see a peaceful reconciliation. Their military training presence in Burundi was certainly on the alert, but there was no particular way that you could adequately influence an armed part of the population that was frightened about its survival. We were in very close touch with the Belgians. I was in touch with some very fine Belgian military officers, who, by and large, were aghast that their government wasn't doing anything of note. This made a bit of bond between me and one of them in particular. But I think Belgium was just so worried that if they put their foot down, their citizens would suffer directly. So, they were unable to do so.

*Q: Were there any rumblings from Rwanda, being a Hutu-based government?*

PENDLETON: Nothing of consequence that I can recall, but I would have to review the bidding on that. There certainly wasn't anything that I thought was of any great import. The kind of raw brutality from the Hutus that we've seen in this decade didn't seem to get mobilized as energy through the government in Rwanda to threaten in a way that would help to put a stop to the slaughter in Burundi.

*Q: Well, now, did Kabila and his Congolese (now he was neither Hutu nor Tutsi, but he later became involved with the Tutsis, I think.*

PENDLETON: Yes, with the Tutsis. At this point he was not on our radar screen in terms of having anything to do with it. However, Tutsis did charge that some of the Hutus involved in the initial coup or uprising had come across the lake from Kabila-Land, basically, and they'd had support from Kabila and others. But I don't remember well enough, if I ever knew, what the charges and countercharges were with respect to Kabila. And it just astonished me years later, when he came back on the scene in a very big way.

*Q: What was the spirit? I mean, you've got your Ambassador, who from what I gather really couldn't quite admit what was happening, but Michael Hoyt, having his experience in Stanleyville, certainly is aware of, you know, the area. Was there any sort of feeling about what the hell sort of government are we representing, or concern about our policy?*

PENDLETON: Well, I felt that way, but I was younger and less wise than Mike, and Mike had been through a lot, and he knew what to expect and what not to expect out of the State

Department in Washington with regard to matters in obscure Catholic Church census-takers reported that now more than 100,000 had been killed. Mike put an addition to that: "Tick Tick" (A Numbers Game?) to leave it open. Whereas I was being dogmatic, he was experienced enough to trim somewhat.

However, when the Department press spokesman was asked about reports of many thousands killed in Burundi, the press spokesman said two days later, "Well, nobody knows; it's a numbers game." You were dealing in an arena where Mike wanted to make sure that we didn't lose our credibility, and he was quite correct, by being too precise and too dogmatic, and I was pretty sure of my sources, and I think it's like every newspaper and every organization where you have a bit of - I wouldn't say "internal conflict." I was the scribbler, and Mike as change would edit when he could, and sometimes he couldn't and we'd just send stuff on the wires. It was certainly different when I got into larger embassies or back in Washington when you had to have 27 clearances. Mike had spent a good bit of his time in Burundi talking through issues with the Ambassador in large measure to try to encourage the Ambassador to think through some of his enthusiasms more carefully. And I bless Mike for that because that was the only thing which allowed me to do any of what I thought I was there for in terms of contact work or economic and political reporting. But it was astonishing to see in such a tiny embassy an extraordinary amount of time spent in consultation between the number one and the number two at post with different visions of life and the region in which we were serving.

*Q: This is what I think these oral histories bring up. This is a different era. It's unthinkable of anything like that happening today, I mean to have, without having and uproar and the press moving in and everything else.*

PENDLETON: Of course there was no TV coverage. *The Washington Post* arrived two months later, and I was sufficiently traumatized and, I think, by then suspicious of almost everybody that I pulled my punches in talking with the reporter. Then my wife told me she would strangle me if I pulled any punches, so I opened up. My wife had been through a very unpleasant personal experience because she's an attorney and she was teaching law to the law students at the Official University of Bujumbura. She was in the midst of giving them two days of exams on morality and the law, when half her students, the Tutsis, killed the other half. And you could hear the cries from the classrooms. It was one of those things where, you know, my wife and I to this day (we think of it often, I mean, these sorts of events. They really were life-informing in a sense and affected our career in terms of what I wanted to ask her to do with her law degree thereafter. But unless you know people who've been through this sort of experience in a very personal way, it's quite distasteful to most people, particularly the nature of the killings, et cetera. We found when we served later in Brussels, that if you invited a group of old Africa hands over, which meant people who had lived in Rwanda and Burundi, you had a bond that went very deep, whereas you normally could do no more than tip your hat to a neighbor you might see every day, from Brussels, who didn't understand.

*Q: What happened? In the summer of '72 you left?*

PENDLETON: Yes, I was reassigned in the summer of '72, and by then I was really emotionally quite wiped out. Almost everybody who was going to be killed had been killed, and it seemed, in

a sense, a fair moment to leave and let somebody bring a new measure of enthusiasm to working things out. While in East Africa, Ray Seitz and I had gotten to know Bob Blackwill, who later became ambassador to MBFR. He was serving in Nairobi. Bob was a consummate mover and shaker on the personnel and other fronts, and he played a major role in arranging that Ray Seitz and I would be assigned to the Secretariat, to the Op Center, when I got back -- which was fine with me. And so we actually returned to the States that summer. I went on home leave. Ray went on deferred home leave, and then we were both assigned to the National Military Command Center of the Pentagon, which was at that point staffed by Operations Center people representing the State Department. It was the height of the Vietnam War, and the National Military Command Center did nothing, oddly enough, at that point, because everything related to Vietnam was going on elsewhere. I recall a day when they announced on the loudspeaker "All hand on release to watch Sink the Bismarck on Channel 5."

But it was great in one sense. Ray and I traded off. One of us worked from six till noon (we only had to work six hours) and the other one would work noon to six. This allowed us both to get our kids in school and buy a house and get settled, because we'd never lived in Washington, but it soon became clear that the NMCC was a non-job.

**MICHAEL P. E. HOYT**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1970-1972)**

*Michael P.E. Hoyt was born in Illinois on November 16, 1929. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Chicago and served in the U.S. Air Force overseas. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956. Mr. Hoyt's career included positions in Karachi, Casablanca, Leopoldville, Stanleyville, Douala, Bujumbura, Ibadan, and Washington, DC. Mr. Hoyt received the Secretary's Award for his performance as head of the American consulate in Stanleyville, Congo (now Kisangani, Zaire) when he and his staff were held hostage of the rebel Simbas for 111 days in 1964. He was interviewed by Ray Sadler on January 30, 1995.*

*Q: There never was any consideration given for an operation, by US army special forces or the agency personnel?*

HOYT: There were some plans. There was "Low-Beam" described in the Leavenworth book. It was first an assault operation designed to extract us alone, at a time when we were in the Sabena Guest Houses. Then it evolved into a croup of black Cuban exiles, a sort of commando group of them, a sort of group of heavily armed men accompanied by a colonel, attached to the Vanderwalle land column. It was specifically designed to rescue us. By the time they arrived, we were gone.

They, in fact, finally did go out by to Kilometer 8 and rescued the missionaries that were left alive. Simbas had gone out there and killed an American man shortly before they arrived. The

area was still under the control of the Simbas. They just passed their way through and loaded everybody up and brought them out.

We could go on endlessly on this Stanleyville episode. I think while there are points that need to be recorded, I think we should go on in my career.

After home leave, and on my way to Bujumbura in the spring of 1970, I stopped by the department for briefings. I really didn't get much of anything. Hank Cohen was still the director of the central African office. I don't recall seeing him. But, I did see David Newsom, who was the assistant secretary for African affairs. He had asked to see me.

In our talk, he saw me, obviously the reason why he wanted to see me, he said that, (this is of course under the Nixon administration and not much attention is being paid to African affairs) He said that the department had been given only 2 political ambassadors. Two people had been foisted on them. One of which was Thomas Patrick Melady, who had worked in the Rockefeller campaign and was not particularly high on the list to be given ambassadorships. Bujumbura is generally considered to be the lowest on the rung on the ladder.

The second ambassador there (the one after Dumont who had objected to my treasonous messages from Stan) was Renchard, an AID employee who had been RIFed (reduction in force) out of the service. His wife had given so much to the Republican party that Renchard was appointed ambassador to Burundi. It was a case known all over the service, as the kinds of political appointees that the service resents highly.

Melady had a long history of activity in African affairs. So it wasn't so far off to have him. Newsom made it clear to me he was happy to just have only these 2 people imposed on him by the White House and that my job was to keep his nose clean. He wanted me to keep things on an even keel.

When I got out there in July, 1970 in time for the 10th anniversary independence celebrations with the Belgian king in attendance. It was a lovely country on the banks of Lake Tanganyika. The embassy had a boat and the CIA had a boat. But, of course, everything in Burundi, particularly to the uninitiated, is controlled by the relations between the Hutu and the Tutsis. The Tutsis being, of course, a minority, they say 15%, almost all the rest being Hutu.

*Q: Number 11, July 12, 1995. An interview with Michael Hoyt, retired foreign service officer who is now headed to Burundi as Deputy Chief of Mission.*

HOYT: I was explaining the relationship between the Hutu and the Tutsi, just about the totality of Burundi politics and events. As I see it now, it was and is certain groups, certain elements, in both the Hutu and the Tutsi ethnic group who caused and are causing the troubles. Certain elements among them are manipulating and using the emotions and feelings between Hutu and Tutsi to further their own ends. Their manipulations caused the slaughter of hundred of thousands of people on both sides, but the overwhelming majority of the killings of the Hutu.

At the time of 1970, when I arrived, the Tutsi were pretty much in control but with a number of Hutu in the government and holding prominent positions. Attempts at true joint rule had collapsed in 1969, the UPRONA, the Tutsi party, was pretty much in control. The Hutu in the government and military were just more than figure heads but not in positions of real power.

The main concern of Ambassador Melady at that time, he made no bones about it, was that he wanted to establish good relations with the ruling power. In other words, with the Tutsi President Micombero had taken over a few years before in a coup from the Mwami, the king of Burundi. He was a lower caste Tutsi, a Hima from Bururi in the south. They were in conflict were the upper class Tutsi, the Banyarguru as well as the Hutu.

Melady made it very clear that our job was to establish good relations with the Tutsi, in particular with the ruling group of the Tutsis. American should not be identified with the Hutu, as had Ambassador Dumont who had been declared *persona non grata* and been forced to leave the country. Generally, the American missionaries, who had come relatively later than the Belgian missionaries, had been allowed only to work among the Hutu and were identified with the Hutu. The Catholics from Belgium had pretty much cultivated the upper class Tutsis.

Melady worked very hard at getting assistance funds for Burundi, a time when American government assistance was at a low ebb under the Nixon administration. With what little US AID funds were available, he financed a monstrosity of a market complex in the central market area. It was more like a concrete fortress, a labyrinth which wasn't used because the merchant would not go in there. He preferred to stay out in the open, where everyone could see, and he was relatively safe.

*Q: Some kind of perspective, insofar as the Hutu and the Tutsi, in terms of the scale of violence, is this roughly comparable to what had occurred to the Nigerians, so far as the Ibo?*

HOYT: I'm not too familiar with it, but as far as I know, there was never a wholesale slaughter on the part of the Ibo against anybody and not a slaughter of Ibo after the Biafra secession was defeated. When the war was brought to a close, there were tremendous efforts made to prevent any of those killings. From my knowledge of it, there was nothing on the scale.

*Q: No comparison.*

HOYT: No comparison. There were apparently deaths by starvation, but mass killings, which were shortly were to take place in Burundi, had not taken place in Nigeria or elsewhere. I think the only real comparison doesn't come until we get the Uganda's killings under Idi Amin. In a later time, and most recently, there have been more mass killings in Africa. Of course, the recent wave of genocide in Rwanda is certainly comparable. I mean you're talking about half a million Tutsis killed in Rwanda. I find it difficult because the Tutsi population was so small, you're wiping out half of the Tutsi population.

When you talk about Hutus, the Hutu in Burundi, you're talking about, at least at that time, 3 or 4 million. So 3 or 400,000, or 2 or 300,000 is not a great number.

I think that when I look at the work I did in Burundi up to the start of the massacres, I tried to, well let's face it, I tried to make Melady. His tendency was to charge out in many directions all at once. He wasn't happy unless he was charging around, writing messages, on one crusade or another. I got his confidence enough so that he would show me his messages, and I would discuss them with him. Discuss how to say things a little better or more "diplomatically."

*Q: How long had you been a Foreign Service officer by this time?*

HOYT: This was 14 years.

Anyway, I think I had his confidence enough so that he listened to me. Apparently, he had done such a good job, or I had done such a good job, that his appointment as ambassador to Uganda came through in the spring of 1972. He was preparing to depart the post to go to Uganda. I subsequently found out that the department was furious at that appointment, Newsom in particular. Melady just did not know how to handle Idi Amin, and his DCM let him alone.

It was Sunday, April 25, 1972, and I had gone to Nairobi to discuss my next assignment with the executive director of the African bureau. We would do what were called non-professional courier runs to Nairobi.

Monday morning, I went to the embassy. I had seen in the morning newspapers that there had been some sort of attack by the Hutu in Burundi. I got to the embassy and found a message for me reporting on what had happened. There was a very good junior officer who I worked very closely with and trusted highly. He was Kim Pendleton, the economic officer. He did all reporting at the post, economic and political.

Anyway, I got a copy of the message in which Kim reported on a serious attack by Hutu on Tutsi in southern Burundi. The message said nothing about my coming back, but I immediately I immediately took my bags and got on the first plane to Bujumbura.

When I arrived in Bujumbura, there was a pall around the airport. The military was all over the place, searching all our bags. Fortunately, I didn't have a diplomatic pouch. In a later incident they did not respect the pouches. We managed to preserve their integrity, but it was tough.

Anyway, I got to the embassy and saw that the situation was very critical. I went to the blackboard in my room, my office was just opposite to the ambassador's, with our secretary in between. I wrote on the blackboard, "Kool it." It stayed there all through the crisis.

Most important, of course, was to get the facts, get a line on what was going on. That was Kim Pendleton's main job. He had established good contacts among the missionaries and the businessmen. I worked mainly with the other diplomatic missions, their personnel, and businessmen that I knew, and various people in the government. Of course it was almost impossible to contact anybody in the government unless they wanted to be talked to.

We learned that a Hutu band, accompanied by Simbas or former Simbas, had come from the Congo, across the lake and were slaughtering Tutsis.

I was queried, some time later, with my experience with the Simbas, what I thought Simba involvement was. I said, as far as I could tell, all the symbols, all the rituals and so on of the Simbas, were being used. I was a close friend of the French air force captain who was the French technical military assistance man. From his descriptions, I felt they acted like Simbas. Whether they were, in fact, Simbas I didn't know.

Martin Kasongo's name was mentioned as being in the group. He was one of the crazies of the Simbas that I had known in Stan. But Kasongo and Martin are even more common than John Smith amongst Batetela, so it's hard to tell.

Anyway, they quickly learned that certain of the Tutsi elite, the extremists, the Bururi Hima group, Shibura, Rwuri, and so on, had, on the night of the attack, had immediately gone to Katanga, where some months before they had sort of lured the exiled Mwami, Charles. They killed him. And then they began a round up and slaughter of all Hutu people in government, all the important Hutu in Bujumbura. And then started a slaughter of Hutu country-wide.

This we could tell was going on. Melady, was in a kind of shock. It took us, Kim and I, several days to persuade him that, in fact, that what was going on was not a slaughter of Tutsi, which the government was claiming, but mass killings of Hutu. For us to report that fact, took some doing. But he finally he just gave up and left it for us to run. He said for us to do whatever you want to do.

His concern was getting out of there.

*Q: Why is that?*

HOYT: He wanted to get to his next post. He paid a farewell visit to Micombero by himself, even got a medal from him which I don't think he even reported.

Of course, my concern was first to get the facts out. Which I think we did successfully though, in the end, probably to excess. We would cable sometimes twice a day on developments. We had morning situation reports, afternoon situation reports, describing this terrible massacre going on country-wide. The utter passivity of the Hutu was something that was really difficult to believe.

We were constantly hearing stories such as a truck would drive up to a village and order all the Hutu men out. They would load the trucks, there would still be some men left. They would tell the men to go home and come back the next morning. They would drive off and come back the next morning and pick up those men.

There were instances where people were buried alive. The Tutsi military would bring Hutu to the prisons, kill them, haul them away in trucks to bulldozed trenches near the airport. We had people counting those trucks as they went by, so we could get pretty accurate a fix on the numbers. We had contacts with the missionaries, both Catholics and Protestants. We would get rundowns of individual parishes, and could determine the numbers involved.



In one of my cables, [I've obtained most of the cables through the Freedom of Information Act and a complete set is available at the Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois], called "The Number's Game," 3 or 4 months into this, estimating that there were between 150 to 200,000 killed up to that point.

The other objective that I had was of course to try, other than getting the information out, was to try to find some way of putting pressure on the government to halt, slow down these killings. Melady was good at this. He came up with his African friends, Nyerere, Kaunda, and so on. We sent cables encouraging approaches to African leaders, to go to the UN. In fact, at the time George Bush was the head of the mission, in New York. I later saw one exchange of cables that he was instructed to go talk to the secretary-general but failed to do so. Just like at one point that Bev Carter, was appointed ambassador to Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, at the same time as the new ambassador to Burundi. When they went before the senate committee for confirmation, there are written transcripts of their joking about chopping off the feet of the Tutsis to make them like the Hutu! Carter was instructed to raise Burundi with Nyerere when he presented his credentials. We were copied the traffic and I learned Carter said he had decided not raised the issue. The next day, the foreign minister came to him and asked him why he hadn't raised and asked if that marked the level of our concern about the situation.

Anyway, I tried to get UN involvement, it was the path that I saw most promising. As a matter of fact, 3 different missions were sent out by the UN at various stages. The Tutsi government was denying anything was going on. At first they said that they were fighting for their lives. It became obvious that they weren't, and were just killing off a lot of Hutu. .

At one point some journalists, Marvine Howe amongst them, came to Bujumbura. This was after Ambassador Melady had left, the 25th of June. I had moved into the ambassador's residence and President Micombero came and was interviewed. I had briefed them prior and after too. Their articles were very good, relating clearly horrible things that were going on. Micombero had them taken out the next day to fly them over where all the bodies were. I went with them in the helicopter. We did see a lot of bodies. floating in the rivers, but it was pretty hard to tell whether they were Hutu or Tutsi. Anyway, the government was very defensive about the whole thing.

The Papal Nuncio had proposed a letter to Micombero, very carefully drafted, an appeal to stop the killings. Although caged in language which was so delicate that it's hard to imagine, reading it afterwards, that it was an appeal. Anyway, it apparently was strong enough that the French ambassador refused to sign it. I sent at least 3 cables to the embassy in Paris to try to get the foreign office, the Quai D'Orsay, to instruct the ambassador. Each time, our embassy people were assured the necessary instructions had been sent. Still, the ambassador refused to the end to sign. In fact, of course, the French were playing their own game, as in Rwanda with the Hutu, backing militarily the government.

Eventually, when I say eventually I'm talking about July, the killings almost died down to such a point that things were perhaps back to as normal as they could be. In August the new ambassador came. I stayed long enough for him to present his credentials. I had not thought we should have sent an ambassador that soon. However, I couldn't make that recommendation because it would have appeared to be too personally connected. It was not my place to do so. Besides, I was very

anxious to get out. I had had enough of this sad country. Also, my wife had been forced to be gone from the post for many months to take care of our youngest son in Tucson.

It was a very emotional thing for me to leave. As I we pulled away from the airport, I looked down and saw the row upon row of trenches that had been dug for the killed. It was sad, but I was glad to be leaving.

I learned before I left that I had been appointed desk officer for Rhodesia. I expressed some surprise to be re-appointed in the same job as before, but there was no record that I had been Rhodesia desk officer. I went back to that. I found a pretty cold reception in the department in the African bureau over my Burundi experience. I was never debriefed. I never saw Newsom about it. Hank Cohen never saw me on Burundi.

I found out that, in fact, the African bureau had tried to play down events in Burundi. The only reason that we were as active as we were was that the international organization side of the department, were very concerned. In fact, there were 2 fellows there who did practically all the work. My reporting provided justification for us to go to the UN and encourage them to be more involved.

In the end, almost nothing was done. The UN reports were suppressed. Burundi has gone on in the same way since, with almost no reaction. It was only late in the 1980s that the Congress got very concerned over recurring episodes where Hutus would attack some Tutsis, and the Tutsis would retaliate by killing 10, 50, 100, thousand Hutu. The Congress finally enacted several different resolutions and laws which served to encourage the Burundi Tutsi leadership, under President Buyoya, to institute reforms, leading up to the '93 election of a Hutu president. He was assassinated in the Fall, and essentially since then, there have been massacres on both sides. Hutus and Tutsis chopping each other up at an ever increasing rate to this day.

*Q: This is tribal.*

HOYT: As I'd tried to explain, it's people playing on tribal differences. Actually, it's not...

*Q: They're tapping ancient animosities?*

HOYT: They're not, that's what I discovered looking at this in depth. I have consulted with the Belgian professor, Vansina, and Rene Lemarchand. Rene has published a book recently showing what is happening in Burundi. I gave him copies of all my cables, and he used them.

But they're both of the opinion that the Hutu and the Tutsi are not 2 different ethnics. There are more social and economic differences between them, it is more a question of rank and so on then ethnicity. It has devolved into a sort of an ethnic struggle but only very recently. Both of these professors believe it's largely an input from Rwanda. Well, we were talking about 1965, 1969. But ever since then, this particular group, this Hima Tutsi group from Bururi, have seized power. They control the army. And certain elements of them are always itching to get the slaughter started again. They really don't think there's any way of controlling the Hutus except like this.

So, it's not really ancient tribal animosities. The Hutu and the Tutsi got along for centuries without chopping each other up. There was a hierarchy but there was always the Mwami, the king, who mediated between the two. But then they removed the Mwami. They removed the colonial administration, and you get these emotions played upon by these particular groups.

*Q: Were there any external forces in play?*

HOYT: Not really. There's a new one coming up now. Rwanda and Burundi are the most populated countries in Africa. There's a theory going around that the problem is overpopulation.

*Q: Something to do with when a certain percentage of the population reaches a median age...*

HOYT: I think that the 2 countries have always been overpopulated. They aren't increasing that rapidly and there's nothing new. They work the land together, the Tutsis and the Hutus. There should be no reason for them to be fighting each other over the land. They're fighting each other because the emotion, I think, because the emotions have been put into play by certain groups. Each time the killings start anew it gets further ingrained. Right now it is pretty stark, the animosity between the 2 groups

*Q: There is something like that in Colombia. There were killings starting in 1948. Colombia, Bogota, Latin America, you can see Man's capacity to do this sort of thing?*

HOYT: It's infinite.

Certainly in Burundi and in Rwanda, which I know little about. In Burundi the only hope, in my mind, is to isolate those extremists on both sides and let the people get on together. That's the only hope. There's not much hope, but it's the only one. You can't give them more land. I think the population factor is almost irrelevant and certainly not the immediate cause.

The immediate cause is people, really very evil people.

*Q: In your dealings with the American intelligence community, the whole problem with the agency cover within embassies. Did this create difficulties, almost a kind of tradition in the State Department to having a number of fixed slots filled with agency personnel. Where operations undertaken to provide diplomatic cover?*

HOYT: I don't think the agency ever occupied their slots as such. There may be some places where there are limitations of post, such as Arab countries, in that sense a certain number of slots were reserved for them. But, of course, they had their own personnel. We were generally able to get the people we wanted to do our job. There was a certain amount of petty jealousies locally, sometimes like agency people had bigger and better houses because they obviously had a greater flexibility in reimbursing their people for housing. They'd go out on the market and get whatever housing they wanted.

My personal experience in working with the agency, particularly in the embassies when I was in charge, I thought that we had excellent relations and worked very well together. John Stockwell

was the agency man in Bujumbura most of the time that I was there. He later turned against the agency. He had grown up in the Katanga, in the Congo, where his father was a technician for the missionaries. He knew the area well and did an excellent job. He was faulted for not concentrating enough on the Soviets stationed there, but we used him for internal stuff, to find out what was going on in the local scene. He also kept an eye out on rebels across the lake. One of them, in fact, one time had threatened to kidnap me when I was in charge. It turned out to be a hoax, a scam. For a few days there I packed one of the agency's pistols in my briefcase. I said they were never going to get me again.

*Q: Did you find their personnel very able?*

HOYT: I found them able. I found they did their work very well and professionally. In the Congo when we were held hostage, here was one of the CIA agents who could have had his cover blown away. We would have been killed instantly if he would have been found out. He kept cool, but most of us did, also.

My impression of whenever I'd come into contact or knowledge about them, they've got their techniques down well, they have ways of protecting their sources and preventing their sources from blabbing later on. In only one instance did they have an agent who we, in the embassy, were working with where they didn't tell us. This was in Burundi. I found out later that they had an agent/informer who was a friend of the embassy. That's a no-no. They have a rule, at least that is what was understood by my colleagues, to let us know if such is the case.

Generally, we worked well together, we shared information. They give us copies of their reports. I have a lot of stuff obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, which is very good. David's stuff was very useful in Stan, and he shared with me. I saw it at the time. Looking back on it, I didn't read it as closely as I should have. On hindsight, it revealed a hell of a lot more than I realized at the time. It showed how imminent the rebel takeover was. It was not entirely an invasion. There were people inside the city who also played their part in the fall of the city.

*Q: Did you have any, in that kind of danger, did Russians, etc., ever try to pitch you?*

HOYT: No, not really. In Burundi we had very good relations with the Russian DCM and worked rather closely with him. He had left by the time the massacres came up and so there wasn't anybody really that we could have dealt with. He was a known KGB agent. In fact, he was running the embassy.

*Q: Probably an able guy.*

HOYT: A very able guy, very friendly. I remember, not him, but when I was going to leave Burundi, the Russian embassy people invited me for lunch. There were 3 or 4 of them, at least one woman, whom I had never met before. We had a beautiful lunch with the most exquisite caviar and pancakes that I have ever had in my life, washed down with many glasses of vodka. By the time the lunch was over, they were completely smashed. I was in a hell of a lot better shape than they were.

In Geneva I worked quite closely with them. I did not have major problems with them, although on one occasion, they pulled the typical trick of agreeing in advance to a compromise, then later, making that the basis for further negotiation.

*Q: Who was under secretary general of the UN who was a Russian who defected shortly, did you come across him?*

HOYT: No. In fact we were thinking of maybe we ought to approach this guy in Burundi, in Bujumbura, to become a defector.

*Q: Did you make a pitch to him?*

HOYT: He was so open and so easy to work with, sort of westernized, we thought he might be susceptible. However, nothing came of it. I guess the agency decided against it because I heard nothing more about it.

*Q: Did you ever have any dealings with the bureaus legal attaché?*

HOYT: Legal attaché?

*Q: That's really the term, LEGATT's.*

HOYT: Which agency did they work for?

*Q: Federal Investigation.*

HOYT: When I was in the operations center I know they were sent to the Dominican Republic. As I understood it, the CIA was not trusted and the FBI agency was sent there. I don't know really how effective they were.

I notice in the list of questions here, it talks about presidential or high level visits, CODELs, and so on. One of the ones I found most difficult was in Bujumbura, Gale McGee headed a delegation visiting Burundi. I think he had ulcers or stomach problems, and we had a very exacting schedule. I was trying to schedule him. He had his own DC4 or DC6, military plane. They were scheduled to take off for Goma, in Zaire, very early in the morning. The consul in Goma was Raymond Seitz.

Raymond subsequently became one of Kissinger's, Eagleburger's boys. He worked in the embassy in London, worked in African affairs, became executive director for Shultz, then sent as Deputy to the embassy in London, and then under Bush was appointed ambassador to the UK. After he was replaced by Admiral Crowe, he lashed out at the administration for lack of policy. He's apparently well admired by The Economist. The Economist listed him at one point, when he was deputy in London, as one of the most knowledgeable people in London, amongst the diplomats. They ran a piece by him, a long piece a couple of weeks ago, in which he blasted the administration for lack of policy. Anyway, that's Raymond Seitz who was then the consul in Bukavu, junior to me at that point.

The timing of the departure was, I thought, too early because I knew Ray was expecting at a later hour. I had no way of communicating with him on the earlier hour. I suggest the CODEL. This was refused out of hand, without explanation. I had, meanwhile, been trying to arrange a meeting with the foreign minister for the group. What happened is that McGee went out to the airport. There were two of the senators staying with me at my residence when a phone call came in saying the foreign minister would see them.

I knew the schedule was tight, so I said we'd drop by on our way to the airport. We did and subsequently were a few minutes late arriving at the airplane.

I can still see Senator Gale McGee, standing in the doorway of the plane, absolutely furious, yelling at me that it was all my fault, I had deliberately delayed them, defying his orders, etc., etc. On top of it, I had let the other senators see the foreign minister without him. I mean, he was so furious he was still spluttering as they closed the door. I thought, well, that's the end of my career. But I never heard anything of it.

I actually worked with Gale McGee's staff on the Byrd provision on Rhodesian sanctions, but I worked with his staff. I told the one I worked most closely with the story. He said he'd find out if there were any repercussions. He said there had been none. Apparently he'd forgotten about it as soon as he took off. He had some sort of stomach problem which required him to eat regularly at set intervals. That was the excuse given for the outburst.

The only other high-level visit I was involved in was Secretary Rogers. He transited Douala on his way to Yaounde. He was also on the other end of my cables coming from Burundi on the massacres. When I got back I was told at the operations center, they told me that the word had come down from his office that they didn't want to see any more cables on Burundi and didn't want the cables summarized. Some people were just sick of Burundi. I think they were more frustrated in being unable to do anything.

**DAVID E. MARK**  
**Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Reserach**  
**Washington, DC (1974-1977)**

*Ambassador David E. Mark graduated from Columbia University in 1943. Shortly after completing a year of law school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Near the end of World War II, Ambassador Mark joined the Foreign Service. He served in Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Burundi, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Henry Precht on July 28, 1989.*

*Q: All right. What else happened to you in INR? Then you were off to Burundi?*

MARK: How did I ever get to Burundi? I mean, that's not my normal area, for sure. When a Foreign Service officer moves along and eventually gets his first ambassadorial post, it's often in

Africa somewhere. But it doesn't have to be. It can be maybe a little more substantive than that. Well, not that some African posts aren't substantive, but Burundi isn't. I mean, if you asked me several tapes back what business the United States had with Romania in the early 1950s, and I said it was not much. But still, it was a lot more than we had with Burundi in the middle 1970s.

But how did it happen to me? Well, Henry Kissinger had gotten to appoint the head of INR after Tom Hughes went off as DCM to London, and his choice was a career CIA senior intelligence officer, named Ray Cline.

*Q: This was in what year?*

MARK: In the end of 1969. Ray Cline was a senior Intelligence man in CIA. He had earlier been the head of station for CIA on Taiwan. He was very close to Chiang Kai-shek, and later on, even more importantly, he was station chief in Germany, which is a key area. He had also been the Deputy Director of CIA for Intelligence, which means not operations, but all the analysis done by CIA.

And so he came over to State, and he thought he knew Henry Kissinger. I mean when Kissinger ran that seminar at Harvard that I attended in 1963-64, Ray Cline was an annual speaker at that. And Kissinger thought that he could get--I mean Cline thought that he could get Kissinger extremely interested in intelligence, listening to reports that the Bureau of Intelligence and Research would put out, and that he, Ray Cline, would play an active role in State Department policy making, first when Kissinger was over in the White House, and later when he came over as Secretary of State.

But Kissinger didn't pay that much attention to intelligence or that much attention to Ray Cline. I'm sure his relations with the Director of CIA were pretty close, undoubtedly, but not with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department. So Ray Cline was very disappointed, and when he saw in 1973, when Kissinger became Secretary--

*Q: No, no. 1974. Or was it '73? I thought it was when Ford became President, right?*

MARK: No, I think Nixon arranged to get Kissinger over.

*Q: Okay. Well, anyway, go ahead.*

MARK: Well, anyway, when he saw that things weren't changing, he decided there was no point in his staying in INR, and he put out some public statement blasting Kissinger for inattention to intelligence information and analyses.

Well, of course, Kissinger didn't take that slight lightly, and Ray Cline resigned at the same time. Kissinger sent in his deputy--well, I'm not sure he was Kissinger's deputy at the time, or whether he was head of the Soviet operational policy part of the White House staff--Bill Hyland, currently (1989) the editor-in-chief of Foreign Affairs Quarterly, and told Bill Hyland to clean out that INR place, clean out the top people there.

Well, I was one of the deputies, and so Bill said to me fairly early on, “Well, David, when are you leaving?”

And I said, “Well, you know, I think I’ve reached the level where I merit an embassy and, you know, arranging that really is in your bailiwick. You know Kissinger and all these people. What can you do about getting me an embassy?”

Well, he didn’t do anything, and a couple of months later he again said, “Well, David, we’ve been getting along fine together on business, but still it’s time for you to go, and when are you leaving?” And I repeated my line. Well, shortly after that, maybe a month after that, Larry Eagleburger called me on one Saturday and said, “David, I think we’ve got an embassy for you. Drop in and see me.”

So I went up to see him and he said, “Yes, at the moment we have only two embassies open, and one is Malawi and the other is Burundi. And I have someone else I have to take care of, and he doesn’t speak French and you do, so why don’t you go to Burundi?” And that’s how I left for Burundi. It was part of the housecleaning of INR.

*Q: And you went there in ‘74?*

MARK: ‘74 and stayed there through ‘77. I mean, the Burundians weren’t sure whether to accept my credentials. They had been signed by Nixon and here Ford had become President in the interim; and it took some six or eight weeks of intensive consultation with juridical experts, until the Burundians finally accepted the documents.

There’s not much to say about Burundi. It was an education for me; all of Africa was an education. The U.S. has no business with Burundi. Hardly anyone does. The Belgians, I guess, because they used to be the colonial power, and the French because it’s French speaking, and they are would-be coordinators of everything that goes in any place in Africa that speaks French. And the United States buys a lot of Burundi’s smallish coffee crop, which doesn’t amount to very much anyway, and coffee is virtually the whole economy. There are a few other little things, both then and now (1989).

It’s a country that has this sort of South African situation, only instead of white versus black, it is two black groups which have managed to kill many more than have been killed in South Africa, believe it or not, since the estimate is somewhere around 100,000 dead in the 1972 massacres of the majority Hutu group by the minority Tutsi, the 15% minority that is 100% of the army and almost 100% of the government. The ratio of officials is a little better nowadays (1989).

So, you know, in a way, all of this was interesting, as was a chance to visit other parts of Africa: West, South, and East. That was all very nice. And to learn a little bit about how an embassy ran and what the CIA did there. I mean, CIA worried about threats to Mobutu in Zaire primarily, and about the Soviet and East European presence in Burundi and Rwanda next door. But all in all, my stay was a diversion.



**THOMAS J. CORCORAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Burundi (1978-1980)**

*Ambassador Thomas J. Corcoran was born in New York in 1920. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950 and served in Spain, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Washington, DC, and was ambassador to Burundi. Ambassador Corcoran was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.*

*Q: The obvious question is how, after all your time in Indochina, did you become appointed ambassador to Burundi?*

CORCORAN: I had been, of course, DCM in Ouagadougou in upper Volta back in '62 to '64, and I had been the chargé in Haiti for about a year, from '73 to '74, a little over a year. So I had some African background. Frankly, I think that since things turned out so well from their point of view in Laos, they were giving me a reward. I guess that's the way these things happen.

*Q: How did you feel about this? Obviously, Burundi is not the center of civilization. It's not a major capital, and also the same thing is true of Ouagadougou and Vientiane. I take it you liked these.*

CORCORAN: No, I sort of had the old-fashioned idea that you're supposed to go where they send you. One of the conditions of your employment was that you were available on a worldwide basis. Most of my assignments were almost unplanned. Most of the planning didn't take place in advance.

*Q: You were ambassador to Burundi, whose capital is Bujumbura. You were there from 1978 to 1980. What was, at that point, American interest in Burundi?*

CORCORAN: The only American interest in Burundi was the same interest we had in all of the other small African countries, partly humanitarian, public health and food aid, partially U.N. contacts, although that hasn't really worked too well in recent years. Most Africans did not vote along with us in the U.N. I think it was just probably force of habit. I think it was Loy Henderson, as under secretary, who went around and surveyed Africa back in the early '60s, and decided where we were going to put posts, because Africa became important because there were so many people there and so many raw materials and so many new political entities.

Burundi is a small country, and their only raw material is coffee, of which all that they exported to the United States was taken up by Folger's coffee company. Most of it went to Europe. I gather even now coffee represents a small portion of the total world market, even though it's mountain-grown, isn't all that important. I gather the main source of income for Burundi is foreign aid of one sort or another.

When I was there, we were trying to get a program started which would stress public health, food production, and education. We had a number of these programs in the planning

stage, and we were starting some of them when I left. But they also had the European Economic Community's aid program. The Belgians had a big educational program, the French had teachers, doctors and a small aid program, plus they took over the military training program when the Belgians dropped it after the great massacre in 1973. I understand they are starting a police program. The Russians had a military assistance program, which was mostly a lot of equipment. The Chinese had a public development program. They were putting up buildings and factories. The North Koreans had a program which, as nearly as I could figure out, was training people on how to conduct demonstrations. The Egyptians had a small program there.

*Q: It certainly appears that the Burundis were working the aid business from left, right, and center.*

CORCORAN: They were. Their official policy was neutral. They claimed that they were free world oriented. Most of them were educated in Belgium and France, and most of the senior people there had university degrees, even the Army officers. President Bagaza, who was the president when I got there, was deposed last year. He had succeeded a man named Micombero, who had been the first president after the monarchy ended there. Micombero was the man who had been president during the great massacre of 1973.

*Q: Could you very briefly explain what the great massacres were?*

CORCORAN: In both Rwanda and Burundi, you have two ethnic groups of people. You've got the Tutsis or "the tall ones" in shorthand and the Hutus, who are "short ones," and you've got a very small number of Twa, the pygmies. They're not much smaller than Hutus. In Burundi, when I was there, the total population was something like 14% Tutsis, 1% Twa, and the rest were Hutus. But the Tutsis ran the place because they had inherited the monarchy, and they had the key positions. In Rwanda, it's the other way around; the Hutus dominate.

In that part of the world, the Burundians and the Rwandans are sort of different from many of the other people across the river in Zaire. They've been pushed around through the centuries, and they're very suspicious, even by local standards of everybody. The Tutsis in Burundi, being in the minority position, were even more suspicious. As I gather, they got the idea in '73 that the Hutus were going to make an attempt to massacre them. I guess they tried to beat them to it. The stories written about that are very strange, because the Hutus apparently submitted rather tamely to the massacre. A lot of missionaries, both American and European, were accused of being pro-Hutu, I suppose since there were so many more Hutus and therefore that many more Christians they got a bad time out of it. Then it was all over, and the man who had done this eventually was eased out and went off to Somalia, on a sort of a permanent scholarship, where he died a couple of years ago. Nobody wanted to talk about it, the Tutsis or the Hutus, after that.

*Q: So when you were there, this was not a topic of conversation?*

CORCORAN: No, except among foreigners who would talk about it, but the locals just put it aside, as, "well, it was a bad thing and it's over."

But as I say, when I got there, Bagaza was the president, and there was a prime minister. But they changed the format, and Bagaza became president and the head of government, in effect, and the former prime minister became foreign minister. They were developing an organization for the party and were having conferences for the party. But obviously, some opposition to Bagaza was building up, partly because in any country where a young man can become the head of state and head of government, especially in a military context, there are a lot of other people who ask the question, "Why not me?"

But also Bagaza apparently got a lot of people upset with him, including the Catholic Church, because the church was trying to get organized, too, and they had bishops all over the place, but it's my understanding that most of the native Burundi clergy wanted to work in the bishop's office, so to speak, be in the cities and be administrative and run the church affairs, which meant that a lot of the parish priests were people from Spain, France, Italy, Austria, who were sort of old-fashioned European parish priests, and not exactly part of the new world of the Catholic left or anything like that, not terribly well educated, and they had some really old-fashioned ideas. You would hear stories about them getting into personal confrontations with the parishioners. Some of this might have been toned down in Europe, but in Africa, you had the added racial input, so a lot of these people, from time to time, were kicked out, as were evangelical missionaries charged with--well, they didn't have to be charged with anything; they'd just be expelled. In many cases, it was an internal feud where the native Christians wanted to run things and felt that Europeans or Americans were standing in their way.

*Q: Were there many American missionaries?*

CORCORAN: Yes. The Assemblies of God were there in a big way, and some of them had been there for 35 years.

*Q: There was sort of a major expulsion in June of 1979, when you were there, of 52 missionaries. Any of these Americans?*

CORCORAN: Oh, I'm sure some of them were. We reported extensively on this.

*Q: What would you, as ambassador, try to do?*

CORCORAN: I would never protest and say, "You can't kick out these missionaries." I would never speak to the president about it. I would speak to the foreign minister and the other people in the foreign ministry, and point out to them, "You can understand how this is being taken abroad. You have a good position in the world and you're in sort of an aid and cultural relationship with the European countries, and then you kick people out without making it quite clear why you're doing it. This is not very smart." And they would either agree or disagree. I thought the worst thing I could do for any missionaries would be to go to the president and say, "You can't do this," because then they would do it. But I was trying to point out to them that these people were contributing something to the infrastructure of the country, and that at least if you're going to kick somebody out, you ought to tell them why and make it easy for them.

The Quakers, I understand, who had sort of an agricultural thing going, when they were asked to get out, said, "Sure," and turned it over to their legal representative. Each of these missionaries had a legal representative who was a Burundian. The Quakers got out. Some of the other people struggled. The Catholic Church struggled.

I think that it's hard to trace the origin of these problems, but I think maybe one of the main problems that the Catholic missionaries had was that initially the church had appointed one man as apostolic delegate to both countries, which is bound to lose when you have to travel back and forth among these two countries who despise each other. Then they remedied that by sending a very experienced man to Burundi, who had served for years in Europe and was very good, but at the same time, other things had happened. Bagaza went on a trip to Rwanda, which was an unusual thing in itself. Some member of the Rwandan establishment conducted a propaganda campaign against him, personal attacks, and this spoiled his visit. Then he came back to Burundi, which was right next door, and the Catholic bishops chose to hand in a protest about injustice being done to them. Nobody, I'm sure, could convince him this wasn't a concerted effort against him, so he responded pretty firmly on that, and he expelled more people.

Like many of the former French and Belgian countries, Burundi made the papal nuncio ipso facto the dean of the diplomatic corps. Well, they made a change in this case and went back to the usual system, which made the senior ambassador the dean. This turned out to be the Chinese. The nuncio didn't like this at all, and he kept arguing about it. I suppose he had a good historical basis, but that really doesn't get you very far once the government has made a public decision.

At one point, the Pope made a statement about what Bagaza was doing to the church, and I suppose that Bagaza just didn't take that very seriously. So I don't know what happened then. I don't know whether he made enough personal enemies or whether people decided that he'd made himself vulnerable. I wouldn't try to guess.

*Q: There weren't any major American interests at that point?*

CORCORAN: No, except that the Russians and the Chinese were everywhere, and the Western countries were, and we were part of that. Plus the importance of humanitarian aid, trying to develop food supplies and public health aid. We did have a big outbreak of cholera, and our aid system just couldn't cope with that. We did take it up with the people from the central disease control center in Atlanta, who could really do that sort of thing. They had their own rules, which I knew would not work. They had to have charge of it, and they had to go in there and do it. Well, in a country where you didn't have much of anything else, but you had a lot of European-trained doctors, native Africans who were also tropical medical specialists, that wouldn't work.

We told the Burundi to devise a project for one area of the town, on the outskirts, where most of the travelers came in and would bring contamination. We would equip and finance cleaning up that area with germicidal sprays and food for people. As I understand it, cholera is a disease which is caused by a germ, but it apparently only affects people who are pretty badly off to begin with. Even cholera shots for most Europeans and Americans aren't given anymore, because if

you're well fed and in good health, you're not going to get cholera. At least that's the current public health view. So we worked out this program, and it was a modest success, I suppose.

The president once asked me why we weren't giving them more aid. This was on July the first, at his National Day party. I told him, we were. I just happened to be making up the list of this, and I would send it to him. Before the Fourth of July, we got, in French, a list of all the programs we had, ones which were approved and ones which were being planned. It added up to quite a bit of money. The total program--I've forgotten the figures now, but it was in the millions of dollars. I gather somehow or other that hadn't come to his notice. He was quite happy when we presented it to him. Some of these programs were agreed to, and they would eventually become projects. Others would be proposed and discussed, and experts in Washington would decide what to do. But the point is that we were in these two fields, essentially of food and public health, and later on, a lot of training.

*Q: How did you deal particularly with the Soviet Union? Was it friendly competition? Were they trying to undercut you? Were you trying to undercut them?*

CORCORAN: No, we didn't really have much competition. There was an interesting rather elderly Soviet ambassador there who had been rather high up in their system. I don't know what happened to him. There were all sorts of stories, one that he was in charge of Egyptian affairs at the time things went wrong.

*Q: When the Soviet experts were expelled from Egypt.*

CORCORAN: Yes. I don't know, but in any event, he was no particular problem. We saw each other only socially. I'd invite him to dinner and movies, and he'd invite me to parties. Most of the times when you gave a big thing, you had just about the entire diplomatic corps. I even had the Libyans in those days. But the Chinese we did not have, because they resisted us. But at some point, when they apparently got a signal, it was on Christmas Eve of 1978, it must have been, a Chinese whom I had seen only at a distance before, came up and grabbed me by the arm and insisted I sit in the same pew in church. I was unwilling to physically fight him off, so I did. I sat with him. I assume he'd gotten a telegram of instruction.

*Q: In church.*

CORCORAN: The government or the papal nuncio was putting on this Christmas mass. So thereafter, he entertained me and my whole staff, and we saw one another. We saw an awful lot of them. As I say, this factory they were building was about a 1927-style textile factory, which was quite dandy for that place, appropriate to the type of labor they could get and the kind of cloth they needed.

The Russian aid program was largely dumping a lot of military equipment which I don't think they quite knew what to do with. But then they had other things, scholarships. Our relations with the Russians were purely social, except, of course, when they invaded Afghanistan. I had to tell him I thought that was kind of a stupid thing to do. He said, "Oh, well, you know, it's very complicated." I think he gave up trying to explain it.

The only people we did not have any contact with were the North Koreans, and even the Russians found them difficult. It's sometimes hard to tell the North Korean from the Chinese if you see them in the dark at a social gathering. But they could tell and would recoil. There was hand-shaking, but nobody really took them too seriously. They were part of the allegedly even-handed policy of the government at that time.

The Egyptians were sort of friendly to us and to everybody. I guess they were there largely because the Libyans were there. The Libyans were financing some of the university construction, a mosque and a university. The Egyptians were keeping an eye on that.

Some of the other African countries who sent representatives there were Zaire and Rwanda. Occasionally they had expulsions of Zairians, which were minor flaps.

All in all, I saw my time there as gradually trying to develop an aid program and getting it on paper and agreed to by everybody before we started putting in the aid mission. The aid instinct is sometimes to get everybody in there and do planning on the spot. I think that's disastrous. If you can convince them that there are certain things you can give them if they will agree to your terms, they can see it down in black and white with dollars and cents, it's easier for them to take these people coming in at once, who want import and export privileges and all the rest of it. But I gather now that we have a Peace Corps there. The Peace Corps wouldn't touch it in my time, because it didn't fit into their program.

*Q: Why wouldn't it fit into the program?*

CORCORAN: I guess I'm thinking of upper Volta now. They'd have to have something which was interesting enough for them to get a number of people in and have something to work on. They wouldn't just send people in there to sing folk songs.

In Burundi, where they have a large university, I think it might have been easier for the Peace Corps to get into that, because they could do teaching. I don't know quite what they're doing now, but they're there. I hear we also have Marine guards there. I heard that the other day from somebody.

*Q: So your major work was aid. How did you deal with Washington on aid? Were they supportive? Was it a problem?*

CORCORAN: I had a very active AID officer there, and he had one or two assistants who were busy developing programs. He would get the programs, and they had regional people in Nairobi, who would come over from time to time to work on the production. So I think that we didn't have any great problems with Washington that he couldn't solve by going back on trips or going to Nairobi and thrashing it out. The program was getting really well developed. There again, my only difference with him was that I wanted it really well formalized before we started building a staff. He might have agreed with that; I'm not sure he did. Certainly the aid people in Washington didn't, because it was their instinct to get in there. Certainly in the history of Burundi, the Burundi behavior to foreigners, I thought that wasn't too smart. Now we're beyond

that stage. I don't know just what we're doing in aid, but I heard from a recent returnee who had been out there for an exercise, that we do have a Peace Corps.

**E. MICHAEL SOUTHWICK**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1979-1982)**

*Ambassador Southwick was born in California and raised in California and Idaho. Educated at Stanford University, he entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Basically an Africa specialist, Mr. Southwick served largely in African posts, including Burundi, Rwanda, Niger, Kenya and Uganda, where from 1994 to 1997 he was United States Ambassador. He also served in Switzerland and Nepal. In his Washington assignments, he dealt with African and United Nations matters. The ambassador was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004*

SOUTHWICK: I got a phone call from Mary Ryan. Mary was in personnel at the time and she said, "We're looking for a DCM in Bujumbura." I said, "Good luck." I said, "I served I Rwanda. These countries are very similar, Burundi and Rwanda. I don't particularly care to go back to Africa although I really enjoyed the African tour and I'm basically not interested." She kept calling me and finally I kept thinking about it and I decided, after talking to my wife, why not? By that time we had a third child, our daughter was born here in 1978. There was no American school out there and we thought that maybe we could put them in French schools. It was a difficult decision. I have to say some of it was financial. It was hard for us to live here on my FSO salary at the time in Washington. We'd bought a house. My wife had a part time job, but it was still hard and one way of solving the problem was to go overseas and rent your house and have government provided housing, get a differential and so forth. A little bit of that. The other thing was being DCM even at a tiny post, this was 19 Americans; it's a way to move ahead.

*Q: Well, it certainly is. So, you went to Bujumbura? Now, this is the capital of?*

SOUTHWICK: Burundi.

*Q: Burundi is the upper or the lower of the two?*

SOUTHWICK: The lower of the two. Rwanda is to the North. Burundi is on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. The reason they wanted me to go is because I had some experience in the area and the ambassador we had out there was regarded as problematic. I don't want to say difficult. It was Thomas Corcoran who was a career Foreign Service Officer who was given Burundi as an ambassadorship to wind up his career.

*Q: Well, he was, his major time was spent in Vietnam. Our last man out of Hanoi.*

SOUTHWICK: Absolutely. I didn't know him from Adam.

*Q: Excuse me, but you were there from when to when?*

SOUTHWICK: From '79 to '82. I'd had three years in Washington basically. The economic course, the public relations part of EB, and then the trade office in EB, so the three segments of that. Burundi was a post with a history of people either leaving, some of them feet first, being thrown out of the post or leaving because they wanted to leave, they couldn't stand it anymore.

*Q: What was the problem?*

SOUTHWICK: I knew some of this before I left. I wasn't kept completely in the dark. Corcoran was kind of a quiet old bachelor. He was not warm, fuzzy wuzzy to people. It's a tiny post. You're out there in the middle of nowhere. We're trying to get things going a little bit because there was a horrible genocide in Burundi in '72. So, this is seven years later and we're trying to build things up. There's no American school there, so you have either people who are ready to put kids in a French school or are single. This is sort of a sociology of posts and kind of a critical mass of unstable people. That had been going on for a while. I went out there as a family person, by definition stable, although we know that not all families are stable. I found I grew very fond of Corcoran. I really liked him. I'll give you an example of this. He had the only decent swimming pool, but he wouldn't let anybody use it. He opened it one day a week for like two hours. After I got to know him I said, "It would help morale around here if you could let people come on Saturday and even more often frankly, after work and just open it up because people need an outlet."

*Q: What was the problem with him?*

SOUTHWICK: He was a little bit reclusive and lived a very quiet life. He wasn't terribly thrilled to be in Bujumbura after spending his entire career in Southeast Asia, but he wanted to wind up as an ambassador. He was kind of quiet, I don't want to say timid, but he wasn't going to get anything better than Burundi. I can say that now. I didn't quite understand that at the time. Our relationship with Burundi was okay, but it was a Tutsi government in a Hutu country. The Tutsis were only 15% of the population. There had been a coup there in '76 to get a young guy, somebody named John-Baptiste Bagaza, as the president. They were trying to reconcile the country and overcome this horrible past where a couple hundred thousand people had been either killed or driven out of the country. It was the first genocide. Certainly eclipsed by what happened in Rwanda in '94.

*Q: At that time sort of looking at the picture, how were relations with Rwanda?*

SOUTHWICK: Rwanda was going very well and was always regarded as the place where things could happen because they had resolved this Hutu-Tutsi issue because the Hutus were in charge. They had a military government, but it was democratizing. We were putting a lot of aid into Rwanda and Rwanda was sort of regarded as a good boy and Burundi was the bad boy because you had this minority government sort of akin to South Africa. We were still trying to move things along. Corcoran was cautious, didn't want to shake up anything. Just wanted to kind of move things along and I got there about the last year of his term.



*Q: How about Burundi and did they get involved with the problems across the lake in the Congo and all that?*

SOUTHWICK: The Congo at that time was fairly stable. It was Mobutu. I mean the whole place was deteriorating, but you weren't having mercenaries coming in. You did have mercenaries to Katanga; it used to be called Katanga, Kolwezi. I think it was '78 or something.

*Q: Those were the Shaba I and Shaba II things?*

SOUTHWICK: Yes, we brought in our plans to parachute Belgians and others in to take care of the situation. There was a massacre of white people in Kolwezi, mainly Belgian workers who worked in the copper mine there. It's one of the biggest copper mines in the world.

*Q: There weren't the kidnappings and things of this nature?*

SOUTHWICK: No.

*Q: How did you find the Tutsi government to deal with?*

SOUTHWICK: They were easy to talk about in terms of clichés and people did and some of them were true. They were closed, suspicious, somewhat manipulative and devious. These are things we are not supposed to say about people, but it stems from their status as a minority group in charge, and therefore feeling under constant pressure which erupted in '72 to the point where they had to kill 150,000 people: essentially every man, woman, and child who could read of the Hutu race.

*Q: Were you feeling you were sitting on a time bomb?*

SOUTHWICK: Joseph Conrad in Heart of Darkness, I think there was kind of a sadness, kind of a melancholy aspect of the country that you could tell that they were trying very slowly to make things better. We were part of that and then when we switched ambassadors in 1980 we got Frances Cook. Frances Cook was a young USIA officer who was 36 years old and was a protégée of the person who became the Assistant Secretary for African affairs.

*Q: Dick Moose?*

SOUTHWICK: Dick Moose, yes. She had been close to Dick Moose and got this ambassadorship which the Republicans allowed to stay in when Reagan was elected in 1980.

*Q: Well, then before we get to the ambassador, what was happening? What were the Hutus doing there? Were we monitoring them to see?*

SOUTHWICK: We were monitoring them. We were trying to find out whether they could get ahead. Could they get into the civil service? Could they get into the university? Could they get into the army? It was very difficult to find out. You can't look at somebody on the street and say definitively whether they're Hutu or Tutsi. All the Hutu had either been killed or driven into

exile. The major dispatch that I wrote before I left was sort of where does this thing stand? Where are the Hutus? Are they slowly being integrated into the government? Are they being given opportunities for advancement? And we found that there were only three or four prominent Hutus in government. There were very few at the university. There were very few in the army and they had the lower positions. They had no leadership positions.

*Q: What about missionaries and all?*

SOUTHWICK: Missionaries were there. Some of them had stayed through. David Rawson, I don't know if you've come across him, a Foreign Service Officer, a missionary brat, grew up in Burundi, eventually became our ambassador in Rwanda during the genocide in '94. The missionaries were always there, mostly Protestants from America. The Catholics who dominated, the country is about 60% or 70% Catholic, we're generally speaking French or Belgian, although there are a few Americans.

*Q: Were they identified with the Hutu more than with the Tutsi?*

SOUTHWICK: The Catholics and the Protestants tended to identify and be identified with the Hutu as the downtrodden. This could lead to problems, but both sides tried to be careful because they knew they could get into trouble with the government if they were too obvious, siding with the Hutu.

*Q: During the time Corcoran was the ambassador, were relations with the government fairly placid?*

SOUTHWICK: Yes, you could say that. It was slow and careful and cautious. He felt that it would take time for this situation to mature. We were building at the aid mission a little bit. Other donors were coming back, but we felt we were engaged in a long term process.

*Q: Was there a Peace Corps there?*

SOUTHWICK: No, there wasn't, but the subsequent ambassador tried to lay the groundwork for the Peace Corps and eventually the Peace Corps did come back. That's one of the things I worked on.

*Q: Well, talk about Frances. I've interviewed Frances.*

SOUTHWICK: Okay.

*Q: But I'd like your impression of how she operated and how she worked in that environment.*

SOUTHWICK: Frances is very creative, very dynamic, a lot of fun. She arrived there with frankly a bad rep. Everything that I had gotten from my grapevine on her was pretty negative.

*Q: What was it?*

SOUTHWICK: The negative was that she was arrogant, that she was selfish, that she was hard to please, that she's only interested in herself, just a whole litany of things. Okay. She got there and we hit it off. She was there three days. I came in and I said, my tour is up next year, but I would like to extend. I said I think we can have some fun here and do some interesting things. She was very creative and all the rest of it. I think if I would fault her is some of these things that I heard on the grapevine which was to some extent true, but she and I always got along well, personally and professionally and still do. We're still very close to this day.

*Q: Had she been an ambassador before?*

SOUTHWICK: No. She was 36 years old, a career person, an FSO-3 in the old system.

*Q: How did it go putting a woman sort-of activist into Burundi?*

SOUTHWICK: Well, she shook up the place and the Burundians didn't quite know what to make of her. She was somebody that felt that they needed to work harder on reconciliation; they need to work harder on everything. In some ways she soaked up the zeitgeist of the whole Kennedy era: we've got to do better, and change things and be a force for change. I think for force of personality and charm and so forth she really made headway getting to know quite a number of the senior government leadership there.

*Q: Sometimes somebody like that can be a bit bewildering.*

SOUTHWICK: Oh, she was and she used that to good effect. They didn't quite know what to do with her, and they had trouble saying no to her on things. I can't think of a specific example, but they wanted to please her I think to some degree up to a point. I mean there are some things that they're never going to do.

*Q: I recall in my interview with her, she mentioned something about there had been a meeting of women and the government didn't want the meeting to take place and she walked with the women to make sure that the government didn't go after them.*

SOUTHWICK: I don't remember it; it might have been after my time, yes.

*Q: As I go through these interviews I think it's interesting. Sometimes you find the American ambassador is usually the catalyst where most of the other ambassadors of France, Belgium, Great Britain and all are usually status quo type things and we try to mix things up, for good or bad.*

SOUTHWICK: Absolutely, I tend to share that.

*Q: Did you find this?*

SOUTHWICK: Yes. You found that the French and the Belgians had a little rivalry going because the Belgians had been the colonial power. The French were trying to, in effect, supplant the Belgians. They were quite aggressive. They were training the military, something we

wouldn't do. After all, this is a military that had massacred civilians and we had zero wish to get involved in that. We started working with the military and started an IMET (International Military Education and Training) program and sort of building things up. Frances had some razzle-dazzle sort of personality. I think for kind of a quiet, backwater effort at post this was quite something. I think the other diplomats found her interesting, but the French had a very capable ambassador there who was my next door neighbor. We became very good friends and he'd known Corcoran because he was a Southeast Asia person and had a Vietnamese wife, the whole bit. We were all watching what happened to Zaire at the time. Zaire was an important country and it was still important for cobalt, a lesser degree for copper because you can get copper other places. You couldn't get cobalt in many other places. You couldn't get chrome in many other places.

*Q: Now, did Lake Tanganyika play any role or was this a place, you couldn't swim in it could you?*

SOUTHWICK: You couldn't swim on the shore. The embassy had a couple of boats. You could go out away from shore, which I did with my kids. We would swim off the boat because the disease schistosomiasis is caused by a snail and it lurks in the reeds along the shore.

*Q: If you go farther out.*

SOUTHWICK: Farther out you're presumably safe and the lake at that point was about nearly 400 miles long in most parts 15 to 25 miles wide. You could go out a few miles and you were okay.

*Q: Was there much commerce up and down the lake?*

SOUTHWICK: Not a lot considering that this was essentially a 400 mile highway. If you go back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century you could see where the 19<sup>th</sup> Century colonialists thought that eventually this would be developed. The Germans built a railroad across Tanganyika to Kigoma, which they completed just on the eve of the First World War. Then there was a boat which, in memory for all time, is the African Queen which was still the boat, a historic boat which was still going up and down Lake Tanganyika. It's called the Louisa in the novel.

*Q: Yes the Graf von Götzen.*

SOUTHWICK: The story was, despite Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn, the Germans scuttled it. The Germans scuttled it and they greased it all up, sank it in shallow water with the idea of bringing it up afterwards because they knew these two torpedo boats were coming and if they didn't do that they were going to be sunk by the British.

*Q: This is World War I.*

SOUTHWICK: This is World War I. Well, after the war it was raised and re-floated, eventually equipped with a diesel engine and from a distance looked pretty good. Up close it was a wreck,

but from a distance you could see it from my porch. I was high up on a hill and you could see it in the middle of the day on Wednesdays I think floating up from Tanzania. A magnificent sight.

*Q: About Tanganyika, I mean Tanzania, did it play any particular?*

SOUTHWICK: Well, you know, Tanzania was one of the interesting African countries because it was led by Julius Nyerere. He had these socialist views, and he was an egghead. Educated in the UK, and he was going to have a different approach. Tanzania was a lifeline to the sea for Burundi, less so for Rwanda. Rwanda went to Uganda overland through Uganda and then Kenya.

*Q: Did you get any kind of tourism or interest of other areas people from the U.S. or elsewhere?*

SOUTHWICK: Rwanda had Dian Fossey there and we had access to the Ugandan game parks, and Rwanda had its own game park, Akagera, on the Tanzanian border. Burundi had no game parks. There was very little tourist interest there. There were some things, but they didn't have the allure of let's say a Queen Elizabeth Park in Uganda, which was one of the most spectacular places in the world.

*Q: As the embassy's DCM, what did you find yourself doing?*

SOUTHWICK: It's, as I think with a lot of DCMs, people issues. A lot of DCMs come out of the political cone and think they're sort of super political officers and write reports and so forth. I started doing a fair amount of that, or certainly my share of it, and I liked doing that, but it's a lot of people problems. We had a PAO (Public Affairs Officer) who was an alcoholic. We had a dysfunctional communications officer, a succession of dysfunctional communication officers.

*Q: It's a real problem sometimes with that. Often they tend to be kind of loners or at least they used to be. It's something about being cooped up in that damn office.*

SOUTHWICK: I think it had something to do with that and we had one relatively junior officer there – a second or third tour officer – who clashed with the ambassador, stuff like that. We had an AID director who felt that he was more important than the ambassador. That was a continuous source of tension.

*Q: Did you find for example that AID, sometimes AID administration is different from other, I mean were they able to get more goodies for their people?*

SOUTHWICK: Yes, I mean they take care of themselves better. They spend a lot on creature comforts. Despite the criticism of State Department people in my experience, there's a distinct difference between housing and how much attention the State Department pays to housing and AID people. The educational level is higher with AID. They all have PhDs, most State Department people don't care about, but they had PhDs and they were there to help people. We were there to do God knows what, but it wasn't necessarily helping people so they had a more noble, long term mission which they tried to keep away from politics, whereas we were kind of bouncing up and down with the ebb and flow of the relationship.

*Q: Did you note any difference? You got there in well, the Carter administration; the Reagan administration came in.*

SOUTHWICK: Came in in 1981.

*Q: Did you see any difference towards Africa at all?*

SOUTHWICK: Well, I had known that Africa was sort of a backwater, but it never bothered me. The United States didn't care about Africa during the Cold War. All it cared about was making sure to keep the communists out and we coddled dictators as a result. Some of that is true, but within that, there was a pretty serious effort going on by Africanists in the State Department; development specialists to get this continent on its feet. It was a serious effort, and a lot of money was put into Africa during the Cold War and it wasn't done cynically. It was done, maybe the reason we got the money was a cynical reason, but the use of the money was certainly not cynical.

*Q: Well, by the time you left, did you see a change, I mean was the Burundi government beginning to come more to terms with the Hutu problem?*

SOUTHWICK: They were working on it and their method of working on it was basically to say it didn't exist. This was not only in Burundi, but Africa is afflicted with tribal and tribal related problems and so says we're all one people. All these differences don't count. It's a one party system. There's only one party and within that I think they were doing a little bit of good, but they were far from working out acceptable arrangements and still are in Burundi. Acceptable arrangements which were fundamentally democratic in nature, but then Bagaza, the president who came to power when he was 29 or 30, still young in his '30s when we were there with Frances, started flirting with the Libyans and started fighting with the Catholic Church. I think through history it is sort of a bad, I'm not Catholic, but it's sort of a bad idea to fight with the Catholic Church. It's just not a good idea. You can do things to contain them or whatever, but you don't pick gratuitous fights. They've been around a lot longer than you have. So, you can see that things were beginning to go wrong.

*Q: This is tape three, side one with Michael Southwick. We missed that last thing, you said you like management?*

SOUTHWICK: I like management. I like being chargé. I'm an eclectic person. This is what I found out about myself. I'm not an economic officer. I'm not an admin officer. I'm sort of a jack of all trades perhaps master at none, but because of all the experience even as I had up to being DCM in Burundi, I could do economics, I could do political work. I could do some of the USIA stuff because I'd been in the Fulbright program. I didn't know much about Intel stuff, but I pretty well filled in that blank later on in my career. I knew the whole system with the exception of Intel pretty damn well.

*Q: Well, speaking of not quite Intel, were there any at that time, was Libya messing around? I mean were there threats? I mean Libya was considered to be sending out agents.*

SOUTHWICK: During the period in Burundi they burned the French embassy and I don't know what they did with our embassy, but we broke relations with them. We did not have, to put it mildly, a good relationship with Libya, and we kept our eye on them and they kept their eye on us. They were up to no good as far as we were concerned in Burundi. Their mode of operating was passing money around. Not that we weren't passing money around.

*Q: What about with Rwanda, were our embassies talking, our ambassadors talking to each other? I mean was this sort of a collegial thing or what?*

SOUTHWICK: Yes, well, this is what happens when if you're an ambassador in one country that has a kind of a poor relationship with a neighboring country, some of this spills over to the respective ambassadors.

*Q: I served in Belgrade back in the '60s and you know the enemy was not quite Zagreb, but. It happens.*

SOUTHWICK: For people who pride ourselves on being pretty good specimens of the human race, this is utterly childish. Utterly childish. Burundi was the bad boy because they had the Tutsi minority government. Rwanda was the good boy because it had the Hutu majority government.

*Q: So, there wasn't a brother to brother or brother to sister relationship?*

SOUTHWICK: No. The DCM up in Kigali when I was in Burundi was Bob Gribbin. I don't know if you've done Bob Gribbin.

*Q: Oh, yes. I've interviewed Bob.*

SOUTHWICK: Well, Bob was always to me then, and subsequently when he was ambassador in Rwanda, I think he feels a little bit more than I do that you have to have this kind of warm, cozy relationship with the government. You support the government and you take pretty much, let's put it this way, I mean charitable, more at face value, what they're telling you than I do. So, from the perspective of our embassy he was exaggerating the importance of Rwanda and the virtue of its government. Now, we knew that we weren't dealing with a virtuous government. Frances Cook felt that wherever she was the center of the universe. Corcoran didn't and I didn't.

*Q: Well, coming out of Hanoi, Saigon.*

SOUTHWICK: I took my role seriously and all that, don't get me wrong, but World War III was not going to start in Burundi. Having worked in trade negotiations I had a pretty good idea of what was what in terms of what makes this planet tick.

**KATHERINE SCHWERING**  
**Political/Economic Officer**  
**Bujumbura (1980-1982)**

*Ms. Schwering was born in Wyoming and raised abroad and various localities in the US. She was educated at Northwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). She joined Chase Bank, where she was trained as an international economist, and worked with them until joining the State Department in 1978. During her career Ms. Schwering worked primarily on international economic, monetary and terrorist matters in Washington and abroad. Her overseas posts were in Burundi, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Ms. Schwering was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: Today is October 13, 2005. Katherine, you're in Bujumbura, Burundi, and it's 1980. What was it like when you got there with brand new eyes looking at the place?*

SCHWERING: Well, first of all the climate was perfect year-round. I used to think of it as Camelot. During my first six months, it literally only rained at night and was always beautiful during the day. It is located at a high enough elevation that for most of the country there are no mosquitoes. It never got above 85. It was never humid, never got below 70, and there were flowers year-round. It was almost a paradise, but it had almost been completely deforested. There was only one patch of original primitive forest left.

The country was in an economic decline. There were only three economic activities – subsistence farming, which supported almost 100% of the population; and, the brewery run by the Belgians, which supplied most of the government revenue; and coffee. They grow the finest coffee in the world – triple A Arabica, which at that point I don't even think was grown in Latin America. They exported their coffee through Tanzania.

The country was extraordinarily poor and because of the high birth rate, family plots of land were being divided up more and more. You were literally looking at Malthus' theory: these people were and are going to starve themselves to death. It didn't really have any resources except one peat bog, which was harvested to feed the brewery. The Burundi couldn't afford to buy the beer from it. It was a really sad situation. There was no medicine, no doctors. The only other city, the second city in the country had basically been built by missionaries over a period of time.

The government at this time was very heavily socialist, even though the president had come to power through a coup while the previous president was on a visit out of the country. Its main allies were Cuba, North Korea, and Russia. Most of the embassies in town were embassies like that, and I think there was a Libyan embassy. There were French and Belgian embassies and perhaps one other western one besides the American embassy. Oh yes, there was an embassy from the People's Republic of China. It was really very heavily oriented toward socialist countries.

*Q: Where did Burundi stand at that time in the Hutu-Tutsi conflict when you got there?*

SCHWERING: Well, it all had started in the early '60s when it was a UN protectorate, not a colony under the Belgians. Maybe it wasn't even a protectorate; there was a third status, which I



can't remember now, that the UN awards. The UN wanted Belgium to get out of Burundi, Rwanda and the Congo. Belgium really didn't want to. Belgium, as you know, was not a very good colonial power. What the Belgians did when they finally agreed to go in 1960 or '61 was to throw elections. However, they were scheduled three days from the date of the decision to leave. Now of course, with a totally illiterate population, no communications, telephones, or radios, it was a disaster. I think they had to re-do the elections. The UN made the Belgians go back and conduct them again. The bottom line is that they removed the ruling structure, which was the Mwami and his family.

Over the last 500 years, the Hutus and Tutsis had lived a completely peaceful symbiotic relationship. It was possible to become a Tutsi if you were a Hutu. There is one sociological study dating from the '50s that I was able to find, which was very interesting. When you reduced the Mwami and the ruling structure, as is true of most third world countries, what money came into the new government, as well as education, tended to go to the military, because that defends a country. It wasn't long before there was a series of coups led by military officers. That had largely been the history. I wish I remembered it more specifically.

It was President Bagaza who was president when we were there. He had ministers, but there was no government. There were ministries and ministers but no parliament. There was a court system, interestingly. It had a university, oddly enough, which had no books, laboratories or anything else. I am not quite sure how students studied or what they studied. There was no electricity, so you couldn't do anything after dark.

Here was only a little electricity in the capital city, Bujumbura and its suburbs, where a few top ministers and the foreigners lived. Other than that, there was no electricity in the country. What electricity there was came from a hookup to the electricity grid of Zaire, which is now Congo. They had none of their own. It was pretty primitive. They had one paved road in the country, which came up along Lake Tanganyika, through Bujumbura, and veered off to the north to a city which used to be the traditional capital of Burundi, and then up into Rwanda.

In 1972 and '73, a conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis broke out. I believe that was the very first time in history, unless there was something in the '60s, which may have been because the Belgians had backed the Tutsis to put them into power hoping they might be able to manipulate them. In fact, there never was any history of internecine warfare. I won't say inter-ethnic, which most people do. They are exactly the same ethnicity, same name, same religion, same culture, and same values, although slightly different genetic descent. In Rwanda, which also had a majority of Hutu and Tutsi, there was so much intermarriage it was even harder to tell them apart. By the time I got to Burundi it was very rare to see what we would consider a true Tutsi, someone very tall and slender.

The entire culture there was very reticent. The rulers were like princes – very self confident, carrying themselves regally, but not aggressively. The personalities are totally different from what you would see in West Africa or in East Africa. It wasn't typical Africa. The most interesting thing was that the culture of Burundi is both Hutu and Tutsi. There are no villages and never have been. Basically extended families and clans would live in *rugos* or hillside

compounds and would populate an area. However, outside of Bujumbura and the city in the north there were no villages.

There were some photographs in the embassy that date from 1972 when the President of Burundi had taken an embassy officer up in a helicopter. The officer had taken photographs of bodies floating down a river, and things like that. It was a horrific episode. Ever since the early '70s – which is when the United States cut off its military and AID programs because of the genocide – the country had gone very socialist.

It was basically like any other hill people like the Montagnards or the hillbillies. I attribute this partly to the lack of villages or any spot to which travelers might come and stay and spend a night or where merchants might set up shop. They had none of this, so like hill people everywhere, they were very suspicious of outsiders and kept to themselves. Before I got there, the government had actually imposed a ban on Burundians having any contact with foreigners. You had to get permission from the president's office or the foreign ministry to talk to any Burundi outside of the minister or someone in a ministry.

I ran a self-help program there distributing a small aid program. It was very difficult as the only infrastructure, was provided by missionaries. They had built all the schools, a few clinics and some cooperative centers. Every ten years or so, the government of Burundi would kick out all of the missionaries and take over the infrastructure, the schools or whatever, and would put in their own teachers. The government never did anything for anybody outside of the main city. In part, it is because it was estimated – although no one really knew – 80% of the population was Hutu. But, it was also because it is such a poor country there wasn't anything. There was no tax system except on coffee exports. The government would buy the entire coffee crop and then export it.

What would happen is even though it was a patriarchal society, women did all the work –the housework and the field work in Burundi. If men got their hands on any money, they actually would just drink it away. So, most of the coffee crop would be for the men, after the women had nurtured the trees and picked the crop; although, the men did sometimes help pick the crop. However, they would be the ones to take it to market and sell it. They would take most of the money. It was only if a woman could get to sell the coffee that she would have any money for the household. It was a terribly dysfunctional society in that way.

When I used to drive around the country on my missions with a driver, I would have great discussions. In Burundi I talked to Burundi males because women would not talk to you. In their culture, women were not supposed to speak in public. The Burundi men would all tell me men were too weak and women were a lot stronger which is why they did all the field work and everything else.

I could not see a way out for that population to survive over the long run. I suspect AIDS.... They still won't cooperate. It is such a hermetic society, in a way. They still won't cooperate with any international organizations like the world health organizations. They won't allow any surveys to be done. They don't want people talking to their population. Perhaps that is changing, but we have no idea what the medical situation is and I would not be surprised if the majority of the population were HIV positive. One reason for that is they used to go to what they called

clinics, which were usually one-room structures like the houses they lived in. These were thatched-roofed, sometimes with a rusting table that you could tell was a maternity delivery table, because it had stirrups. There was no mattress or anything on it, just the metal table. There would be one sort of kidney shaped medical dish in the room with dirty water in it, and the clinic's only needle in it.

The government had complete control over all medication and medical care. There was kind of a hospital in Bujumbura, which had been set up by the Belgians and continued to run (and deteriorate) by the Burundi. Once a quarter, the government would send medicines and vaccinations around the country. Once a quarter; there would be some quasi-trained medical technician assigned to each of these clinical centers, and he (usually a man) would take this one needle and vaccinate everybody. The needle was used for years. It was really one of the most desperately poor countries you could ever find.

*Q: Let's take a couple of things. You were there from when to when?*

SCHWERING: August of '80 to November of 1982.

*Q: What was your job?*

SCHWERING: I did everything except GSO work. There was an ambassador.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

SCHWERING: Frances Cook. I went through two deputy chiefs of mission. The second one was the Joseph Wilson who is now in the news, so I know him personally, and then there was me. I was the political, economic, commercial – you name it – officer.

*Q: Consular?*

SCHWERING: No. There was a separate consular official and a separate commercial officer, but in fact I did all of that work, too. We had GSO staff. I did everything, and the workload was incredible, because there were all these reporting requirements out of Washington. Also, Frances Cook was hyperactive and demanded we work seven days a week. It was the worst embassy I ever worked in.

*Q: Well, let's talk a bit about that. In the first place, what were American concerns in Burundi?*

SCHWERING: Well frankly, in my view, we didn't have any. To the extent we had a goal; it was to try to woo the government away from the socialist view of things. It was just to have another vote in our bloc in international organizations.

*Q: So the UN vote was probably the only interest?*

SCHWERING: Pretty much. They had no money to buy anything. They weren't very friendly. They had no influence on any surrounding countries. It should have been a nice posting. I went

there because I thought it would be a nice, low key, assignment in a beautiful spot. It was all but low key, because Frances Cook was a large actor on a stage that was too small. She just dreamt up as much work as she could. You would not believe what she could think of.

*Q: I have interviewed her. Could you talk about what she was doing?*

SCHWERING: She entertained all the time and threatened us with low rankings if we didn't. You have to remember there were 12 ministers in this whole country. You have an embassy of six or seven people all entertaining the same people five nights a week – please! It got to a point where she would throw functions seven days a week sometimes, with a lot of things on Saturday or Sunday. She tried to attract the government and schmooze them even on Sundays with swimming parties, but it got to a point where the ministers were no longer interested. They actually did not live much better than the rest of the people. There was no money to be had. They would go home to the rugos, the family hillside huts, on the weekends. They began sending third cousins to the ambassador's pool parties.

I actually was the only officer who got out and who traveled. I became, oddly enough, friends with a military officer. He and I must have met at one of the cocktail parties the ambassador must have thrown. We just hit it off. Gradually, over time, he introduced me to his family. He was from the important province, the one province from which all the government came. It was obviously a clan structure. This was Bururi Province which was in the south. It got to the point that he was willing to risk his career, because this was a forbidden contact for him, as well as for me, if the government had found out we were friends. He would sometimes come to visit me and would sometimes bring a sister. I would have to dismiss my guards, because I knew they would be interviewed by the Surete of the government. They weren't the secret service or intelligence, but basically the watchdogs of the regime. So he would come and visit me, and then he would invite me to go out and visit his family. Because I had diplomatic plates, I would switch cars with a missionary, because I knew they would follow me. I would load him and friends up in Bujumbura and we would head out. I may have been the only American ever to sleep in a rugo, and actually to hang out with a Burundi family.

At that time, and I understand this may still be the case because my daughter has a friend who is now working on a medical program in Rwanda, you were not allowed to mention the words Hutu and Tutsi. You couldn't even say trees and bushes. When I would call on missionaries, we would go for a walk there, even though there wasn't any possibility of electronic eavesdropping, because of the lack of electronics, lack of electricity, and lack of technical knowledge. However, even the missionaries, who had been there for years, refused to acknowledge there was a problem or mention the two different groups.

Now, you know, my view was that if you are not allowed to say the words, there is a problem. Unfortunately it conflicted very much with Frances Cook's views of things. She wanted to believe she was a good friend of Bagaza, and that these were all good people and stuff. She actually called me in at some point and told me I could no longer talk to any westerners or Americans. I was to take them off my job requirements. Even individuals from other agencies, with whom I worked, had the same experience in Burundi. It is just their culture. The Burundi have no use for us particularly and no reason to share information, which is historically true of

their culture. Information was the coin of the realm. That is how you pleased the Mwalmi in the past and got land in return. Yet, Frances absolutely forbade me to have anything to do with or do any reporting on what any non-Burundi said.

*Q: Well, how did you get visitors through?*

SCHWERING: Visitors would come in. The only ones who ever came in were actually the people looking for money from my self help program. I talked with a lot of Burundi that way. Unfortunately, I never found a true program that fit within our guidelines, because the whole idea of the self-help program was to get a group of women together to start an egg farming and selling business or something really small. Because there were no villages, there was no community to help. There wasn't a single application for the money from a Burundi that didn't actually involve benefiting his personal family. They were almost all Tutsis too, and they weren't going to help the Hutus. The organizations that could use our money best were the missionaries, because they ran clinics, schools and the such, and they really needed the funds. They helped everybody. However, Frances Cook forbade me from giving them a dime. It was really sad.

*Q: What was the ambassador trying to do by saying there wasn't a problem there?*

SCHWERING: She said that and kept reporting it. I don't know. She was biased against white skins frankly. She believed we should only interact with the Burundi. I have no problem with that obviously, but it was extraordinarily difficult because the government forbade it. I, nevertheless, got around to all of those who did it, but they weren't telling me anything. There were no politics.

*Q: You said you had something a couple of other things that happened while you were in Burundi.*

SCHWERING: Yes. While I was in Burundi, a couple of retired, or ex-CIA agents, had gone into the business of illegally supplying arms and other things to Libya, a country we had sanctions on at the time. One of their accomplices, who was from New Orleans and had been in charge of physically shipping these weapons decided to hide out in Burundi. How he even heard of the country, we don't know. There is no extradition treaty between the U.S. and Burundi. He was there purporting to be a U.S. businessman. This was another issue about which Ambassador Cook and I had totally different points of view. Having spent six years on Wall Street, I know something about business and businessmen. I could think of absolutely no reason for an American businessman to be in Burundi purporting to be doing business, because there was no business going on between Burundi and the U.S. There was no foreign exchange for them to purchase anything from us. Their only export was coffee, and that was regularly contracted to regular buyers. In fact, Folgers used to buy half of the Burundi coffee crop, and this was AAA Arabica coffee, which was one of the reasons Folgers coffee was one of the best coffees. Anyway, the ambassador was absolutely convinced this guy was legit. She arranged meetings for him with two of the ministers in the Burundi government. Even though she had never met him, she tried to get him an appointment with President Bagaza of Burundi.

I just had my suspicions. I called back to the U.S. and did what research I could through Dun and Bradstreet on the company he purported to represent. I found a lot of statements that these reporting companies had no information on the company. The ambassador took that to mean, "Oh, this guy is legitimate and fine." It just didn't fit, and she got really angry with me because I basically wouldn't endorse her view basically. I never argued with her, but I just didn't agree that he was a legitimate businessman.

Well, a month or two after that, we get a cable screaming out of Washington telling us who this guy was and that he was armed and dangerous, and that the FBI had a planeload of agents in Rome who wanted to fly down and capture him because he was wanted in the United States as a criminal.

At about this time, we also learned that there was a death threat against Ambassador Cook that was said to originate somehow in Greece. We had no marines in the embassy, and the entire security system in the embassy was a lock on the front door of the embassy. It was the duty officer's job to get to the front door 15 minutes before opening time and unlock the door. It was just like a dial lock on a safe.

We had some other security inside the embassy building. All the Americans with the exception of the admin counselor, were upstairs behind a secured gate. However, everyone on the ground floor was a Burundi or a third country national. I wasn't directly involved in the negotiations. However, one thing we all knew was that the Burundi government would never give clearance to fly armed U.S. agents into the country. This was a very socialist oriented country. They had no particular interest in dealing with the U.S. We had cut off all military and AID programs with the Burundi government ten years earlier, when the Hutus had been slaughtered, so there was no incentive for them to cooperate. I think, in the end, some of our embassy officers were ordered to go and get him. They were armed. However, once we received the threat on the ambassador, which was somehow associated with this episode, we were all ordered to stand 24 hour watch on the ambassador, two at a time. There were only seven Americans in the embassy. One of the two was to be anyone who ever had weapons training and was to be armed, and then someone else was to be there to entertain her basically. So we did that for three or four days until something broke. I am not quite sure what happened, but I think the individual actually surrendered himself to the embassy and was gotten out of the country. That was kind of interesting.

*Q: Oh yeah.*

SCHWERING: We also spent one day being surrounded by North Koreans. I forgot that one. As I said, pretty much only the enemies of the United States had embassies in Burundi. There were also the French, Belgian, and German embassies. There was a North Korean embassy. The Koreans were doing great business in terms of building contracts in the Middle East in those days.

Apparently, South Korean businessmen heard there was used construction equipment to be had from Zaire or something like that. This poor South Korean businessman had caught the flight from Nairobi to Burundi which stopped in Bujumbura and then would go on to Congo. On that same flight were some North Koreans attached to their embassy in Burundi. Well, they spotted

his passport and immediately tried to capture him. From that plane ride on, this South Korean was fleeing. He would stay in crowds. He got through the airport and checked into a hotel in Burundi. There was one small local hotel and one large Belgian one. It turns out that during the day he would hide out in the American embassy. He would just come sit in our lobby. He did this for three days. Eventually, we would have to kick him out of the embassy back to his hotel. He would stay in crowds of people, but the North Koreans had a van, and as he was walking on the sidewalk they would drive alongside him with the van doors open and would invite him to come for a talk along the lakeshore.

Now that was significant because I have been in South Korea. Koreans don't know how to swim. They never go near the water. Part of that is because all of the shores of South Korea are pretty well trip wired so that North Koreans who might be dropped off in the water couldn't come ashore. One of the greatest fears Koreans had is to have a son drown. I found that true even for Koreans here. They don't like to have their sons, in particular, go near water. So to have the North Koreans invite the South Korean for a little talk along the shores of Lake Tanganyika didn't fool anybody.

The U.S. embassy kept calling the Burundi government saying, "You know, he is hiding in our embassy, but he is not our responsibility. He is yours; you have got to protect him." We said, "Even though he is not a diplomat, you have got to get the North Koreans to call off their dogs." The Burundi government kept saying, "You do it. You talk to them." We would tell them back. "We don't talk to the North Koreans, and they wouldn't listen to us if we did."

One day I remember there was a commotion just outside my office in the embassy. I finally asked somebody in the hallway, "What's going on?" They said, "Haven't you looked outside your window yet?" I hadn't. When I looked outside, I stared right into the eyes of a North Korean. He was a distance away, but he was just standing there in a drizzle watching the embassy. Apparently, our entire embassy was surrounded by them. They were waiting for this guy to come out.

Eventually, though, the South Korean businessman got out of the country safely. But that incident was funny.

*Q: Not funny for him.*

SCHWERING: No. Then we had the very first U.S. military attaché visit to Burundi since the slaughters of 10 or 12 years earlier. It was our DAO from Kinshasa who flew out. I remember I handled their first trip out there. They had a little two or four seater plane, and they would bring supplies if the ambassador wanted them. But the very first time they landed, there was no one at the Burundi airport, no one in the tower and no one in the building. The pilots of the plane wanted to refuel. I was out there on the tarmac meeting them. As we couldn't find anybody at the airport physically, the three of us had to push this plane across the tarmac. I hadn't realized that planes are so carefully balanced that once you got the tail up, even one person could just push it. The pilots were pretty familiar with where to look for fuel, stored in tanks which are well below the tarmac. So the three of us just pushed the plane to where we could find a lid to a fuel tank.

They opened it up and refueled the plane themselves, and then said, “When we find someone, we will pay them.”

I loved Burundi. It was a beautiful climate.

**FRANCES D. COOK**  
**Ambassador**  
**Burundi (1980-1983)**

*Ambassador Cook grew up in West Virginia and Florida and attended Mary Washington College, earning her BA in 1967. She took the Foreign Service exam during her senior year of college and served at posts in Paris, Sydney, and Dakar, before becoming Ambassador to Burundi. Ambassador Cook was interviewed by Ann Miller Morin in 1986.*

COOK: It's considered sort of *de rigueur* if you're going to an African post to go for consultations in the capital of the former colonial power. I found that when I got to Burundi they kind of resented it. I think other African countries might as well. I found it enormously useful for another reason. It's because I found that in the United States so much - in this case it was Belgium - their views are cited as definitive on the former colonies, as it is on Zaire, as the French on West Africa, as the English on Kenya and South Africa, and time and again I would argue with those views in cables, and it helped me to have been there to see the people articulating these things. To know at least a little bit, from my time there, what was animating these views, what was behind it. It wasn't just factual reporting. It was valuable to me personally and substantively to have been there. Symbolically I don't think it was that much of a plus! Now I also went to London and Paris for two separate reasons and because it was no additional airfare. London (although I visited FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office.]) - the main purpose there was because that's the international headquarters for family planning organizations, but also because it's the world headquarters of the international coffee organization. When I went to Burundi we had a trade deficit with Burundi.

*Q: We did? The U.S. did?*

COOK: Because of the amount of coffee we bought from Burundi.

*Q: I didn't realize that the international coffee market was in London.*

COOK: It's all headquartered in London and that's where it's run from. It was very important to understand that, to understand the economy, to understand what role we played in the international coffee cartels and so forth.

*Q: That's about their principal crop, isn't it? Isn't that about what keeps them afloat?*



COOK: Yes. That's 85-95% of their exports. So I did those consultations and then went off to Greece for a week.

*Q: What did Paris add?*

COOK: Paris was just the Quai d'Orsay. The French had the only western military assistance program in there. I started an American one during the time I was there, so I wanted to talk to them. I find in my years in working in Africa, it's often interesting to get the view from somebody similar but not the same, who was not the colonial [power].. The French had a lot of ties in that part of Africa, but it had not been their colony. I thought their perspective added to the Belgian one would be very interesting, and in fact it was.

*Q: Different points of view?*

COOK: Yes.

*Q: When you went out to your post, what did you regard as your principal mission? What did you hope to accomplish there?*

COOK: I felt that each of us, in whatever way we could, had an obligation to our government to try to promote (by that I mean expand) and improve US relations with our country of service. I didn't go out feeling I was ambassador to Africa. I thought I was ambassador to Burundi. I realized I had a very specific piece of real estate to deal with. The other thing that I felt was equally important, and here I think my USIS background influenced me a lot, my cultural affairs experience, was to get the country, the leaders of the country where I was assigned, to better understand the United States and its institutions, and to understand why our policy and our goals in Africa were very different from the European countries; which is really all they know, still. Independence was only the early sixties for most of these countries. I felt that there were tremendous possibilities in expanding American-African relations. I think it was deeply in our own national interest to do that, and I think it's in theirs. And to try to explore ways you can do that. Now, you have to be extremely creative every year because resources always decline, they rarely rise, and so you have to go out there with a kind of personal knowledge of American private institutions and corporations, people who can be helpful to you one way or the other. I was going into a country that had always been deeply suspicious of the United States. I knew that. I was going into a country that twice PNGed [*persona non grata* -a diplomat declared unacceptable by the host government.] American ambassadors. I knew that.

*Q: Oh, had they?*

COOK: Yes.

*Q: On what grounds?*

COOK: Suspicion of being involved with the ethnic problems.

*Q: Uprisings? Yes.*

COOK: Yes. So I knew that I was going into a country that knew very little about the United States. I think it's very important to say, even on the tape, that that is in some cases the desires of the former European colonial overlords that the United States be viewed either poorly - or not at all! The most glaring example, because it's documentary, (but there are others, certainly in the commercial sphere) are the texts published in France for teaching English to Africans. I've seen them published by really important publishers like Gallimard. I've seen a chapter on the south and what it shows is a picture from the 1930's which shows a toilet for blacks and a toilet for whites - and that is the sole picture illustrating the chapter of the English book on the South. That kind of playing around continues in Africa, so you're dealing not only with just lack of exposure to the United States and our institutions and our people, but you're dealing with efforts, and those are by our friends - you should see what the North Koreans and the Chinese and the Russians are doing - if France can do that to us in Africa, then the other side is working. I think by the very fragility of the African institutions, because independence is so new, that a genuine fear kind of grows out of what they don't know about what the big powers might be trying to do to them and so forth. So you have to combat a lot of ignorance and fear about the United States.

*Q: Then this explains why that terrible canard about the US introducing AIDS into Africa is able to reach such acceptance.*

COOK: That's traced directly to Moscow. We know where that one came from.

*Q: Yes, but the point is it's accepted without question.*

COOK: Another canard of a whole different dimension is about the CIA and the Peace Corps. That challenge was launched twenty years ago and it's been absolutely refuted down the line. There's never been an instance of it. I thought it was a non issue, but when I was looking for ways to expand our relations with Burundi, knowing that the USAID level was at a certain level and I couldn't expand that budgetary pot. I had to go in another direction, and we opened a Peace Corps program. (We also started a small military training program, not equipment, just training, sending them here for training). That's one of the questions I had to answer directly in the foreign ministry. They said, "But what about this CIA connection with the Peace Corps?" That story is so old and it's been refuted so long ago, you'd think that it's a not an issue any more.

*Q: Isn't it in the Peace Corps charter that there absolutely can be no connection?*

COOK: It's absolutely there, but it's something, I don't know if the Russians put it out or the Europeans put it out, but it somehow... and it stayed in the subconscious. Even though it's been completely [disavowed], it's not even discussed in African countries where the Peace Corps has been operating all these years. But the Peace Corps had never been in Burundi and that was still in their minds and that's one of the questions I had to address up front. That kind of stuff just comes out and it gets to be circular. It sounds very simple, what I viewed as my mandate, it is or is not depending on the amount of energy and the amount of creativity you try to put into it. You have to try to do it with diminishing, or no, resources in these very small countries and so you have to use a lot of personal energy and imagination in reaching out to other people.

*Q: Now you've told me that in order to achieve your goals, you had to know resources back in the States that you could draw on because of the diminishing funds. How were you able to bring the Peace Corps in? That would be government funded of course.*

COOK: That was government funded. That was later. What I was referring to there was some of the things, and the department helps you on this, before you go out. If nobody has told you about it they should have, about the BCIU consultations in New York.

*Q: BCIU?*

COOK: BCIU. It's Businessmen's Council for International Understanding. No matter what country you're going to, if you're going to a country like Burundi where there's basically no US trade, or there wasn't any anyway when I went there, this Council in New York City nevertheless will set up a full day's worth of appointments for you with people who have some sort of interest either in Africa or specifically in your country of service.

*Q: Business people?*

COOK: Yes, business people, banks and so forth. Now, if you're going off as ambassador to Saudi Arabia you'll have presumably five days' worth of consultations, but even if you're going to a Burundi you have a minimum of one. And you start learning about people who are in the coffee business, or people interested in doing loans, or whatever else. So you start building up, so even if you don't have your own resources to draw on, you have those. And the department does that for everybody that goes out as ambassador.

*Q: Does that include the EXIM bank and things like that?*

COOK: That's here. This is all New York. This is purely commercial.

*Q: But you do go to the EXIM bank here?*

COOK: Oh, sure, yes.

The Peace Corps has changed over the years. The way it was when I started focusing on the question of Burundi, and I think it still is, is that you can request specific skills that the country needs. It's not just young liberal arts graduates who want to go and try to help a developing country. Now you can say I want an agricultural engineer. I need a water engineer. I need a sanitary engineer. I need a specialist in teaching English as a second language. And so forth. One of the ways that Burundi was, I think, learning about the larger world and stepping out a bit was the enormous emphasis on learning English there, which was unusual in a Francophone country. So they specifically wanted some English teachers and so forth. There was no way I felt we could do it except through the Peace Corps.

*Q: Why was this sudden emphasis on learning English? In order to compete in business?*

COOK: They felt there very strongly that that is the international language, and that you had to have that to deal commercially, to understand politically what was going on in the world. They needed it for their diplomats and so forth. But just as I learned about a culture by learning Swahili, they learned by doing it. We got some English [teachers]. I remember now, it was a long time ago, that was one of our first requests. I think we also had an AID project, an excellent reforestation project in the southern part of the country that basically we felt could be maintained by a forester volunteer, so we wanted to try to continue seeing that project going. So there was a package of the very skills that we thought could come in.

Now Burundi is a country, as are all former Belgian colonies, where there is very profound missionary impact upcountry. I don't believe that there will ever be completely smooth relations between any former Belgian country and an African government, because of the pattern of Belgian colonization - where they basically turned the, to use the Australian term "outback" over to the missionaries, and concentrated on exploiting the country economically. So that has created a pattern in the rural parts of those three countries, a pattern of dependence and loyalty, by the present population, on the foreign missionaries who provided the medical care and the educational care that they got, if any, from foreigners, missionaries, not from either the Belgian government, or, due to lack of resources, really, much from their own government after independence. There will always be, I think, in those countries a great sensitivity on the part of the African governments about the activities [of the missionaries]. That leads to missionary expulsions regularly in all three countries, arrests and so forth, because there was a kind of tension built in for the loyalty of the people.

*Q: Mostly Catholic missionaries in those countries?*

COOK: There were American fundamentalists.

*Q: The Belgians let in anybody, did they?*

COOK: There were American fundamentalist groups in Burundi I'd never heard of until I got there. I've never heard of them here. I was raised a Methodist. I'd never heard of the Free Methodists until I got there, and they're operating in Burundi. There is a group called Child Evangelicals. I'd never heard of them.

*Q: All kinds of missionaries. Why is it that none of this bringing in of the Peace Corps had happened before you got there?*

COOK: Well, I think because probably before Bagaza [Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, President of the Burundi Republic] became president, there was a great history of ethnic tension and slaughter there. There was an unwillingness to let young foreigners loose in the interior.

*Q: I see.*

COOK: The Burundis surprised me in sort of understanding this. Really didn't feel that they needed - they didn't phrase it this way - young liberal arts graduates to come and learn about development in the country. They really needed people to work. The Peace Corps changed over

the years and I think changed for the better. A lot of people had very profound experiences. I don't mean to denigrate young liberal arts [graduates], but I think later on the real business of development has to be with technical people. They knew that it changed, and we told them we'd go in and offer them specific skills. They also were very unhappy with some of the racist attitudes they were encountering among some of the younger European workers in the [assistance] programs. I think they liked what we were doing. Our AID program was very new there. It was only two or three years old when I arrived.

*Q: There were Europeans working in our AID program?*

COOK: No, working in the interior of the country on EEC [European Economic Community or Common Market.] projects, or on their own bilateral [European] projects. They had encountered a lot of racism. They had to expel some of them.

*Q: They had?*

COOK: Yes.

*Q: Now, how do we make certain that we don't send people who turn out to be racist to those places?*

COOK: You'd have to ask the Peace Corps that, but certainly if I found one on my watch they wouldn't be around any longer than [when] the next plane took off, because you just don't need that. And I think people who have those kinds of attitudes wouldn't sign up for the Peace Corps anyway. It's not a draft, it's a voluntary thing.

*Q: No, but they can be insidious the way some from other countries are. They go down there and they think they're very kind, you know that paternalistic attitudes that just sets the natives on edge?*

COOK: True, yes, But our AID program was quite new so I think this was a natural extension of the AID program. I think it's still...

*Q: The AID program was ongoing when you got there?*

COOK: It's ongoing, and I think like most AID budgets it's falling right now, which is too bad, because Burundi is one of the 25 poorest countries in the world. But Gramm-Rudman [Gramm-Rudman. – The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Reduction Act of 1985 which imposed limitations on government spending. ] is having an enormous [effect].

*Q: Oh, I know it is. What AID programs were going on when you got there?*

COOK: There were two large ones and several smaller ones. The two large ones were, first of all, very exciting development of Burundi's peat resources. They have one of the largest reservoirs of peat in the world. And of course we had to bring in Irish technicians to work on our project because they're the great bog experts. That was about an \$8 million project spread over

several years. Then we had a large experimental farm in southern Burundi which basically developed good seeds for that kind of altitude and climate. An improved seed multiplication center, if you will. Then we had smaller projects, the forestation project. We had various education projects. We did some small-scale water projects to try to get [clean water]. Burundi, unlike many countries in Africa, has too many springs, if anything. The water is very clean if you just go down far enough to get it out of the ground instead of taking surface water. So we were working on smaller projects like that.

*Q: I see.*

COOK: Then we had a big PL 480, Title II food program, which was administered by Catholic Relief Services.

*Q: Can you recall your very first day at the post? When you arrived, who met you, what you did, where you went. Did you go right to the embassy.*

COOK: My arrival I will never forget because it was one of these things that only we could do to ourselves. I went out during the period of the Carter administration when he had eliminated first class air travel for everybody. I decided, politically, I wanted to arrive on Burundi Airlines. There were three or four African airlines that went through there. I made a point of going in on Burundi Airlines, which was a Caravelle.

*Q: From where?*

COOK: From Nairobi. I went down and spent a couple of days with the Harrops [Foreign Service Officer, ambassador to Kenya , 7/80 to 9/83.] on my way in to Burundi. I wouldn't go on Cam Air, Air Zaire, there are all sorts of other options I had, but I insisted on going Burundi Air. I thought it was important. So I was sitting all the way in the back end of this Caravelle on my little tourist ticket. I'd always flown tourist my whole life, but no African country sends its diplomats by tourist class. They don't send any of their diplomats by tourist class and certainly not their ambassadors. So when I got there - you know the Caravelle you go right out of the tail and then there's the first class stairs down. I looked out the window and I saw the country team lined up, and several Africans, who I thought probably were and in fact were the chief of protocol, from the foreign ministry and the various people who traditionally meet you. They were all lined up at the stairs of the first class section. So I thought now how do I handle this? Do I embarrass the United States or do I embarrass the Burundis? I decided I would do neither, so I waited until everybody was off the plane and then I walked to the front of the plane and walked down the first class stairs where they were waiting for me. [laughter]

*Q: Good for you. Isn't that funny!*

COOK: I laughed the whole way up the aisle, though, because I was struggling with a lot of hand luggage and it would have been much easier just to slip out the back, but it would have just embarrassed everybody, and it would have been absolutely inexplicable to this very poor country that I was coming there in tourist class, because those kinds of symbols are important. So

anyway, that is where we started and we went straight from there to the VIP lounge and had a bit of a conversation.

*Q: The chief of protocol was the most important person in their delegation?*

COOK: Yes, which is traditional. Then the DCM took me out of the VIP lounge and said, "This is your driver," and introduced me, and, "This is your car." I was blinking because I still was getting used to this whole process. I got in and sat down and off we went into Bujumbura. I told you of all my travels in Africa, I'd never set foot in this country. There are very few pictures of it in any of the books, so I didn't even know what to expect. It's an absolutely gorgeous place because it's on the north shore of Lake Tanganyika. The city itself is not gorgeous, but the setting is just exquisite and the weather is beautiful all year long, because you're at a high altitude and on this lake. We drove into town, into the residence and everybody...

*Q: The DCM was with you, was he?*

COOK: No, he...

*Q: You were alone?*

COOK: Yes. He sent off by myself with the driver, who was a delightful person, who was my driver the whole time I was there, who told me what I was seeing as we went through town. As we went through town I said - there's a long drive into town as there is in most places - we went through town and I said, "Where's the center of town?" It's very small. He said, "We just passed it." I said, "Oh." [laughter] We went on to my house and then my secretary had the whole country team over for my first meal of that wonderful Lake Tanganyika fish and so that was my first day there.

*Q: You mean your first night there she had people over to the residence?*

COOK: It was lunch because I came in early in the morning.

*Q: I see.*

COOK: Then they let me stay at home at the residence that night by myself. I had boxes piled up. You know you ship things ahead of time so you sort of get into your mail and then into your boxes and walk around. I do not like to go to any post having anything my first night there, and I always send out instructions not to do anything the first night. It is very hard to keep them from doing it, but I think that's why they did the lunch when they got my cable saying I wanted no event the first night. I don't like to do it and half the times I win and half the times I don't. People think you're just being shy, and I'm not. I really like to walk around the house and look at it and see what's going on.

*Q: At the airport how much of your staff was there? Your DCM?*

COOK: The DCM and all the section heads.

*Q: Did you know your secretary before you went out there?*

COOK: No. Oh, I'd met her briefly in Washington that summer, sorry.

*Q: You said you had fish, Tanganyika fish. Is there a particular way they cook it?*

COOK: This was just fried, but it's exquisite. It's Nile perch. It's just wonderful.

*Q: Had you chosen your DCM before you went out?*

COOK: No, he was there and I, in fact... Because I'd skipped so many steps in my career, that summer before I went out I asked the Department if I could go take the DCM course. I really had never been head of an embassy section. And they wouldn't let me. They said ambassadors are specifically excluded. They sent me some of the reading material. That's the most I got out of it. I'd been through the ambassadorial course, you know the one that they teach down here.

*Q: You did take that?*

COOK: Yes. I was Barbara Watson's roommate when we took our trips around the country. It was wonderful. We had a delightful time. So I knew a little bit about what to expect from that course, but not really. He [the DCM] did everything, apparently, by the book, how it's taught in the DCM course, and it's very well-organized. It's exactly what you need. He had a briefing book which he gave me on arrival and fastened to the front of it was this historic cable that you get to send out when you assume your post, which is, "Have arrived and assumed charge," for me to initial which I did with great joy. Dick Moose then had a tradition with all of his ambassadors; when he got that incoming copy he would always sign it with a very nice dedication and have it framed and send it back to you.

*Q: Did he? How nice!*

COOK: He did that for every one of his ambassadors the whole time he was at AF.

*Q: A very nice touch.*

COOK: So you really feel like you are taking charge then. But you basically don't exist as an official person until you present your credentials. Maybe I should tell you about that next time?

[APRIL 7, 1987]

*Q: When you arrived at your post, were you absolutely exhausted?*

COOK: No, I wasn't. I'd stopped for a week of vacation en route which I'd recommend to everybody because the combination of the tenseness over the hearings, the briefings before you leave, and packing out, some people might be able to go straight to their post. Maybe people who



have people to help them with these things, but I took a week in Greece on a nice little island en route, and had my birthday there. So that's why I was 35 when I presented my credentials.

*Q: Oh, your 35th birthday. All right. Now can you describe the presentation of credentials? Was it immediately? After a few days?*

COOK: The Burundis don't do it immediately. They tend to group people, and since this was the season, there were several of us presenting our credentials at the same time, of which I was the first. They made a point of having me present my credentials first of the five or six that day. Specifically ahead of the Belgian ambassador, who had arrived at post before me, but they had, as they always do, an official reason. They did it for their own political reasons, but the official reason they gave is that they received a request for my *agrément* before they received his. They did it to send a political message.

*Q: That is a message.*

COOK: It was fun. I was fully prepared, as it turned out, by my desk officer for going out there, because I was told I'd have to make a speech when I presented my credentials. It's done in some countries. So after drafting my little speech here for the swearing-in, then I had to do this one, and it's hard to do this when you don't know the country and have never been there, so I did one and of course that wasn't part of the ceremony at all. The ceremony was quite simple. I can tell you about it very quickly. I just went with the DCM, not with the whole country team. You go with the traditions of the country. So in Burundi, you take one person - obviously your DCM. We just went to the palace. He stayed in the anteroom and had a cup of tea with the chief of protocol while I had a brief conversation with the president. We exchanged letters, I mean I gave him the letter of recall of my predecessor and my own credentials and that was the whole ceremony.

*Q: You did recall your predecessor?*

COOK: Yes, I think you have two letters. They give them to you here in the presidential appointments staff. But the one point that I made in the meeting, I knew enough about Burundi to know that in the past, particularly two predecessors before me, David Mark, they'd restricted his movements. It can be a tightly controlled society. I made a point of saying in my very first conversation with the president that I'd heard that the country was very beautiful and I intended to see all of it, and that, what's more, if we were providing aid to Burundi and had projects all over the country, we had to be able to monitor them and I wanted his permission, at first meeting, to do this. He, I think, was taken aback. This was a surprise that somebody would do this right at first. He said, "Of course, I would like you to see all of my country." So later on, at several points in my tour when people came to me and said, "You haven't gotten permission to go" here, there, or the other place, I'd reply "I have it from the president." I used it for the whole time I was there and I never sought permission. I would tell them, because they did have a subsidiary interest in security, occasionally, if I was going someplace really far in the country I would tell them, "By the way, I'm going." I didn't ask permission, ever, to go anyplace. And had they tried to buck me in that, I would have first of all referred to the president's conversation, and secondly, probably suspended AID in those areas they wouldn't let me visit. It's not

acceptable that they would ask us for AID and then not let us visit the whole area. So I used that first conversation for that, and it worked.

The rest of that conversation, frankly, I'd have to look at the reporting cable. I think it was fairly unremarkable. It was a generally warm welcome. The one thing that was remarkable about it, I think, was that he told me, at the very beginning, he said, "This is an important day for me as president, and an important day for Burundi, because you are the first foreign ambassador to ever have arrived in our capital being recommended by another African chief of state." It turned out that Senghor had written him a letter. That was very nice and it was very unexpected. It set a wonderful tone to the whole thing. Because I came recommended by a fellow African chief of state, it just made a difference right from the beginning. Senghor had had the courtesy and the kindness and the forethought, and he knew a little bit about Burundi and he knew it would make a difference.

*Q: And nothing you had asked for?*

COOK: No, no, he just did it and that was lovely. And he didn't know Bagaza particularly well, but they'd see each other in OAU meetings and so forth. But it wasn't somebody like Houphouët-Boigny [Felix Houphouët-Boigny, president of the Ivory Coast.] or somebody that he dealt with regularly. It set a wonderful tone right from the beginning. Those kinds of things matter enormously, enormously in Africa. I think that just set a nice tone, and it let him know that people outside of Burundi were going to be watching, to see how I was received, and how I did there.

*Q: Normally do people have to get written permission to travel around?*

COOK: Yes, you do. One thing I fought unsuccessfully the whole time I was there, is that they are like - well the Soviet Union does the same thing, Israel does, actually, for military - you cannot technically invite anybody to the residence. You have to send the invitations to the foreign ministry and they decide who gets to come. Now as time went by, and as they saw I wasn't a threat, but was trying to promote American-Burundi relations, they basically would let, (to meals and small things), everybody come that I invited. My last Fourth of July party there I was just crushed. They took people off the list that I really wanted. I didn't do "laundry list" invitations, because I thought that's asking to have names cut. I did people that had a specific interest. Now, these are government of Burundi employees, but in a developing country most of your contacts are government employees.

One year when I was there, I inspired myself from Eunice Shriver, and it was great fun, but I didn't try it twice because I was afraid they would stop it. But for that year we invited them because they weren't government employees. We didn't have to go to the Foreign Ministry so they didn't realize that we had invited them. We invited every little farmer's cooperative head that had received a self-help grant from us, fishing cooperatives, farming cooperatives, handicapped people who normally wouldn't be seen at diplomatic receptions. I had them all one Fourth of July. It was absolutely glorious. There were about fifty people there who clearly had never been to a diplomatic reception in their life, were clearly outside the government and very much the working class people there, and they came and had a great time. I saw the foreign

minister was looking around, and thinking “where did this person come from?. [laughter] Because in a small capital like that, you see the same people at every reception. But they didn’t know they couldn’t come, and they had their little invitations. We had chauffeurs driving them all over the country to make sure they got them. And the ones that were really far got them by mail. And a lot of them came even from up country. It was wonderful.

I think I mentioned to you, when I talked about working for Eunice in Paris, there was so much, more even, I think, then she knows now, how much I inspired myself from some of the things I watched her do. One of the funny things about my presentation of credentials there, was when I came back to the house. You don’t go in your own car for these events. The chief of protocol, I think for most of these this is true, comes and picks you up in his car. They take you with a motorcycle escort and you come back to the residence. The thing that was really touching - I really almost cried - because it was so touching to me, and I’d just forgotten that this was going to happen. When we came back into the driveway, the flag hadn’t been on the house the whole time I’d been there, because I hadn’t presented credentials. They had it arranged so that, when I drove up in the driveway the flag went up the flag pole. It was really very, very touching. The embassy had done that.

But the driveway was on an incline like this, and when I came back up, I recalled that in Paris, Eunice and Sarge always got out of whatever motorcade they were in - they were in some mammoth ones there - like when the astronauts first started traveling - remember the first astronauts and so forth? They always got out of their limousine, wherever they were, and they went back, and they shook hands with every motorcycle policeman that had escorted them. This I think was probably a campaign tactic that carried over. The French were enormously touched by it, because these people are basically ignored. So I just did the same thing. I didn’t even think about doing it ahead of time. I just did it instinctively because I was thinking about them, because it was the day I was presenting my credentials. So I went back down this driveway shaking hands with the motorcycle policemen who had come up. The car was in front and they were behind. We were on an incline. I didn’t realize that the brakes on a motorcycle are in the handles, and when I took their hands off the handlebars to shake hands with me, the motorcycles started sliding back down. [laughter] So I was standing there in my violet silk dress, holding this motorcycle that was going back down the driveway! It was a terribly funny event. They were obviously touched by it, because I’m sure no other foreign ambassador had ever shaken hands with them. But I just hadn’t taken account of, I guess, the engineering of motorcycles and the incline of my driveway. I kept doing things like that throughout my tour, because there were little things like that that they did in Paris, which were I thought unusual. I thought they were extremely American, and I thought spoke well of what we were about in our country.

*Q: Exactly.*

COOK: The other thing that happened, I guess, funny that day, nobody had told me what to expect. I didn’t know what you do at a credential ceremony. I’d never seen one. I’d never been a member of a country team to ever go to a ceremony. So when I got out of the car at the president’s palace, they had troops lined up on both sides of the road who presented arms to me. I didn’t know, what do you do? Do you salute? What do you do? I grinned. I didn’t know what else to do.

*Q: I don't think a woman...*

COOK: I just didn't know and I didn't expect it, I guess. I thought I'm supposed to do something in response and I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I hadn't a clue, so I just grinned at them. I found one who - they'd never had a female ambassador there before - I found one little fellow holding his arms like this and looking around his gun like this. I looked at him and sort of winked. He smiled and then I went on in. I didn't know what to do. You don't salute.

*Q: You only salute if you have a hat on, right?*

COOK: What?

*Q: A military hat, if you have a military hat on.*

COOK: I guess. I've seen military people do that. But what does a civilian do and what does a woman do?

*Q: We'll have to watch Corazon Aquino [prime minister of the Philippines] on the nightly news.*

COOK: She just walks on. There are more people like that now. I didn't have that many models to go by. Who was it, Indira Gandhi [prime minister of India] and Mrs. Bandaranaike [Sirimavo Bandaranaike, prime minister of Sri Lanka] in Ceylon. Mrs. Thatcher, I guess, was in there. What does a woman do when arms are presented? I'd never thought about it and I didn't know.

*Q: It's a good question.*

COOK: But I just remember thinking, Here I am and the first thing I get out of the car and I don't know what to do. It all went very nicely, but I laughed about it all afterwards. Between the presentation of arms and the motorcycle, falling back down the driveway with me trying to hold them up.

*Q: Were the arms presented over at the presidential palace?*

COOK: Yes. They were lined up on both sides of the driveway. We pulled up and two big lines of soldiers were there and we were in between them with the flags on the car and all that. It was quite grand.

*Q: It must be very grand.*

COOK: Even in a small country like that it's very impressive and very... it's a ceremony that both impresses you and touches you and you're very proud to be in.

*Q: Oh, I can imagine.*

COOK: It's one of the proudest moments of being an ambassador, I think, is when you present your credentials.

*Q: What happened to the other people who were in your group? They don't drive?*

COOK: No, they come separately. Each man goes to the house separately. Then you invite the chief of protocol, and traditionally in most countries and it's certainly true there, for a glass of champagne. I don't know what he's like by the end of the day if he's done seven ambassadors! I was the first one, so it was okay then. He has a quick glass of champagne and then gets in his car and goes and gets the next one, and goes on. So that is the custom. We carried it out completely with the only things... I guess because this was so unexpected to me to be an ambassador, I was as much an observer as a participant.

*Q: That's a good point.*

COOK: I think because these kinds of ceremonies which I'd never... I'd never even talked to anybody before I went out about presenting credentials. I assumed that they were kind of *sui generis* for each country. I found out since that they are - but they aren't. There are certain sort of forms you go through in every country. I'd never seen them. I'd never talked to anybody about them. So you just sort of wing it and hope for the best. The chief of protocol has been through... probably most of the people in a country like Burundi haven't presented credentials before, so they guide you very well. But that was my first day

*Q: You said you wore lavender?*

COOK: Yes, I wore lavender. I think, for good luck, that I wore the same dress that I wore for my confirmation hearing. It was just a lavender silk shirtwaist dress with some flowers on it.

*Q: What does the president wear? Is he in uniform.*

COOK: A suit.

*Q: Oh, he's in a suit.*

COOK: Most of the former military presidents in Africa you only see in their uniforms in official portraits. You don't see them wear them.

*Q: They make a point of not, I suppose.*

COOK: Yes. He's one, you know, who hasn't become a field marshal. He's still a lieutenant colonel, which I think is one of the admirable... it says a lot about him, and about his role.

*Q: What do you think was the reaction of the host country to your being a woman?*

COOK: I think they didn't know America well enough to know... If it had come from any other country they may have been surprised. From America, I think, they thought anything can go.

They were so in the European mold. This is true of most African countries. It's a country where women occupy less senior government positions than most others in Africa, although they named their first female ministers while I was there, which I was very pleased about.

*Q: Do you think because of you?*

COOK: I don't know. I did a lot of things there that other ambassadors didn't do, and I guess I just made a visual impact. I'm not a small person. If I'm in a crowd of Africans I stand out one way or the other.

*Q: They're rather small in stature in Burundi?*

COOK: The people who are running the government there are the famous Watusi tribe.

*Q: Oh, are they?*

COOK: But they are not tall, I'm disappointed to say. I thought I would go to a nation of eight foot tall men.

*Q: I thought they were all eight foot tall.*

COOK: I looked the president straight in the eye when I presented credentials. Now I'm 5'8" and I had on heels so he's probably 5'10", 5'11". I just did a lot of things while I was there that I thought was important for America to support that were symbolic. They didn't have AID figures tied to them, and I think they just got used to me doing that. For example when they had parliamentary elections, the first one in years when I was there, they went around holding big meetings around the country where all the candidates spoke. There was only one party so they were all from the same party. The one in the capital was held in the stadium, and there certainly were no foreigners there except for me. I didn't ask permission to go. I called the minister of interior, who by then was a good friend, and I said, "I just want you to know that I am going." He said, "You are our guest." I went and stood right in the middle of the stadium and it was obvious to everybody.

*Q: You were an observer.*

COOK: Yes, and I was the only foreigner there. I was the only white there. But I thought that this effort at democratization should be supported by the United States. They did the same thing then when the new parliament had its first session. I was the only foreigner invited to the opening session.

*Q: Oh, really?*

COOK: Yes. I talked to them a lot about it. I think it's very exciting to work in Africa because you can promote these kinds of ideas. It wasn't Philadelphia, 1776, but damn it, they were making a step in the right direction. It's something the United States should encourage. I was the only ambassador at that, too. I kept doing things where the others... My European colleagues

tended to be older, near retirement, much more classical in their approach. I was much more sort of involved and committed, more Kennedy, if you will, of being interested in various aspects of Burundi, not just going in and make *démarches* at the foreign ministry, which is kind of the classic way to operate. The Self-Help Program I thought was one of the most exciting things we did, and it's something you can get so much good out of in Africa, there's so little red tape that it has immediate impact on the lives of the people who ask for the grants. Some of the grants were \$2,000, \$3,000, but it would be a fishing cooperative that needed a new boat or something like that. We would just sign the agreement, they would go downstairs and get the money, and we'd go out and visit them. We visited every Self-Help Project in Burundi.

It's called the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund. It's one of the most creative things we have to use in Africa. My understanding is that it's allocated through AID, but it's given to the department to spend, so there's none of the AID red tape with it. You can use it to get around the country, you can use it to get to groups that aren't being helped by some of these big bucks AID projects, the World Bank, or other donors. You can use it and have an immediate impact. We did a clean water project up in the mountains. Burundi has a lot of water, but the water has to be tapped below the surface or else it gets dirty just by being out. We did little pumps, a lot of PVC pipe. I think our maximum dollar total was \$5,000 for a project and it was usually much below that. One requirement was they had to come to the embassy. It was forbidden, you know, for Burundis to go to a foreign embassy at all. They had to come to the embassy and sign a Self-Help agreement. We would talk to them a little bit about their area of Burundi, and tell them America wanted to support their development projects.

*Q: They had to get permission to come?*

COOK: Again, the government people had to. I think the people out in the cooperatives didn't know they had to get permission. When I first got there, I said, "I am not paying out money to people I have not met. They have to come to this embassy, and we have to meet them." So we had a young political-economic officer who would get nominations from missionaries, American missionaries, working in the country, or people who just knew about a cooperative. Sometimes we would get it from, we eventually started getting it from ministries, because they saw it was a very quick expenditure. There was no studies, no study teams, no impact assessments. It was just something with an immediate need. It was small, but often that's all that's needed for a little community. We helped a lot of agricultural cooperatives. We even funded one I was so happy about. All the way to the northern part of Burundi we found a female cooperative!

*Q: Did you?*

COOK: They raised chickens, and boy, did we go visit them and give them money. [laughter] It was the only female project I found the whole time I was in the country. The pol-econ officer, a woman as well and I, we couldn't wait to go see them with their chickens. I wonder how they're doing. I just don't know. We both bought from them when we were up there. We bought chickens and eggs when we went to visit their cooperative.

*Q: You obviously had yourself a wonderful time. What about your DCM? Was there one there or did you select one?*

COOK: There was one there when I arrived which is, I think, standard. He was absolutely first-class. After I had been there about, I think, less than six months, he came in one day and asked if he could extend. "Absolutely." It was someone I did not know before. He did all of the things... I tried to take the DCM course before I went out and FSI wouldn't let me. [laughter]

*Q: You'd never been DCM?*

COOK: That's right. I was just trying to... Some of the things that they teach in DCM course I know he did, and he did them to perfection, and I understand why. Evidently, the highest failure rate in the Foreign Service is DCMs. There are several little techniques they teach them which help. One is letting the person know as soon as they arrive, the new ambassador, that they are in charge, rather than attempting to remain either psychologically or operationally the head of mission.

*Q: How long had he been chargé?*

COOK: I think just for a couple, three months. It wasn't a long one. But he did little things like the briefing book he gave to me in the car on the way in from the airport. I had it on the way in from the airport and attached to the cover was the cable typed out saying, "I have arrived and assumed charge." for me to sign. He did all the little symbolic things. There are other things which I think they're taught at that course. One is that the DCM should take a vacation, in other words get out of the country a few weeks after the new ambassador arrives and not constantly be dogging your steps. It's a way to break, psychologically. He did that. He did all of the sort of right steps. He also was extremely strong on the thing I think you need in these small missions in Africa. I, frankly, if given the opportunity again, wouldn't consider having anybody else but an admin officer, which is what his cone was. He was also a crackerjack political officer. But frequently political officers make their rise through being DCM's. The last thing you need, in these small embassies in Africa, is another political officer, because politics is not that important in these countries. What's important is development, and going out and representing America. You have a political officer. The ambassador basically in these third-world countries gets most of the good information anyway, because it's through the ministers people talk to, and you don't need a third political officer in these small embassies. What you need is somebody to help you manage everything, whether it's budgets, whether it's the admin section, whether it's the GSO, whether it's housing problems, which you spend an inordinate amount of time on. I think any ambassador does. I had never in my whole career given my embassies problems about my housing. When I got there I discovered you know - what's going on now in the Foreign Service: I had people who told me they were going to ask for transfers because they couldn't have x house or y house. He managed that whole problem. It was a post when I arrived that had the highest rate of psychiatric evacuations in the Foreign Service.

*Q: Really?*

COOK: We implemented a lot of programs and three years later we had at least that many if not more extension requests, three or four. A lot of it was luck of the draw, which officers come there, but a tremendous amount of time was spent just on morale issues. He agreed with that



completely and knew how to work the system to do the things they were concerned about and knew how to produce prizes or rewards, and how to try to pull the small embassy together as a team instead of it all going off in various directions. Then when it did come time for him to leave after his extension, I asked for another admin officer there.

Morale is impacted enormously by the little things. Whether it's when your household effects arrive, what condition your house is in, whether your electricity is working, all those kinds of things. He didn't become the super admin officer, we had an admin officer, but he watched over that section very carefully. That was the place to start with morale. It's a 25% post. You've got to worry about things like that. You can't spend your whole time trying to do foreign policy designs for the United States, you've got to spend time on the basics. Then the dividends are enormous in terms of the work product you get. But that's the kind of person that can do that, I think, most effectively.

*Q: Now, you're political cone, right?*

COOK: I don't know what my cone is. I transferred over and I've just been in management since I've been in the State Department. My instincts, I think, are political but I've never had a full-time political job. There's so much about me that...

*Q: You don't fit the pattern.*

COOK: ...is *sui generis*. I have a cone number. I've been meaning to ask what cone they put me in. I truly don't know.

*Q: Let's find out.*

COOK: I think it's interfunctional management direction or something like that. It's not anyone of the classical cones.

*Q: Oh, I see, it's that extra one.*

COOK: I think. I've never asked. It never seemed to be important.

*Q: Ask PER about that.*

COOK: If you find out, let me know.

*Q: I'll let you know. What about your staff? How large was it? How many of what did you have and so forth?*

COOK: You're asking me to go back six years. Let's see. We had four agencies, five by the time I left. We added Peace Corps. We had in terms of Americans, I'd just have to add up the numbers, I don't really know what the... We had four and later five agencies of which the largest by far at the beginning of my tour was AID. Just shortly after I left, the largest one was Peace Corps, when Peace Corps volunteers started coming in. We started two new programs while I

was there. One was the Peace Corps program. Peace Corps had never been in Burundi, and we negotiated a very quick entry. I don't know how they're faring now. I've heard they've had some difficulties, but I think that's not unusual. Then, we started a military assistance program, a very small one, which was strictly IMET [International Military Education and Training.] and will probably remain so, which is military training. I guess it was my old CAO [Cultural Affairs Officer] background again, I thought this whole exchange, getting more Burundis out of the mountains to the States, to see what we were about, could help us more than any single thing in Burundi, because there was a great deal of suspicion. A couple of our ambassadors had been PNGed from Burundi.

*Q: Is that so?*

COOK: Yes. I think it was just a great deal of suspicion. They knew the Belgians and didn't like them, and they sort of thought everybody from outside was like that, you know, involved in their internal politics, and so forth, which we certainly weren't. And so I saw the military assistance program as just another version, another extension of the USIS exchange program. I had one of the best PAOs [Public Affairs Officer.] in the agency, a young woman, who is now PAO in Denmark. She had a really massive exchange program. I think the second largest one in Africa was out of Burundi while I was there. She really believed in this concept, too. She even did things like using Fulbright scholarships for military officers, which some USIA officers wouldn't touch. She said that, and we agreed completely, that these are the people that control, that run the country. So these are the people that you need to know something about the United States. She didn't send them off on the Fulbright program studying military subjects. They went to do, and this was very much Bagaza's idea of how he trained his military, they went off to get master's degrees in mathematics at Penn State. Then they would come back and they would teach both at the military academy and at the University of Burundi. But the point is that they were part of the elite of the country. So we started using, first of all, part of the USIS program for military officers.

Then we got an IMET program which was pure military training, you know, Fort Leavenworth [in Kansas] and so forth. To do that then we had the first ever official visit by defense attachés, and we got them accredited while I was there. They were based in Kinshasa, and they covered all the countries around Zaire. But again they were particularly honored by the Burundis. They came and presented credentials and made a very good impression. The senior defense attaché was a former POW in Vietnam, so I had a particular fondness for him. Then when they came back to Burundi on army day, they were one of only, I think, about three foreign military delegations invited to sit in the tribune with the president. So there was a special, I think... I think my desire to get them to know more about the United States was warmly reciprocated on the other side. I think they felt they needed to know something beyond... because of their distrust - I don't want to exaggerate - but I think part of the reasons for their relations with the Libyans, Cubans, and North Koreans who were also there (not exactly our kind of diplomatic corps, right?) was their distrust of European motives in Burundi. This was the only other way they knew to go. It was a deeply Christian country with a lot of European-educated Burundis, and I think a lot of people weren't quite comfortable with that and were willing to see what else was out there. Now, America never offered any of these things before. They always, of course, asked us for military equipment and this that and the other. We had to go through the painful process that you have to

go through in every country where you start a military program, explaining that we don't give away military equipment to anybody, you know. To the extent that we make terms extremely favorable, it's countries where we have bases, which we didn't contemplate asking for in Burundi. So we got it down quickly to the IMET group of programs. But they kept asking, of course, for equipment. But I think they were pleased to have that and they were very pleased, I think, with what their trainees came back with from military training, and we were delighted with the people they sent. The people they sent, we had two or three a year by the time I left. I would go to the airport and see every one of them off. I would have every one of them to dinner, a group dinner with their senior officers (the military weren't allowed to go to diplomatic houses at all). I told them to have this program they had to do that. It would help them learn something about America to be in an American house before they went to America.

*Q: Of course.*

COOK: So I had them over with their wives and we had a dinner for them. Most of them had never met a foreigner. We had a little dinner for them and I'd go to the airport and see everyone of them off. And if they came back at any point I would see them all when they came back. The first group we sent, they were tops in their class every place they went in the United States. So they worked very hard on it. The problem in any of these countries, of course, is getting people with good enough English.

*Q: Was English as a foreign language part of the USIA program?*

COOK: Oh, yes, we had a large English teaching program, and really very senior people in it. It was just amazing. It was part of the attempt, I think, to move out into the world and away from the European experience that they'd had and did not like. The Belgians, it's an historical fact, did get deeply involved in internal politics and culture in the three countries that they had in Africa, which were Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire, and the Africans did not like that experience. It had been bloody in fact. I think they looked askance. The French were very prominent there in military assistance. The Belgians cut it off after all the slaughters in '72 and the French eventually came in. They became very important, and much more important than the "baddies." But [the Burundis] wanted to spread out. My instincts and their desires sort of met. It's a small country but I think it's a country where we made a lot of progress in that way.

*Q: Were these your initiatives that you have been telling me about?*

COOK: Yes. You know, when you're in a country that is not of prime political interest to us, you have a small AID program. And what you have to try to do - and for this you have to draw on all your previous experiences, and your internal resources, and every visitor that comes through, and all your visits to Washington - to tap the various pots of money that are available in this government. There are a lot of them here. Our [AID program] was \$10 million when I was there, five in development assistance and five PL480. In a program that size the Peace Corps entry or an IMET entry or something like that stacks up OK - and it expands the range of both your contacts and what you're doing for your country. People who served a long time in these countries, or if they had come up through the Foreign Service system, more than I, might be more aware of these programs, but I learned it all really out there - just by talking to people and

figuring out that there were separate spigots you could use. You had to get AF bureau support for it, but they knew what I was doing and they realized that it wasn't in our interest to have a country that was hostile to us there. Burundi was terribly hostile to the US in history. Not only had they expelled a couple of ambassadors, but they were the authors of the "Zionism is a form of racism" resolution at the UN! They'd done various other things along that line that had been way out of proportion to their size. A lot of it I felt over time was just a lack of knowledge of the United States. And fear!

*Q: Fear probably had a great deal to do with it. Was one of the PNGed ambassadors your immediate predecessor?*

COOK: No, it had been... let's see... three or four removed, I think. It's a famous case, anytime you read an article about the translation/interpretation services office here in the State Department. The letter expelling him had been mailed from Burundi to the White House, and it had come over in the batch of letters they always send over from the White House, that are in foreign languages. The interpreter was sitting there just reading it one day, and they'd gotten it three or four weeks after it had been mailed in Bujumbura, by the ministry. We thought it was a very funny example, because the interpreter that read it said, "My goodness." Looked at the date on the letter and realized what they had.

*Q: And the ambassador was still sitting at the post?*

COOK: Yes, and didn't know anything about it.

*Q: Didn't know anything about it? (Laughter) That's funny. Well, not too funny for him. So the State Department had to notify him. You must have had about 35 officers, roughly?*

COOK: Not that many. Our largest was AID with seven officers. So we were smaller than that. We had about an equal number of State. We had contractors... you know AID operates a lot with contractors. So you have a bigger community, to look after, on the official payroll than what it shows in the list of officers.

*Q: How many nationals did you have?*

COOK: I think the whole embassy was under 125. But you have massive GSO sections in Africa, and drivers and so forth. It was still a fair-sized staff even for a country that small. It was the kind of combination that you end up with in Africa. There's always a fair refugee component in most embassy staffs in Africa.

*Q: Is that so?*

COOK: Yes. I think refugees all over the world tend to... it's true of our European embassies as well. There so many refugees working in all of them. I think they tend to congregate around foreign missions because they feel a bit safer. There were equally refugees working in CRS. We had CRS there to handle PL 480.

*Q: Now what's CRS?*

COOK: Catholic Relief Service. And they worked full-time on this program so they were the same as embassy staff, the three Americans who weren't really embassy staff. It was kind of hard when you say, "What was your staff?"

*Q: Because you have odd things.*

COOK: But really are part of your "protection mandate."

*Q: After all the ambassador is responsible for all the Americans in the country.*

COOK: [Nods yes.] The other thing that I tried to do early on there, in addition to making sure that I could travel around the country... There had been a history of missionary expulsion from Burundi, which had recommenced in recent years, which makes me very sad... In the first six months, I went to call on all the [American citizen] ones who were in Bujumbura, who had headquarters there, and there were some unusual groups that I frankly had never heard of, even as an American - a lot of them evangelicals, but I made a point of calling on them, and I went in the middle of the day, in the official car with the flag on the car to make sure the Burundi government knew I was calling on them. I didn't have discreet meetings with them. I went at high noon so everybody could see where I was going. Otherwise, I didn't run around town with the flag on my car all the time (which some young ambassadors or chargés do!). I did it when I wanted to make a point, or when I was going someplace official. I did the sort of standard... You do it for national days or when you're going to call on the president.

*Q: You're very good on symbolism, aren't you?*

COOK: Yes, it's important in that country. So I went around and called on all of the missionaries. From years of living in Africa, they're all wonderful cooks, so you had nice cookies and things at each of the meetings! Sometimes it was just a husband and wife I'd call on. For the Seventh Day Adventists I ended up going there on a day that they had a regional meeting from all over Africa, and they asked me to talk to them extemporaneously, and I did. They're involved in medical and educational work. It's not just proselytizing and religious work, they're doing all sorts of development things all over Africa. Some of them I knew in Burundi had been born in Burundi.

*Q: Really?*

COOK: They'd been there that long. So I made a point of calling on them and sort of expanding the wings of the embassy over them. I also opened up the swimming pool at the residence one day a week to any American resident of Burundi. That translated as the missionaries. It was a work day for us at the embassy.

*Q: To all Americans?*

COOK: Resident in Burundi, and that was exclusively missionaries. People who didn't have any connection to the embassy. There were no private sector people at all, no businessmen. What that meant was the missionaries came, and they came from the hills, way back in northern Burundi. They'd come down because they knew my pool was open to them on Friday. I'd have the full residence staff there. It wasn't a party, I didn't offer refreshments or anything, it was just this was an American house and this was their pool to use one day a week. My predecessor had the pool closed even to embassy employees. I changed that a great deal. It was working on the whole morale issue again.

*Q: When did you let the staff use it?*

COOK: Anytime they wanted to.

*Q: You didn't set aside particular hours?*

COOK: I was very lucky, because of the geography, if you will, of the residential area. There were what the French call a little bosquet, a small little group of tropical trees and so forth, between the pool and tennis court area, and the residence. (I know some ambassadors had to walk through their house to get to the pool.) When I first got there it bothered me that the pool had been closed completely, except for Fourth of July parties, by my predecessor. So I opened it up immediately after going, via a lot of personal angst stuff about the insurance question. Even though I had people sign waivers, in fact they had no legal bearing and I knew that. So if anything happened I could have been in a great deal of personal trouble. Some people look at that very seriously, and say it's not worth the risk. I felt the morale question was worth the risk, and so I opened it up. When I first opened it up some employees tended to come into the house a lot. I'm not particularly a swimmer or a tennis player, although I did like to use it some. I really wanted to have some privacy left, and so the house was off limits. When I first opened it up two or three people came through on three or four different weekends wandering through the house asking the residence staff for something. That, we made very clear, was off limits. They got used to it very quickly and they'd bring their little soft drinks and sandwiches and so forth. I think particularly the embassy people who had children enjoyed having... It was the only really good swimming pool in the country. The one at the hotel wasn't that safe. They didn't do the chemicals and things you should.

*Q: You didn't use it yourself certain hours of the day? Not at all?*

COOK: The staff wasn't that large. It was an Olympic size swimming pool and a wonderful clay tennis court. We had the two-hour lunch break which you have in Africa, so I would often... I could have lunch by the pool and I could swim then and nobody would be there because they wouldn't have time to run back and forth. I never found that there was a real conflict. I entertained enormously at that pool, and I did it because it was American, again.

*Q: You had pool parties, and let people swim?*

COOK: Yes. The poor Burundis had never been to one in their lives. My own personal taste was French food and I had one of the best French chefs working for anybody in the Foreign Service,

but at these pool parties I would always do American food. I made it an American barbecue. It was hot dogs when they arrived and then later in the day there would be grilled chicken and grilled ribs. We had a huge barbecue area down by the pool, and I had constructed next to it a stove that burned peat because one of our projects in Burundi, a big five million dollar project, was using peat as an alternate source of energy. It has among the largest peat reserves in the world. (We were trying to get them to use this form of energy, because their petroleum energy has to be driven overland from the port at Mombasa which is an enormous expense, so we were trying to get them to use peat in various ways.) And by the time I left they were using it in bakeries and so forth. So I had a peat stove built next to the pool. And every time we had a party, I insisted that one pot had to be on the peat stove. My cook didn't particularly like to use it, because he was used to using the charcoal to barbecue. But I insisted that he always had to have one thing on there. The Burundis were always going over there looking at it.

*Q: How do you think of these things?*

COOK: It just seems natural.

*Q: I don't think that would have ever dawned on me to use a peat fire.*

COOK: Absolutely. A lot of them had never seen peat in Burundi. If it's going to be an alternate source of energy for them, then they need to get used to seeing it and they need to get used to seeing it in big houses, not just where the peasants are. One of their national dishes is some form of beans, so we always did our baked beans on the peat stove. They got used to seeing that.

*Q: Slow cooking.*

COOK: Yes, they got used to seeing it and how it works. The cook would explain to them when he had to light it and how long it would last.

*Q: You have to light them well ahead, don't you?*

COOK: Yes. The cook would always be there and he would talk to them about it. There were all sorts of rumors going on that it made this terrible smell, it did this, that, and the other, and they saw it didn't.

*Q: Where did you get your cook, by the way?*

COOK: He was a remarkable man who was first a night guard. We had these guards walking. I had guards walking around my garden with spears. That's the level of security there was! My father took a spear home to Florida. He thought it was the most wonderful thing he saw!

*Q: What I wanted to get into was your relationship with members of the cabinet and other government officials. You've already told me about meeting the chief of state.*

COOK: The persons you need to build on in these countries (it was absolutely true in my case, except I didn't have much of a running field) are the people who have an American experience,

who understand what you're about, and who have a stake in seeing you succeed because it's part of their CV at this point, too. We happened to have one remarkable one in Burundi who became a very good friend. His title was Minister of Energy, Public Works, and Mines. He graduated from NYU and went out of his way immediately when I got there - and he does with every American ambassador, it wasn't just Frances, but we became particularly good friends - For example, he had me over to a dinner at his house [with] about five or six other ministers, and I was told that no foreign ambassador had ever had such an event, even previous American ones. For some reason he'd decided it would be nice. It sort of gave his blessing to my time there. It also helped that he was "first among equals" ( a relative of the president, reputedly) at the time I was there. He wasn't prime minister. They didn't have one. So it helped to have that kind of attention very early on. I hadn't been there two months when that happened. He also happened to be an American baseball and basketball and football nut. Boy, did I get the videotapes in and have private showings for him. [laughter]

*Q: I can imagine.*

COOK: And he enjoyed it enormously. I had Superbowl showings at the residence for a government minister.

*Q: There's all sorts of stuff there to use if you...*

COOK: When I got into trouble, some ministries wouldn't deal with me, not because they were anti-Americans, because they had these very strict rules. They knew if they got outside of the non-fraternization rules they were in trouble. I would call him on things that really mattered to us even if it was totally outside of his area. You can't overuse that or you destroy it. So I tried to use it very sparingly, but several times we really had issues that were very important to us and we just couldn't get any movement out of the government. I would call him, and he would invariably go to bat for us. So that's the kind of person you automatically hold on to in any country, not just in Africa, but in any country. In Burundi we had one, and he happened to be a very good guy so we were lucky on that. He was also the "minister of the peat," among other things. We'd take trips together up country to look at the peat projects and things.

**JOSEPH C. WILSON, IV**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1982-1985)**

*Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, IV was born in Connecticut in 1949. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and after working in a variety of fields joined the Foreign Service in 1976. Wilson has served overseas in Niger, Togo, South Africa, Burundi, the Congo, and as the ambassador to Gabon. He has also worked in the Bureau of African Affairs, as the political advisor to the Commander in Chief, US Armed Forces, Europe, and as the senior director for African Affairs at the National Security Council. Ambassador Wilson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*



*Q: You left there in 1982?*

WILSON: I left there in 1982. Again, my tour was curtailed. Our ambassador to Burundi had received a death threat, and she came to South Africa. A Libyan threat had been made on her life, a threat that was attributed to...

*Q: Who was that?*

WILSON: Frances Cook. She came to South Africa ostensibly to get medical treatment but it was really to get out of Burundi while the police tracked down this threat. She asked me if I wanted to come to be her deputy. That seemed like an opportunity to break out of the administrative officer mold and go on and do something else. So I said, "Yes." It was a stretch assignment; it took awhile to work through the system to make it happen. But Frances, for all her faults, was a strong enough character to make it happen, and she brought me up to Burundi as her DCM.

*Q: Were you beginning to feel a little bit like an African hand by this point?*

WILSON: By that point I was very comfortable in Africa. While in Washington, I had made a couple trips out to a number of different posts looking at their operations. I liked Africans, and I liked the challenges. It was apparent to me from having talked to my colleagues who had worked in other parts of the world that you got much more responsibility in Africa much earlier in your career. I was able to put in a whole new information management system in South Africa while I was there. I was able to spend a lot of money doing things. In Brazzaville, when we reopened the post, I was master of my own destiny. Some of my colleagues were still clipping newspapers in European capitals where nothing much really happened. So I liked it, and so long as it kept offering me challenging jobs, I went along for the ride.

*Q: You were in Burundi from what?*

WILSON: 1982 to 1985. As I said, Frances Cook was the ambassador. She had been the office director for the Office of Public Affairs when I was in the Bureau of African Affairs before going to Pretoria. Frances and I had known each since 1979 when I came back to Washington.

*Q: What was the situation when you arrived in 1982 in Burundi?*

WILSON: The political situation was okay. These were the good years. Tutsi regimes in Burundi had historically come to power in a military coup, either bloody or bloodless. The regimes have traditionally been nominated by the southern Tutsis, who in their caste system are low on the ethnic hierarchy and, as such, had been the recruitment source for the military historically. As they got guns, they got power and became all powerful. When they come to power, they did so on a platform of reconciliation, but because of the fact that 85 percent of the population is Hutu and only 15 percent of the population is Tutsi, eventually they become paranoid. As they become paranoid, they become more authoritarian, and then the cycle of repression began again. When I got there, we were on the good side of that cycle; there was still a lot of talk about reconciliation.

They were in the process of setting up a national assembly. They had local and legislative elections which returned to the national assembly a certain percentage of Hutu. Clearly it was not indicative of the 85 percent strength they had in the population, the demographics, but it at least gave them a voice in the national assembly. So things were fine. It was a good time.

*Q: Can you describe the composition of our embassy there?*

WILSON: We had an ambassador and DCM, a consular officer and a political economic officer. We had a defense attaché that came from the Congo - -Zaire then. We had a USIS operation, and we had a large AID mission with a number of projects that we were on going And then we had a couple of other agencies, including the Peace Corps.

*Q: What was AID doing there?*

WILSON: AID was doing a health project; their big project was the peat project. Burundi has peat bogs, and in the interest of forest conservation, AID was working on a joint venture with the Irish peat bog to exploit the peat in Burundi which could be used as an alternative fuel source to timber. They were harvesting peat, converting it into fuel, developing ovens and pots and pans that would work with peat, because peat gives off a higher heat than charcoal or wood. Then they were subsidizing the sale of it in the open market. The project was never economically viable, but it was interesting. The nature of the peat in Burundi didn't lend itself to being used as a fuel, and the conversion of every kitchen in Burundi from the one that they had been using to another one was just simply out of the question. It never did work, but it was an interesting project.

*Q: I've interviewed Frances Cook, but from your perspective how did she run the embassy and how did she work?*

WILSON: Frances was a very dominant personality, very outgoing. She knew everybody in the country. She defended and promoted U.S. interests and activities with great enthusiasm, and she didn't mince words. Actually I thought she was a lot of fun. She was everywhere. She cut a large swath through Burundian society. She didn't hesitate to tell the Burundians of all stripes what she thought. At that time, Burundi had one of the radical Marxist Leninist socialist fascist military dictatorships that one saw during the Cold War in Africa. Burundi had been the country that had introduced a resolution in the United Nations equating Zionism with racism, I think is what it was, or Zionism with colonialism or something like that; it had been that resolution that had tied the UN General Assembly up in knots for a number of years and put Burundi definitively on the list of countries we didn't value very highly. They were still radicals within the OAU camp and were...

*Q: That's the Organization...*

WILSON: Organization of African Unity. They didn't like "constructive engagement," and they didn't think much of the United States. They were much closer to the Soviet Union and becoming closer to France. The moderation during this time of Burundi's foreign policy moved it from being a close confidante and ally of the Soviet Union to being pretty close to the French.

*Q: The Belgians by this time were pretty much out of it ?*

WILSON: The relationship with Belgium was very similar to the relationship between other African countries and their former colonial powers - sort of love/hate relationship. The Belgians still maintained an interest, but they were only peripherally involved. The Burundians liked Belgium as a country they could beat up on, but they still felt comfortable sending their kids to Brussels or to Louvain to go to university or other schools. I would say that the Belgians exerted less influence on Burundi than, say, the French had exerted on their former colonies historically. Remember that at the time of Burundian independence, I think there was only one or maybe two university graduates; so the Belgians hadn't done a whole lot. There was no real public school system in Burundi worth mentioning.

*Q: That's sort of the pattern that they followed in the Congo.*

WILSON: I think that's exactly right.

*Q: Just to touch on a few things, how did you find the Peace Corps? How were they working?*

WILSON: I've always thought - and this was brought home to me when I was in Burundi - that Peace Corps is one of our best operations in Africa. It gets Americans out to the village level. We learn a lot about Africa that way. We should never underestimate the value to our own people of the Peace Corps program and the value of getting our young people some knowledge about how life is in the rest of the world.

*Q: There are a significant number who went into government, either in Congress or in the Executive Branch, who brought that Peace Corps experience with them.*

WILSON: Yes; more and more. I think Peace Corps volunteers are basically people who are interested in public service generally and find the Peace Corps to their liking, or if they go into Peace Corps, they then find public service to their liking as a calling. We used to have a lot of ex-Peace Corps volunteers in AID. There were a number of former Peace Corps volunteers who were moving up in the ranks of the Foreign Service at that time. They did a great job. We had about 110 Peace Corps volunteers throughout Burundi. They were involved in everything from development of maternal/child health care programs to teaching to all sorts of other activities. Raising fish was one that they did in the interior. To a person, they were great; they were very active; it was a good group; they were motivated. They found the people in the interior to be very welcoming once they got over their sort of innate shyness.

*Q: Here's a quasi-Marxist dictatorial regime. How did you find dealing with the government?*

WILSON: For me, it was my first tour as a DCM, and I learned an awful lot from Frances. She was very good about introducing me, about encouraging me to take initiative, about insuring that I was aware of everything that she was doing so that I could fill in when she wasn't there. My range of contacts was pretty much hers and then some. I ran a basketball team when I was there, for example; so I had a somewhat different range of contacts that came through the basketball

league. Basketball was kind of the national pastime there, and we managed to get some sponsorship for uniforms and balls and what not.

*Q: I would think - one always thinks of the Tutsis as being so tall - that this would be a Tutsi-dominated sport.*

WILSON: Interestingly, in the government of Burundi at the time, the tallest minister was a Hutu and the shortest minister and the most Bantu-looking minister was a Tutsi; only they truly knew how the lineage passed. At the time I was there, they estimated conservatively that the rate of intermarriage was about 35 percent. They have clan distinctions and they have anthropological distinctions that put people in one caste or the other, but in fact there is an awful lot of intermarriage there. It is even more pronounced in Burundi than it is in Rwanda, for example, where when it became independent and had the revolution or genocide that brought the Hutus to power, most of the Tutsis or a good percentage of the Tutsis were driven out into refugee camps. Those who remained in Rwanda afterwards had to carry ID cards. One's identification card designated you as either Hutu or a Tutsi. That was the Rwandan practice. In Burundi it was not like that. They were all Burundians, and you didn't have the minority of the population driven into refugee camps. There were Hutu refugee camps outside of Burundi, but the vast majority of the Burundi population was Hutu. Our basketball team was young and fast. The Minister of Public Works had his basketball team, and they used to beat us pretty regularly, but they were older and savvier. They made up with the experience for what we had in enthusiasm.

*Q: What were the issues of most interest to the embassy in Burundi?*

WILSON: We were concerned in those days about democratization; in other words the political liberalization of the country. We were concerned that the country not fall back into a genocidal type situation as had occurred in 1976; so we were interested that there be put into place structures that would permit the adjudication of conflicts in other than violent manners. We were concerned that the Burundians be able to climb the ladder economically; so we were always looking with them at ways of increasing their GDP.

They produced a cash crop, which was coffee. They had their entire country planted principally in beans. Legumes were the principal staple in their diet; they had rice and they had some other things, and they harvested fish from Lake Tanganyika and from some of the other interior waters and rivers. They were very productive. For all intents and purposes, they were self sufficient in agriculture. But they have a large population relative to the territory that they live in. So they always had to make the land even more productive; they had to come to grips with population growth; and they to come to grips with the incipient, inherent ethnic conflict. Our AID and Peace Corps projects which were designed to provide some humanitarian relief where necessary in the health sector and/or some development-type activities. We built a farm-to-market road in southern Burundi, for example, to help open up some of the farmers to get their coffee crops down to the markets. So those were the sorts of things we were concerned about.

*Q: Did we get involved with the government on human rights and that type of thing?*

WILSON: In those days, we were doing a human rights report every year which meant that to the extent to which there were human rights violations in Burundi, we were reporting on them. For my first two years there anyway, the situation was pretty good and improving, I suppose. 'Improving' is probably a better way of describing it rather than 'pretty good.' There were still arbitrary arrests; the justice system was not very good, and you didn't have a free press, but for the first couple years I was there, things were getting better. The National Assembly permitted additional voices from the Burundian society to be heard. There was a sense of liberalization. Now, from the second to the third year, that changed, and the Bagaza regime - Jean-Batiste Bagaza was the president - became increasingly paranoid and as a consequence became increasingly authoritarian. It began to see enemies among the missionaries, in the churches, and then by extension in the larger Hutu population. We started to see arbitrary arrests, priests being thrown in jail, missionaries being thrown out of the country or being thrown in jail.

*Q: Were there American missionaries there?*

WILSON: There were not very many American missionaries. There must have been one or two. There were some Seventh Day Adventist missionaries there. There were some Catholic, French and Italian Catholic, missionaries and priests there. We may have had some Baptists, I'm sure we must have had some Baptists...

*Q: Usually the Seventh Day Adventists get involved in medical.*

WILSON: That's right. They had a very interesting health center project. They were putting health centers up in the interior, and they were doing it on a sort of a pay-as-you-go; they were trying to develop some sense of shared responsibility for health care between the patients and the providers of medical services.

*Q: Were we going in and protesting, particularly into the third year you were there, about excesses or were we carrying a watching brief?*

WILSON: With Frances Cook, there was no such thing as a watching brief. She was very much your activist ambassador, and she was of that generation which approached the job of being ambassador with great zeal and enthusiasm. We had no Washington guidance whatsoever. If there was a hiccup that we took umbrage at, we were all over them like a dirty shirt.

*Q: How did they respond to this activist American ambassador, and a woman at that?*

WILSON: They loved her. As she pointed out, for the first couple years she was there, she would bang on doors and nobody would answer. Then they got used to her, and they basically began to accept her because she brought things with her. She was good natured; she truly wanted a better future for Burundi, and so she worked very hard to get AID programs in place and to enhance the presence of Peace Corps. Peace Corps got started in Burundi when I got there. I actually brought the document with me which brought the first Peace Corps volunteers there. She had done all the spade work, she had done all the negotiating and she had worked the arrangements to bring this program to Burundi. She did all the negotiating for an IMET program - a military training program - the authorization for which I also brought with me when I came to the country. So

these were all things that she had done. The Burundians saw that she was prepared to work for a better U.S.-Burundi relationship. They understood that the cost of bringing these programs was that they would have to listen to her expressing the views of the United States when they did things that didn't match up with our interests or our concerns.

*Q: Did you find a growing interest, you might say, in the Western form of democracy, and particularly economics, or was the hand of the Soviet Union and sort of the extreme socialist world pretty heavy there?*

WILSON: When I first got there in 1982, it was about the time that the IMF and the World Bank were starting to talk about privatization and the need to develop private sectors as part of a country's economic management strategy. So there was already a lot of interest in seeing how things could be privatized, including the coffee cooperative - the buying system that they had in place. Now, the Burundians, like a lot of other African governments, were always willing to sell off assets that didn't make any money or didn't employ anybody - ventures that lost money and didn't employ anybody's cousins, but there weren't many of those in Burundi. So the pace of privatization moved very, very slowly.

Politically they were interested in our Constitution. Even if they weren't interested in our Constitution, we made sure that they got copies of it, translated it into French so that they would all read and understand it. I'm sure that Frances must have highlighted a few copies to insure that they would focus on the important parts. They were interested in that. I think that they were looking for a way to practice a more modern system of governance, which would allow them to manage the affairs of state more effectively than they had done in the past. The issue, of course, was how much power were they prepared to give up in doing so. The great fear, which remains to this day in these countries, is who's going to be massacred if they give up that one centimeter or one pound too much of power.

*Q: I would imagine that, both in Rwanda and Burundi, every head of family has to figure out when am I going to get the hell out of here, or how am I going to protect my family, or something like that - these massacres occur, particularly since independence apparently; it's more a modern phenomenon.*

WILSON: I think any family with some substance does exactly that. They try to have a way out and a place to go. In Burundi there was still this nightmare of the 1976 massacres. At the time that I was there, everybody was very sensitive to that; people sort of tiptoed around all the core issues. There was no such thing as a "Truth and Reconciliation" Commission. There was no such thing as facing up to the events of 1976. You would come at event somewhat obliquely; people would in confidence tell you the stories of their experiences during 1976, whether Hutu or Tutsi, because the massacres took place both ways. There were 60,000 Tutsis who were murdered during the first couple nights, and then maybe 600,000 Hutu that were killed in the aftermath in a systematic fashion by the Micombero government and by the military.

There was still some sense of reconciliation after the 1976 massacres; people seemed to be focused on that. Towards the end of my tenure in Burundi, the Tutsi regime was getting paranoid again, which is a common thread through the politics of the region. When the Tutsis are in

power, after a while, they get paranoid and then they get oppressive, and then you have essentially a return to some war as they force people into guerilla activities..

*Q: Did the Soviet Union, China, North Korea or North Vietnam play any role there?*

WILSON: The Chinese were building buildings. That's what the Chinese did best. The North Koreans built a building. They built what I guess was going to be the new National Assembly. It was completed the year that I left. I actually went to an event there where President Bagaza spoke for about three and a half hours in Kirundi, which I certainly didn't understand and nobody else in the diplomatic corps understood. But I remember distinctly sitting on these uncomfortable seats that had been put in by the North Koreans to fit people of North Korean stature. They were very tight for somebody over 5'6." Your knees literally were up against the seat in front of you. The Burundians were pretty big people, and the seats were obviously too small. For three and a half hours in this seat listening to the speech in Kirundi was not the most pleasant of my experiences.

*Q: Let's talk a little about the neighborhood. Libya, were they messing around?*

WILSON: A couple of things were happening when I was there. One of our policy requirements was to defend and support "constructive engagement." Burundi was one of the most skeptical countries about that.

*Q: You might explain was constructive...*

WILSON: "Constructive engagement" was a U.S. effort predicated on the notion that if you were going to solve the southern African racial conundrum, you had to do it by persuasion and by evolution and not by fomenting revolution in South Africa. You had to try and maintain some infrastructure in place so that it all wouldn't be destroyed in the process. "Constructive engagement," as it was practiced, solved the southern African problems one by one, beginning with the resolution of the Angolan civil war and then moved on to the independence of Namibia and ultimately to the change of regime in South Africa. It was a concept that was articulated by Chet Crocker in a *Foreign Affairs* article before the election of Reagan in 1980. It was despised by Africans because they saw it as racist, and even if it wasn't racist, they thought that it was way too soft on the apartheid regime of South Africa. You can make a lot of sort of rhetorical money by denouncing "constructive engagement," which the Burundians did.

I remember that the first part of our strategy was to deal with the international implications of the Angolan civil war, i.e., first the Cuban troops in Angola and then the South African troops in Angola. I remember about three weeks after I got there - I was Chargé then because Frances had left the country - I was summoned to the foreign ministry by the then foreign minister, a guy by the name of Edward Nzambimana. He was a colonel who had participated in the coup that brought Bagaza to power. He had been a prime minister and he had been the foreign minister. He was a savvy guy and a real radical. He summoned me to discuss an arcane element of our approach towards Angola. We were negotiating with both sides, or all sides, in the Angolan civil war the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola. The question was would the withdrawals be linked, or would there be parallel movement, which would have come down

to having one South African leave for every Cuban. I spent 45 minutes explaining to the foreign minister what the subtle distinction and differences were between these two approaches and what was on the table. After I left, I went home thinking that I had done a great job in my first meeting as charge' with the foreign minister. I got home and turned on Voice of America. George Bush, who was then Vice President, had just landed in Nairobi, Kenya, and at his airport press conference somebody asked him, "Is there any difference between linkage and parallel movement?" to which he answered "no." So I figured my credibility with this foreign minister was shot after having wasted 45 minutes of his time telling him there was a difference. Fortunately for me, he got fired about three weeks later, and he neglected to tell his successor what a bad diplomat I was.

The Libyans were involved. The Libyans had always had designs on that part of central Africa, and the Libyans had money that they were prepared to spend there. They did things like putting up a library. When I was there, Qadhafi came to visit one time. During the course of his speech he got so vehemently anti-American, virulently anti-American, that somebody pulled the plug on his microphone, which was gratifying to us. The fellow who did it later came to see me to explain to me what he had done and to tell me why he had done it. We were concerned because the Libyans were making menacing noises at that time. In fact, we had some information that they were supporting terrorist activities in the region, supporting activities against American and, in fact, French interests, and some of the stuff that we were seeing then later got played out in west and central Africa a few years later. So, yes, we were concerned about them, and one of our objectives was to make sure that the Burundians understood our concerns about the Libyans. At that time they were fighting a war in Chad with the French along the Aouzi strip. The French and the Chadians were basically fighting the war; we were supporting it. So that was one of our...

*Q: Was the Burundi government concerned about people such as the Libyans getting more involved?*

WILSON: The Burundian position was always 'We understand your concerns. We want to be friends with the United States, even as we're attacking you on "constructive engagement." We want to assure you that we're watching the Libyans closely and we're not going to let them do anything that is untoward or out of hand or that undermines our regime.' That region had had some experience with Libyan involvement. The Libyans had invaded Uganda to defend Idi Amin and the Tanzanians had deployed and defeated Libyan troops and had gotten Amin out of there. So there was some history in the region of Libyan troops actually deploying. Burundi is not a Muslim country. I think maybe less than one percent of the country was Muslim, so they didn't see a Qadhafi library as being terribly threatening to them, or that the Libyans were actually going to be able to convert a bunch of Burundian Catholics to Islam.

*Q: Did Uganda play any role there?*

WILSON: We saw very little of Uganda. Uganda was in a lot of turmoil during the years that I was in Burundi. It was an internal strife. Obote was having troubles; the Obote period was even, if anything, more disastrous than the Amin period. Uganda during these years was pretty much tied up with itself.



*Q: What about Tanzania, particularly on the economic side? We watched Nyerere, with all good will and everybody saying how wonderful it was, essentially destroying the Tanzanian relatively rich economy. Were the Burundis looking at that and taking note?*

WILSON: The relationship between Tanzania and Burundi has always been tense, principally because Tanzania was the port through which a lot of Burundian goods went as well as imports into Burundi. The Tanzanians, by controlling access, were able to exact their pound of flesh from the Burundians. There was also a certain arrogance in the way the Tanzanians approached the landlocked countries. There were also some Hutu refugee camps on Tanzanian territory, and the Burundians were concerned that there would be destabilization efforts being launched from Tanzania anytime that Nyerere decided he wanted to do something. The people in the Tanzanian government were principally from Brururi, which was the southernmost province, bordering on Tanzania; that generated a sort of cross-border understanding and tension. Nyerere was not universally admired in Burundi, to say the least.

*Q: He seemed to be most popular in Scandinavia.*

WILSON: I think that's right. It'll be interesting to see what the revisionist history of the Nyerere era will say about him. There were some things that he did which were pretty successful. For example, I think he actually was pretty successful, at least on the mainland, of forging a Tanzanian identity, but at great cost. Whether or not the cost through the years of bad economic policies were worth the forging of a national identity, I think, is anybody's guess, but I suspect it will be several hundred years, or at least 100 years, before anybody definitively makes a case one way or the other. From my perspective, it was unfortunate that Nyerere became the mediator of the Burundian dispute, because I think there is merit in having somebody who is truly a disinterested party to be the mediator in these things. Nyerere was never disinterested, and Tanzanian-Burundian relations are replete with examples of Tanzanian destabilization efforts of Burundi or at least harassing Burundi over the years. That doesn't make for a good mediator.

*Q: What about Rwanda?*

WILSON: Relations with Rwanda were always tense because you had a Hutu government in power in Kigali and a Tutsi government in power in Burundi; that made for a little bit of concern. After I left, there were massacres in the north in the late 1980s; even during the time that I was in Burundi, there was always concern that the Rwandans were working with Burundian Hutus. The Hutu population was even larger in the north than it was in the south; so along the Rwandan border, there was always concern about that. The relations were strained. The two countries talked to each other. They were part of the Great Lakes Organization, so they all talked to each other. Every now and again Mobutu would mediate some issue between them. But relations were not real cordial.

*Q: You mentioned Mobutu. What about with the Congo, Zaire at that time?*

WILSON: Relations with the Congo were interesting because Mobutu played the regional relationship very much as he played his own domestic politics. He would not hesitate to use the carrot if he felt it necessary or to use the stick. At one time, Mobutu decided that he wanted to

double his defense budget. He took advantage of a Qadhafi visit to Burundi to visit the United States and say that Qadhafi was planning to invade the Congo from Burundi using Burundian troops. He said that Qadhafi had delivered a bunch of Zodiac boats to southern Burundi to effect an invasion across Lake Tanganyika. Therefore, he, Mobutu, was going to have to double the defense budget, and the United States was going to have to come up with some more money. We went and looked for these Zodiac boats everywhere and looked for any evidence of Libyan training and obviously couldn't find any because there was none to be found. So Mobutu would not hesitate to use such excuses. Mobutu occupied a heavy position in the region. He was "the man." The Congo was and is a huge country - potentially very wealthy - 47 million people compared to 4 or 5 million in Burundi and 4 or 5 million in Rwanda. They were all Francophones and they could all deal with Belgium. So he was the predominant power obviously.

*Q: Did you yourself get into any interventions with the Burundian government and people in jail or anything like that?*

WILSON: I don't think we did because I don't recall any. We might have gone and spoken on behalf of a political prisoner, but I don't recall. I just don't think there were that many political prisoners while we were there. My second ambassador, Jim Bullington, had a cook who was a Seventh Day Adventist; he was arrested in late 1984 or early 1985 as part of a round-up of the cultists - i.e. other religions that were deemed by the government to be subverting its authority. Bullington took this as a personal affront, and it became sort of a *cause celebre* for our relationship. The Burundians wouldn't release the ambassador's cook. I know that we must have made some demarches as people were being rounded up, but I just don't recall anymore.

*Q: You were there during the Reagan Administration, and you were mentioning that population was a real problem. Of course, we had our problems, domestic problems, about various forms of birth control, particularly abortion. Did that mean we weren't a player in the population side?*

WILSON: It meant that we didn't run any population control programs and we didn't participate in any programs of the planned parenthood variety that might have either an abortion information component or an abortion component. We did do some maternal-child health care type activities which were designed to enhance the health of both the mother and the unborn child and then subsequently the child. As part of that, we would talk about child spacing. This was principally done by Peace Corps. They would be out in the villages talking to the mothers about the utility of maybe waiting two or three years before you have a second or third or fourth child.

*Q: Was there any sort of equipment available? I'm thinking of condoms, IUDs or something like this. You can have a space, but you've got to have a means to space.*

WILSON: I don't recall. This was before the big AIDS scare, so I don't recall that we were in the business of providing condoms.

*Q: What about AIDS?*

WILSON: AIDS was becoming an issue towards the end of my tour there. We were just beginning to hear stories about this. In fact, I watched a number of friends in Burundi - two aides - pass on in subsequent years. We were already hearing about the route from Mombasa for trucking goods through Uganda, Rwanda and to Burundi. All along that route there were stories about AIDS beginning to affect populations - trucker populations and the prostitute population. Jonathan Mann was in the Congo; he was an American doing research on the AIDS phenomenon and was beginning to write cables about the pandemic that AIDS was going to become.

*Q: Were there any great crises while you were there?*

WILSON: We had a drought during one of the years that I was in Burundi. It would have been 1983-84, or 1984-85. There was a lot of concern that the harvest would come up short and that they would need some additional food products. We actually got ahead of that. It was at a time when we were doing this air relief into Ethiopia because nobody had seen the consequences of the drought there. We'd seen it a year ahead of time and we'd managed to organize Catholic relief services and some of these groups as well as USAID began to report on this. We were submitting of reports on the weather throughout the country and trying to plot whether or not the harvest was going to come up short. As a consequence we were actually able to stockpile several thousand tons of food products on the east coast ready if needed to be shipped to Burundi and we did. We had enough stockpiled so that we were able to use some of these stocks that we planned for Burundi for other relief requirements. We were pretty pleased with that - that we had actually put into place an early warning system. We were pretty gratified about that. Other than that, we went through the good periods and then we started going through the bad periods. Then my three years were up and I moved on.

*Q: Were we looking for a political cycle or was there one almost well established that could be predictable enough for paranoia to set in or was this something that you more or less realized in hindsight?*

WILSON: We could see it coming. It was curious. The cycle sort of changed about the time that France gave up sovereignty. Just before she withdrew, we started seeing a reaction to missionary activities and religious activities. If anything, Washington was reading our reporting and was saying, "Gee, Frances, maybe you've got "clientitis," because she was pretty enthusiastic about the changes that were being made. When Jim Bullington came out, he took a cold, steely-eyed look at the situation, and he started reporting from his perspective. In fact, the situation was changing. We had gone from a pretense of democratization to authoritarianism, which culminated in the arrest of his cook, as I mentioned. We began to use a different slant on our report, but it was pretty clear that this was a cycle that Burundian regimes went through. In fact, you needed to put in place, I think, as many safeguards as one possibly could as early as possible in the hopes that they would not all be destroyed when the subsequent paranoia set in these regimes. Curiously, after we sort of identified the new trends, we were criticized for being too critical. Go figure.

*Q: This was a period during which, I think, we were beginning, particularly in Africa, to look at the non-governmental organizations as being a real potential tool of influence rather than being*

*sort of outsiders mucking around with government controls. I'm talking about the NGOs. Did you see this?*

WILSON: Yes; we saw it principally when we looked at humanitarian relief. Catholic World Relief Services, Catholic Relief Services, had been a partner with USAID on some of our "Food For Work" and "Food For Peace" programs. Our farm-to-market road had been financed through "Food For Peace;" it was managed by Catholic Relief Services. They would bring in all the food and distribute it. When we geared up for the potential drought, we used them exclusively. We were still early in Burundi's development so that only the traditional NGOs were there. Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief, and the Seventh Day Adventist groups were the ones that were most active. There was not yet the explosion of other NGOs. They were viewed with a mixture of appreciation and suspicion by the host governments. What were all these guys doing there? There was also the growth of some of advocacy groups at that time as well. That meant that in addition to our human rights reporting, interested parties were starting to get reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, some of which were consistent with what we were reporting and some of which went further than what we were reporting. They had some different information on some subjects than we had. They had different takes on the threats to organized religion by the government. So we had these two groups, which confused the NGO picture somewhat because in some people's minds it was not clear whether they were an NGO development group or an NGO advocacy group.

*Q: At that time when you were there, were they working together?*

WILSON: You can't generalize. The traditional ones worked very well together. The Seventh Day Adventist project was a great project, and they worked very well with the Ministry of Health. They worked best with those ministries that were underfunded and overburdened. Catholic Relief Services was good in the distribution of food to those who needed it. The Adventists were good in developing the health centers.

*Q: We were talking about that there were no college graduates in Burundi. Did you find that there was a pretty sophisticated government structure by this time or not?*

WILSON: The government structure was principally a military government, so all the key players were military officers. The military, as is true in so many of these little African countries, was the only organization worthy of the term 'organization.' Burundi had people who had been educated, but not in a liberal arts education; it was a military education. By the time I got there in the 1980s - 20 years after independence - there was a generation of educated Burundians, mostly Tutsi, but they were all pretty young. The ministers were in their early 30s, for example. Bagaza himself was only 36 at the time. So it was a pretty young regime. They focused on education - trying to get people educated - but they had a long way to go because during the 1976 massacres, one of the principal targets for execution were every educated Hutu. They assumed that a Hutu with glasses was an educated Hutu. Therefore, wearing glasses was a death sentence. After that, you can imagine that in Burundi society the desire for education was not universal, to say the least. There was a sort of paradox. The people that we dealt with mostly were educated. A lot of them had been educated in the East because the Soviets and the East Germans had put a lot of money into bringing these people into their systems. One of my principal interlocutors had been

educated in Bulgaria, of all places. That background gave some Burundians an ideological baggage which gave them a Marxist understanding of how economies ought to be structured and managed. They did not always have a great education. Increasingly there are people who were going off to Belgium and some that are going off to France, because France was offering some education. There were some that had gone off to the States either on Fulbright scholarships or some AID program that provided them some education. I had always thought that the fall of Berlin Wall presaged basically the cutback in scholarships from Eastern Europe. If there was ever a void to be filled, that was it; we could have filled relatively inexpensively and we would have been able to train literally an entire generation of African elite along Western - more politically and economically liberal - lines.

*Q: I was in Yugoslavia in the 1960s when almost an entire African student group said, "The hell with this." They arrived in Belgrade and said, "Get us out of here. We're being called black monkeys and all this." They weren't getting any real education in the East. We took a lot of them and sent them off to pretty good places.*

WILSON: We should have continued to do that. We never should have let that opportunity pass. There were a lot of them going off to China, a lot going off to the Soviet Union. Actually it worked in our favor because many would come back with real ambivalence if not outright hatred of their experience.

*Q: Those countries were not able really to absorb foreigners, particularly black foreigners. They used the term 'black monkeys' which was muttered in front of them, and the Africans knew enough Bulgarian to understand. It was not a pleasant experience.*

WILSON: That's right.

*Q: When you were in Burundi, did you have anything to do with gorillas?*

WILSON: G O R I L L A S as opposed to G U E R I L L A S. There were some mountain gorillas in eastern Congo - then Zaire - in the Kivu region. There were also gorillas in Diane Fossey's area in Rwanda. There were no gorillas in Burundi, but we used to go over to Bukavu fairly frequently to see the gorillas. A friend of mine was the head of the Peace Corps training program there. All the new Peace Corps volunteers were trained in Bukavu before the Congolese wars; so we used to go over there and talk to the new Peace Corps volunteers and take advantage of such occasions to go see the gorillas, which was a lot of fun. It was one of the more interesting things you could do - trek through the forests and run across a family of gorillas complete with silver backs and the little ones, and learn the etiquette and protocol of approaching a group of gorillas in the forest.

I was in Burundi obviously, as I mentioned earlier, from '82 to '85, which was a good time in Burundi.

**JAMES R. BULLINGTON**

**Ambassador  
Burundi (1983-1986)**

*Ambassador James R. Bullington was born in Tennessee in 1940, and received his BA from Auburn University in 1962, when he entered the Foreign Service. His assignments abroad include Hue, Saigon, Quang Tri, Chiang Mai, Mandalay, Rangoon, N'Djamena and Contonou, with an ambassadorship to Burundi. In 2001 Ambassador Bullington was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: You went out there when?*

BULLINGTON: It was April or May of '83. We got there in time to do the Fourth of July reception.

*Q: Of '83.*

BULLINGTON: '83.

*Q: And you were there how long?*

BULLINGTON: Until after the Fourth of July reception in '86.

*Q: Bad timing.*

BULLINGTON: I couldn't avoid that.

*Q: Well, in the first place, I've got a map in my eyes, Burundi is the lower or upper one?*

BULLINGTON: It's the lower one.

*Q: Lower one. Rwanda, Burundi are always going together.*

BULLINGTON: They're twins.

*Q: Lower one. What was the situation in Burundi when you went there?*

BULLINGTON: It was difficult. Burundi and Rwanda are truly twins. They're about the same size; they were both former Belgian territories, League of Nations mandates. They were originally colonized by the Germans in the 1890s, but they were awarded to the Belgians after World War I, under the League of Nations. They both have the same ethnic makeup, about 75-80% Hutu, and about 15-18% Tutsi, with a few other sorts of people. The conflict has been between the Tutsis and the Hutus. Long before the Germans came, both Rwanda and Burundi had been Tutsi-ruled kingdoms in more or less the current geographic boundaries of what is now Rwanda and what is now Burundi. So this is not one of the many cases in Africa where the white colonialists came in and drew stupid boundaries and got different ethnic groups all mixed up. It was that way when the Europeans got there - two Tutsi-ruled kingdoms in what is now Rwanda

and Burundi. When the Belgians were forced to give them independence in 1962 they took different paths. In Rwanda the majority Hutus took over and proceeded to persecute the Tutsis. In Burundi just the opposite happened. The minority Tutsis were able to maintain themselves in power and proceeded to do nasty things to the Hutus, denying them access to education and all positions of power. In 1976 there was a Hutu uprising in Burundi that was viciously suppressed in what amounted to a genocide. It was not quite on the scale of what happened in Rwanda in 1994, but still tens of thousands of Hutus were slaughtered after they had unsuccessfully tried to overthrow the government. It was said that the Tutsis either killed or forced to flee the country every Hutu with more than an elementary school education. As time went on each of these situations played off the other. In Burundi the Tutsis could say 'See, see Rwanda, what has happened there, what they have done to the Tutsis, and how nasty they've been. That's what will happen to us if these guys ever get power here.' Same thing in Rwanda. They said 'See, see these Tutsis in Burundi, what they did to our brethren there. That's what they will do to us if we give them half a chance.' So the two problems reinforced each other. In 1983, when I got there, Burundi was fairly calm, but it was only a calm imposed by the Tutsi military government. They held all the important levers of power, most importantly the Army. There were no Hutu army officers, none. There were no Hutus, except a few tame ones they had co-opted, at any significant level of government. The Tutsis ran things, keeping the country quiet, but suppressed. The government was paranoid. They saw enemies everywhere, particularly Europeans and Americans. They saw us as people who wanted to come in and organize the Hutus in a rebellion that would overthrow them. Harassment and expulsion of missionaries was one of the things that I dealt with from the beginning. There were still twenty or thirty American missionaries as well as a lot of European missionaries.

*Q: The Americans were mostly Protestant.*

BULLINGTON: The Americans were all Protestant. The Europeans were almost all Catholic. But both groups were equally mistrusted as foreign agents who were working to support and educate the Hutus who would eventually rise up and overthrow the Tutsi government. So the government didn't like missionaries, and they were suspicious of the countries from whence the missionaries came. They were suspicious of almost anything we did. We had an AID mission there. For a rural road construction project, AID had shipped in several boxes of machetes, to clear brush along the road. The government seized those machetes, and said 'This is obviously something you're planning to hand out to the Hutus to come and slaughter us!' It was paranoia. They were constantly harassing and expelling the missionaries. One of my closest allies became the Papal Nuncio. I worked with him to try to moderate such problems. The biggest crisis we had, however, was over our diplomatic pouches. The American government, unlike any other as far as I can tell, allows its personnel to use the diplomatic pouch for personal mail, including packages. Consequently the American pouches are physically bigger and more numerous than any other country's. This has been going on for a long time, but one particular pouch shipment came in that was especially huge. There were thirty large diplomatic pouch bags addressed to the U.S. Embassy. Because of their paranoia the Burundi government seized them and wouldn't let them out of the airport. They said 'This is surely a shipment of arms to arm the Hutus and overthrow us.' This led to a serious confrontation that lasted several months. We had no idea what was in those pouches. And the State Department couldn't tell us what was in them. They

just came through the U.S. mail. Nobody had opened the boxes they contained. Nobody knew what was in those pouches.

*Q: Was anybody in your Embassy waiting for something?*

BULLINGTON: Not that we knew of. No one had ordered any personal mail of that bulk. But it was not only those particular pouches; they then blocked all the subsequent ones that came in. So that stopped both our official pouch mail and our personal mail. This was just before Christmas, November of 1985. So nobody got Christmas presents for the kids and other things we'd ordered. This went on for about three months. We didn't even get the checks that were in the pouches that were needed to pay the rents for our housing and salaries for our local employees. We didn't get medical supplies. We didn't get all these things that normally come through the pouch. This made it very difficult to operate the Embassy. Also, there's an important principle involved, the inviolability of diplomatic pouches, which could have repercussions far beyond Burundi. I was doing everything I could to try to get a resolution, but the government wouldn't budge. Finally, I wanted to begin gradually shutting down the Embassy, to say 'Ok, we can't pay our rents, we can't pay our salaries, we have to start laying people off, and eventually we'll just close up and go home.' I didn't think our interests in Burundi were important enough to justify caving in on the principle of inviolability of diplomatic pouches. The Africa Bureau took another view and said no, we should try to accommodate them, don't make any threats, just stick it out and eventually the problem will go away. Some parts of the Department whose interests were more focused on pouches and diplomatic procedures and the precedential implications of the situation seemed to share my view, but my instructions came from the Africa Bureau. They said no, don't do anything, just live with it. After three months I decided we couldn't live with it much longer, and we ought to do something one way or another. By interpreting my instructions, let's say, very liberally, the solution I came up with was to invite the Foreign Ministry to send their people into the Embassy along with the pouches that were at issue, and observe us as we opened them. I didn't know what was in them, but I knew damn well it was not arms or anything else that the government of Burundi had any legitimate reason to be concerned about. Whether or not the Department would have approved this procedure I'll never know, but anyway we did it. The pouches were opened and the contents turned out to be seeds addressed to Peace Corps. The Peace Corps director had gotten an offer from an American seed company that said 'we have some seeds we'd like to give to Peace Corps Volunteers to plant.' She thought she was ordering these little packages of seeds that you get at hardware stores. Instead of little packages, they were gross lots of five hundred packages. So that's what caused the diplomatic confrontation, pounds and pounds of Peace Corps seeds. Although the problem was solved, I don't think the Africa Bureau much liked me for resisting their instructions just to do nothing and wait it out.

*Q: Did you have much contact with Rwanda, our Embassy in Rwanda?*

BULLINGTON: To some extent. I visited John Blaine, our Ambassador there, during the first part of my tour. But it wasn't a daily kind of thing.

*Q: Given the history of those places, one would almost be taking the temperature every day of the Hutu-Tutsi relationship, was it sort of known that at any time this could blow up?*



BULLINGTON: We were concerned about it because in Burundi it had blown up less than ten years previously, in 1976, in a terrible massacre. We knew it could happen, but the government had been successful in keeping the Hutus so suppressed that there was no visible internal threat at that time. There were Hutu opposition movements based in Brussels and across Lake Tanganyika in eastern Congo, Zaire at that time. But they weren't really doing anything inside the country. There was no significant fighting at the time I was there, but it was always a potential.

*Q: Was there at that time a Hutu educated class and all?*

BULLINGTON: No, they had wiped it out in 1976, and didn't permit any more Hutus to get advanced educations or to rise to leadership positions. Almost all educated Hutus were outside Burundi.

*Q: Well this must have put quite a crimp on the missionaries didn't it? I mean did you find yourself having to sit on the missionaries?*

BULLINGTON: We tried to intervene on their behalf with the government, to keep the government from expelling them and doing nasty things to them. The Seventh Day Adventists were one of the groups that were active there. My cook was a Seventh Day Adventist. He had been the cook for previous Ambassadors for several years. The government had a *corvée* labor system, inherited from colonial days, where they would assemble people supposedly on a voluntary basis, but basically they just rounded them up, and made them do things like repair roads. Saturday was the appointed day for this communal labor. This poses a problem for faithful Adventists, who are not supposed to work on their Sabbath. They refused to do the Saturday labor, but they offered to do it on Sunday or some other day. Since they were all Hutus, the government wouldn't accept this and threw the Adventist leaders in jail. They also jailed my cook. This was during one of the times we'd been having some controversy with the government, about the pouches among other things, and I was pretty well convinced that they had picked on him because he was my cook. He was not a minister; he was not a leader of the Adventists. There were thirty, forty thousand Adventists in the country and yet they only put forty or fifty of them in jail, but he was one of them. I think that they did it because he was the American Ambassador's cook. 'We'll show you Americans, you can't mess with us.' Jail is not a nice place to be in Burundi, especially for doing nothing but maintaining one's religious faith. I was trying to get him out. This was near the end of my tour, and I wanted to make a personal appeal to the President during my farewell call on him. When I told the Department this, the Department hemmed and hawed and eventually told me no, don't do it. Their stated reasoning was that this would be unfair, that we couldn't get all the Adventists out of jail so we shouldn't intervene on behalf of my cook. That infuriated me.

*Q: It's nice when you don't ask.*

BULLINGTON: Right. In hindsight I would not have. But I thought it was so automatic, I was just submitting the list of the things I would be reviewing with the President on my farewell call, and on the list was an appeal to release my cook. I never imagined that there would be a problem

with it. I told them that this was a very curious moral position, to say that because we cannot save everyone we will therefore save no one.

*Q: Sounds like the lawyers got into it.*

BULLINGTON: Yes, probably. The decision came to me from the Africa Bureau. I wrote some, let's say, rather heated remonstrances. Finally, after considerable discussion, I did what I felt was the right thing, appealed to the President, and got my cook out of jail.

*Q: Well now, who was the President of Burundi?*

BULLINGTON: Jean-Baptiste Bagaza. The year after I left he was overthrown in a military coup by the current President, whose name I can't recall.

*Q: It'll come. But what was your impression of, what were our relations with the government, could you talk to them?*

BULLINGTON: You could talk to them, but not very productively. They were so suspicious, literally to the point of paranoia. They saw us as wanting to overthrow them when we didn't. We didn't much like this government, but we certainly weren't plotting to overthrow them or arm Hutus or anything remotely approaching that.

*Q: Were there any other countries, how about the role of the Belgians, was it all a role or?*

BULLINGTON: They were a major influence there, as were the French. Certainly economically, they provided more aid than we did.

*Q: Did you feel they were at all fishing in troubled waters?*

BULLINGTON: The French or Belgians? No, not really. They would have liked to the extent possible to see some improvements in human rights, but no country was working to bring that about in the sense of trying to overthrow the government.

*Q: At that time, was there concerns about the growth of population then?*

BULLINGTON: Burundi and Rwanda are the two most densely populated countries in Africa. It was obvious, at least to me, that there was no way they could accommodate the kind of population growth they were experiencing and have any hope of achieving economic development.

*Q: Were we able to do anything, did we have anything on birth control or anything of that nature?*

BULLINGTON: No, we didn't. Others did, some UN agencies and NGOs, but we were not active in that.

*Q: Did we have any aid going on there?*

BULLINGTON: I expect we do now.

*Q: But at that time...*

BULLINGTON: At that time? Yes, we had a small AID mission. I looked at the AID mission and discovered that the total amount of assistance it was dispersing was on the level of a million dollars per year, a very small amount. To maintain that AID mission with its staff and overhead was costing well over a million dollars a year. This did not make sense to me, and I recommended that it be closed. The Department didn't want to do that.

*Q: Well this is often, we talk about the AID money we're giving to a country, and yet we throw in the cost of the AID mission.*

BULLINGTON: Particularly when it's tiny like that you're spending more on housing and staff than actual money going to economic development.

*Q: What about tourism?*

BULLINGTON: No. None.

*Q: The mountain gorillas were up in Rwanda.*

BULLINGTON: In Rwanda, yes. There are no wild animals left in Burundi, because it's so densely populated. There's not a lot to see there. It's a beautiful country, though, with one of the best climates in the world. Lake Tanganyika is there, a beautiful lake. Lots of mountains. But it's so densely populated that unless you like seeing a lot of little bean fields and rural huts, there's not much there for tourists.

*Q: Any problems from Tanganyika or Zaire?*

BULLINGTON: Right across the lake is Kivu province of Zaire. It was as always very unstable. There was all sorts of banditry and very little government control, but it didn't really spill over into Burundi when I was there.

**DENNIS HAYS**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Bujumbura (1985-1988)**

*Ambassador Hays was born into a US Navy family and was raised in the United States and abroad. He was educated at the University of Florida and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1975, he spent the major portion of his career dealing with Latin American, particularly Mexican and Cuban, Affairs. He*

*also served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Burundi, and from 1997 to 2000 as U.S. Ambassador to Surinam. Ambassador Hays was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2001.*

*Q: How did all this weigh in? What came next for you?*

HAYS: Actually, very directly. My onward assignment was as DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) to Bujumbura, Burundi. It's kind of a rule of thumb that if you haven't heard of the place before you enter the Foreign Service, you need to think about twice about whether you want to go there. I was interested in it because I wanted to be a DCM or a chargé. I was chosen for that job by the then Ambassador Jim Bullington who had never met me, never spoken to me, but knew me through AFSA and so that was one of my bids and he chose me. As an admin cone officer and as an O-3, I don't think I would've been picked to be a DCM other than the fact that I had the AFSA experience under my belt. So it carried on to that.

Bujumbura was kind of the end of the world. I remember telling my family, my dad was in the quarters right across from the State Department on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street where the Vice Chief lived, and the Redskins were in the Super Bowl getting crushed by Oakland. The final piece fell in place and I knew that I was going to Bujumbura, Burundi, and so there was a mad scurry for maps and atlases. But it was good. There was a transition when I was on the Ewing Commission which was sort of my last AFSA action. It with the mid-career course here at the Foreign Service Institute. I went in determined to defend it and came out determined to kill it. It just wasn't doing what I hoped and thought it could do. I didn't see any way for it to get to where it needed to be. One of our last meetings I attended was at the expense of going shopping with my wife for last second purchases to go to Burundi so I paid the price for that Commission, I want you to know.

*Q: We appreciated that. As I recall aside from the content of responsibilities, you were chosen by Undersecretary Spiers. He appointed the commission, and it seems to me, because I didn't know you, I think he asked that you be on it. I was very agreeable.*

HAYS: Thank you.

*Q: Let's go on with Bujumbura. Did you have French?*

HAYS: I had college French, and I had gotten off language probation by taking early morning French.

*Q: So you didn't have any brush up or any more preparation?*

HAYS: No. I could've used it and would have liked to have it, but there was no time.

*Q: And so you went there the summer of 1985, and the ambassador was still Jim Bullington?*

HAYS: Yes.

*Q: Talk a little bit about what you found there, in terms of the problems of the country and to what extent the cleavages that we have come to connect with Burundi and Rwanda present at the time you went.*

HAYS: By the time I got there in 1985, it had been thirteen years since the end of the last set of massacres. At that point there had been about 180,000 people killed, the vast majority of them Hutu – like Rwanda it's a Hutu-Tutsi question, the Tutsi being nomadic herders and the Hutu being Bantu farmers. It was a feudal society that had existed for hundreds of years. Colonialism was a very light mantle on these countries. They were an appendage to the Belgian Congo after they had been originally German colonies. After World War I, they had been given over to Belgium. Interestingly, my German colleague noted that every month there were three guys who had fought for the Germans – they were Burundians who had fought to the German army in World War I – and they were still getting pensions 65 or 70 years later.

The Tutsis, when they conducted the last set of massacres, had systematically gone after every Hutu who had any education at all, even elementary school education. They would go into villages and kill all Hutu. The idea was to prevent the Hutu for at least a generation from presenting any kind of threat in the sense that they're educated and in touch with the modern world. So that had happened, in addition to the 180,000 dead, there were 200,000 who had fled with some still living in refugee camps in Tanzania and a few over in the Congo (Zaire). But you were starting to see some Hutu who had been to the university in Europe, let's say, and now had come back to the country. At this point, it was just beginning to be an issue again. The feeling was pretty upbeat though at the time. There was a sense that it was a new world, and that some accommodation was possible. Actually, one of my clearest memories of the humbling experiences in my diplomatic career was being at dinners and arguing that the Burundi really didn't need to worry about a repeat of the '72-73 massacres because in the modern day (1985), the world would no longer permit such a thing happening. Between CNN, and the New York Times, and Paris Match, the U.N. and everything, there was no way that a slow motion massacre like that could take place. The world just wouldn't let it happen. Well, of course, the world did let it happen and not too long after that. I was completely wrong on that point, but I believed it at that time and argued and worked for that.

There was a military strongman Jean-Baptiste Bagaza who was in charge. He had taken over in a coup from Micombero, his cousin, who in turn had taken over from the King who was deposed in 1964 or so. You had the Tutsi in control of Burundi and the Hutu who had taken over in 1959 in Rwanda, and there was no thought at all that Rwanda would ever be anything other than Hutu-dominated. They were 90% of the population; how in the world could they do anything but rule the place? There was this strain as I remember of this sort of melodic cousin culture that was active in Uganda at this point. The Dinka are sort of considered in this crowd. Along the Great Lakes region of Central Africa there were these sorts of contacts that were taking place. But we were more concerned at the time about Bagaza's engagement in a power struggle with one of the few groups outside his control, the Catholic Church. He was engaged in a series of repressive measures against foreign priests, local priests and what have you.

Another key issue at this time was AIDS. In the mid-eighties it was clear that something was happening, and it was out there, but there was no definitive answer as to exactly what it was and

exactly how you got it. So there was concern in the mission, and me too with a second baby being born around this time; what if it's mosquito borne or waterborne or if it's casual contact skin-to-skin contact that transmits this? So there were people at post who were seriously thinking that we needed to leave; it was one thing for me, but I'm not going to put my kids at risk. The State Department medical officer, the RMO, came through and was reassuring to the point that he could be, but when asked the specific question if he could guarantee that this is not transmitted by mosquitoes or whatever, the answer was no, we can't guarantee that at this point.

There was a Belgian researcher who was doing work secretly on this (what became AIDS), because Burundi didn't want to admit that this was going on even though Burundi was one of the first nations to really take a hit in this area. The other thing that was happening, of course, was that the Tutsi elite tended to be more at risk because they had more sexual partners. In your Mercedes you can drive to more places than if you have to walk from your hilltop to somebody else's hilltop. So in the army, in particular, a lot of people were getting ill and wasting away. To keep things in proportion though, many, many more people were dying from malaria every year than would die from AIDS and more people probably died from cholera and maybe yellow fever. Certainly malaria was a killer, and the family members of the staff were dying of malaria and so the government was downplaying all this. I can remember several, kind of clandestine meetings with the doctor to get his best sense which turned out to be not too far from where the scientific community ended up. At the time, it sounded pretty radical, pretty strange.

One quick anecdote: the ambassador from Zaire died of AIDS at this time. His successor came in and had the house literally stripped: all of the curtains and the furniture was taken out and burned, they ripped down wallpaper, tore up the floor boards; he wanted to replace everything in the house. But there was one part that I thought was the most interesting: he had his deputy drive around in the ambassadorial Mercedes for a couple of months just in case there was a spare microbe. And after he seemed to be doing OK, he said OK we'll take it back and it became the chief of mission vehicle again.

*Q: Let's talk a little bit about the size of the U.S. embassy, and perhaps a word or two about what were perceived to be U.S. interests in Burundi at that point.*

HAYS: We were a pretty small mission. State had a political/economic junior officer, there was me, the ambassador, a consular officer, and an economic/commercial guy. AID had a modest mission, a guy by the name of George Bliss when I started, and they had two or three mostly demonstration farm projects that tended to be their big thing.

One of the things I worked on and we got during my time, was a Peace Corps presence, although it was a mixed success at best. Burundi is a tough place to operate in. Both the Hutu and the Tutsi tend to be very reserved, they don't make friends easily, they don't trust outsiders, the language is all but impossible for anybody who wasn't born there and grew up there and French, once you kind of got past the settlements, had died out. You could get by with Swahili and most of the Peace Corps ended up learning Swahili rather than Kirundi. Kirundi is just impossible. There weren't that many paved roads in the country at that point. There were stretches where the predecessors of SUVs no-shock jeeps and trucks were the only way you could get there. Burundi and Rwanda were the most densely populated countries in Africa at the time, mostly because

they were small countries, but they had a lot of people. It was subsistence farming; since the country was predominantly mountainous you had families who worked their way up the mountain. If you had more than one son you would divide up the land, and there wouldn't be enough to raise a family so you would have to move further up and steeper up the mountain which led to erosion and problems along those lines. The Belgians had tried to institute terracing as a method, but they went about it in a kind of brutal way – get out there and do your terracing without explaining why or what. After independence, there was a feeling in the general population that this was something their colonial masters wanted them to do and therefore they were going to go back to the way they had always done it for hundreds of years. The difference was they hadn't worked their way up the mountain quite as much and erosion wasn't quite such a problem, but it was always a concern in terms of eating. We had some food programs to try to deal with that.

*Q: Did AID have any population programs? Family planning?*

HAYS: I don't remember specifically if there was anybody who dealt with that. It may have been a component in someone else's program.

*Q: And I assume in the embassy proper there was an administrative officer. Was there a Public Affairs Officer, USIS (United States Information Officer)?*

HAYS: Yes. It was David Lambert, and we had an admin officer. We were supposed to have a GSO (General Services Officer), but sometimes we did and sometimes we didn't.

*Q: And then you were covered by the Regional Medical Officer from Nairobi?*

HAYS: For a while from Nairobi and for a while from Kinshasa.

*Q: And there were probably some other regional people who came through periodically?*

HAYS: Yes. There was an RSO (Regional Security Officer), and there was the usual sort of standard folks, but we didn't get a lot of visitors. We were not on the main beaten path for people to come and see us.

*Q: That was probably also true of your families?*

HAYS: Exactly. Not too many families get out to Burundi.

*Q: Was there much travel within the country or were you pretty much confined to Bujumbura?*

HAYS: You could travel down along the lake, and you could go inland to an AID farm which was about a four-hour drive. There was the road that went up to Rwanda and then there was the road to Zaire. And pretty much that was it. One nice feature was the lake, Lake Tanganyika was there and so the embassy had emergency evacuation boats in case we needed to flee to Zaire, and in case not everyone can fit into the boat it was necessary to put someone on sticks behind the boat to carry out an evacuation. So that was quite pleasant, and the best fish in the world, a Nile

perch, was out of there. There were also crocodiles, and twice there were people in the international community who were killed while I was there. A twelve year old French boy got snapped up.

*Q: So if you're water skiing it was important to stay on the skis?*

HAYS: It was. Most of the crocodiles were on the border so we would go out into the middle of the lake and ski out there. Of course, periodically there would be an overachiever who would cut across the lake to get the other side. You did have to worry about that. Fortunately, in the American community that was not a problem. But it was difficult to get to places. It was expensive. To get to the States was a two day operation and very expensive; you go to Brussels or Paris and then on over. Nairobi was a big town and once in a while you would go there just to see a city, but they were already starting to have their crime problems and so it wasn't total rest and relaxation.

*Q: And Zaire probably wasn't so good?*

HAYS: It was never an option. We did go to Bukavu. It was a beautiful little town, but already sort of fading. They had mountain guerrillas there, and I once went with a group from the embassy. It was pretty neat and I enjoyed it. That was in Zaire.

*Q: Now, the American community was pretty much just the official community and the Peace Corps volunteers? Or were there some other Americans?*

HAYS: There were some others. There was a missionary presence that was fairly big – in total including children probably 80 or something like that. There was a very small American business community; one of the oil companies was interested in drilling and they had a resident manager American there. It was interesting in the way colonialism washes people up. There was a fairly good-sized Greek community – most of the fishermen were Greek and did the trading and we had all this “made in Swaziland” which was actually South African foodstuffs and materials that would come along the lake.

*Q: You mentioned some of the other embassies or missions that were there? Belgium, Germany, Zaire.*

HAYS: The British had an honorary consul and the ambassador would come down from Kampala from time to time. The big missions were the Belgians, because they were the traditional colonial power, and the French because they were interested in the Francophones. As it was explained to me, they saw Burundi and Rwanda as a sort of entrepôt for British speaking East Africa. If they could get a foothold there, they could work up through Uganda, Tanzania and Nairobi. They were a serious mission. The Chinese, of course, were there, the Russians were there, the Libyans, the Egyptians. Interestingly, the Egyptians were there, I gather, because Rwanda claimed to be the southernmost source of the Nile and their sphere of influence is anything that touches on the Nile. They had a bigger mission than you would think for somebody as far away from Egypt. As far as the Nile, you could go and drive and hike and then there was



this rock and every twenty seconds there would be a drop of water and you'd say well, that's the southernmost source of the Nile.

*Q: Was there much Cold War mentality in the diplomatic community in those days, in the mid-eighties, with the Chinese or the Soviets?*

HAYS: The Chinese were inscrutable. It was hard to know exactly what they were up to. They had a pretty big mission. The North Koreans were there too. We got along with the Russians pretty well as a rule. By the mid-eighties things were calming down. I also went to Leningrad to do an advance for the First Lady who went to Leningrad for a day trip from the Moscow summit and the Russians were happy about that. There was a pretty good camaraderie among the diplomatic missions. Obviously, I saw it from the deputy level, and so the French, the Belgian, the German and myself were the western power group. This became important in September 1987. When you have a military government, there are a lot of coup rumors all the time. Most of the time they were false, but this time it was real. In the middle of August all the Europeans go on vacation so they all leave. Out of eighteen or nineteen diplomatic missions, there were only two or three ambassadors who happened to be in the country on the third of September. We were having our Western alliance breakfast – we would get together about every two weeks to talk about stuff – when I got a call from our agency guy who said, “None of the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) from the north part of town are at work; none of them, do you know why that might be?” And I said, “Is there some traffic problem or why?” because there was a bridge that went over that part of town. About this time the French got a call that there were some strange things going on, and so as we were sitting around comparing notes, it dawned on all of that there was maybe something actually happening.

In fact, there was a coup d'état taking place. Interestingly, being Burundi, they waited until Bagaza was in Quebec for a francophone summit so he was out of the country. The proximate cause, as we went through and analyzed it, was that the non-commissioned officers were very unhappy because: 1) there was a threatened reduction in force that was going to hit them pretty hard, 2) they weren't getting a pay raise because times were tough and 3) their pensions were being affected. The sergeants were very unhappy and Bagaza was out of the country. There were all sorts of other things: there was the church-state thing, the Hutu-Tutsi thing; there were all these issues but what it came down to basically, was the sergeants were unhappy with their pay status. They went to a cousin of Bagaza, Buyoya, who was from the right clan of the southern Tutsis and said, “Look, we want you to be our head. Are you prepared to do it? Yes or no? Tell us.” Buyoya was an attractive candidate for a successor as head of state and his cousin knew that, so he was being farmed out. He was being relieved of his command. He was leaving the army and he was going to be manager of the brewery, which wasn't a bad job for Burundi, but he was on his way out. They came to him and he had motivation to decide what he wanted to do. So the sergeants said basically, look we're with you if there is no reduction in force, you raise our pay and protect our pension. He said, sure, I can go with that.

So this set in motion a slow motion coup, and it gained strength unit by military unit. There was some opposition to it but not a lot. The embassy was co-located with one of the larger banks, and so we had armed soldiers within our compound, mostly because of the bank, but behind them was the front door to the American Embassy. We were concerned, obviously, with the American

community. We had done a pretty good job with the warden system drills and contact sheets, phone trees and that sort of thing. We got the word out to the wardens and again, because it was sort of slow motion and not everyone seized at once, we were able to co-locate and ended up at the ambassador's residence. The ambassador, it was Dan Phillips at this point, was on vacation (Block Island, I think) and I remember calling him, and telling him, "I think we're having a coup." He said, "Oh, my God! Can I get back?" And I said, "Well, they closed the airport; I don't know for how long." It ended up that they shut down the airport for two weeks, and that's really the only way to get into Burundi. The overland route is pretty tenuous. After about two weeks they opened up the land border and some of the ambassadors came back that way, flying to Kigali and then driving down. I remember the French Ambassador saying, "No, this is not possible." He would fly back on Air France, thank you very much. The French Ambassador does not sneak across the border in the middle of the night.

The first day or so we were very much concerned with security aspects because 13 or 14 years before there had been 180,000 people killed, and so there was always this concern the spark would be lit and there would be widespread massacres that took place. And we had nowhere to go – we could not fly in or out. Overland was not recommended. Maybe we could get on the lake, but then where would we go? We could go to Zaire, but that isn't too much either and so we decided to stay put. Because it was basically a military coup, it was Tutsi against Tutsi. You didn't have that element of Hutu that even two and three years later was present and might have started it off on the downward spiral that we saw in 89/90.

Bagaza meanwhile tried to get back. He made it to Paris and sent the message OK, you guys can have the money, we won't to any cuts, no problem, let me back, but it was too late at that point. The people were committed and they realized that if they let Bagaza back they would be at risk. So they stuck with Buyoya, and he became the new President. I had dealt with him through the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program in his military capacity. He had the training command so that actually worked out pretty well because I had some rapport with him before he got to that position.

*Q: Buyoya is still there?*

HAYS: Yes. He's still there. Actually, to his credit there was a democratic election, he lost and stepped down. Then there was another coup, and he was invited to come back in. Of the candidates that are out there, he is probably the best one that they could have. I think he's a reasonable fellow.

*Q: Did you in this period anticipate that the Hutu would come to the place where there again would be violence or you certainly thought that was a possibility?*

HAYS: Certainly we were concerned about it, very much so. As I mentioned earlier the Hutu were just getting to where they were more prominent. You were starting to see Hutu school teachers, second-level ministry people, even a couple of ministers although the real power was with the Tutsi who was number two in the ministry. Again, the whole educated class had been wiped out fifteen years before so it takes a while for the new generation to move in. I think that if

the coup had happened two or three years later it certainly would've had that element in it and might have gone much worse as in fact it did, but a couple of years later.

*Q: How long was your tour of duty in Bujumbura?*

HAYS: Three years. I left in the summer of 1988.

*Q: Dan Phillips was the ambassador at the time you left?*

HAYS: Yes, at the time I left.

*Q: When we talked before, you were talking about the coup that took place in September of 1987, and you were in charge of the embassy at the time. Was there any violence at all in the course of that coup?*

HAYS: Not a lot. It was still, at this point, inside the Tutsi family, in particular in one clan in the Tutsi family that produced the leadership. There were episodes of violence but mostly outside the capital. At that point, the army had a very tight grip on the population, and you also had a situation where they effectively had pass laws, so unless you had permission you were not allowed to live in the city. I think that also made it a bit more controllable. When the army took over they closed the airport, took over in the radio stations, and the banks and that these sorts of things. They really had all the choke points. Bagaza dismissed the first reports in Quebec at a francophone summit and attempted to fly back and made it as far as Paris before it was clear that the airport was closed. My understanding was that Habyarimana, the guy in charge of Rwanda, also said he was not interested in facilitating his return. So then it would have taken a major effort. Four weeks after that there was a pretty tight curfew which the major effect was changing the social atmosphere in terms of when people had to get home from parties. It went from dusk to 9:00 and then to eleven or twelve and finally faded away. There was a time that people were worried that he was going to come back so people were jumpy and anxious. Again because the embassy shared the compound with the bank, we had soldiers at our front door for that time period.

*Q: Did Bagaza ever come back?*

HAYS: He came back years later as part of a general amnesty, and he tried to get some traction and never quite made it.

*Q: But that was well beyond your time there?*

HAYS: Yes. There was also a guy who they called Mr. America who was the minister of public works named Niamboya who was imprisoned at this time. He ended up spending a number of years in prison or effectively in prison in tiny posts out in the middle of nowhere.

*Q: Why was he called Mr. America?*

HAYS: He had lived in Brooklyn for some time, I guess, originally as a student and stayed on. He spoke English which was very unusual for the Burundi at this point, very few did. He had what was perceived as an American style; he was open, he liked jokes, he would invite people to his home and very few Burundi would invite a foreigner to their home. To socialize with Burundi it was either in your home or in a restaurant. One quick story on him; he had this magnificent house on a hill but it had the absolute worst road you can imagine to get to it. It was full of potholes and was sliding off the side down the mountain. So you'd ask him, "You're the Minister of Public Works. Why do you have this road?" And his answer was, "When people see my road they can't complain about their road."

*Q: Why was he put in prison, because of his association with America?*

HAYS: No. I think it was mostly because he was perceived to be the bagman for Bagaza, the one that had the smarts to work in the international financial markets and to make money go places that might come back later as theirs and theirs alone.

*Q: I'm not sure to what extent you talked about the role of other countries in Burundi at that time. I'm wondering a little bit about the role of Japan and to what extent the United Nations and international agencies were involved.*

HAYS: As a Belgian colony, the Belgians' license plate number was one. The French were probably the next most prominent because of the francophone connection and also this feeling that this was the tip of the spear aiming into eastern Africa and they would work at moving their commercial interests forward. The U.N. was represented by UNDP and was the major group there. They had money and could do new projects and so they had a fairly visible presence. Interestingly, there was a Japanese woman who was the acting head of that for quite some time. Other than that, the U.N. had a refugee office there because there were still a lot of refugees from the various massacres that had occurred over the years in all directions. That was about it; the Russians had a big mission, the Chinese were there, the Egyptians, the Japanese, I don't remember them playing much of a role. They did have an aid program. I remember once every six months having lunch with the Japanese. I think he must've been rotating, because I don't remember him being there all the time. They would donate a generator or something to the hospital. The Saudis also were there but only to the extent of being a sponsor of a new hospital which had absolutely top of the line, first rate equipment, but then of course, no one to really administer it. It didn't live up to its full potential.

*Q: Did we talk the other day about the U.S. AID program and the Peace Corps?*

HAYS: We touched on it a little bit. The AID program was primarily about sustainable agriculture. In Burundi culture the women did the farming except for coffee which was a cash crop. With cash you could buy beer, so there was that connection. AID had an experimental farm way up country which was trying to do wheat and other highland wheat-type stuff that worked pretty well. My impression at the time and afterwards was that that the reality was that it worked great as long as you had a farmer from Iowa living right there who would get up everyday and do the right things or make sure they were done. It didn't happen afterwards. The Peace Corps came in and their thing was tilapia, fish farming. They brought it in. I was there when the initial group

came in, about ten or so, and they were sprinkled out in the countryside to do tilapia farming. In some places it actually kicked off and was self sustaining; I can think of one specifically where the community really took to it, but the others were not so good.

*Q: Did you travel up country, around the country, through the bush quite a bit?*

HAYS: I went everywhere there was a road, which isn't saying a whole lot, and then some in the dirt tracks. It is a country where there was sort of one part-time elephant in the whole country. There was literally a guy who would occasionally wander over from Zaire on the Zambezi Plain, and it was sort of interesting because Burundi was one of the largest exporters of ivory in the world even though they had one part-time elephant. They also had Lake Tanganyika and so from Zaire and Zambia and points south it could come up to the airport. I lived on a hill overlooking the plain, and you can see the airport in the distance. Occasionally, the lights would come on at about three in the morning and go off five minutes later and about two hours after that they would come on for five minutes and then go off again. This was the ivory planes that were flying in from the Mideast or perhaps the Far East. But most of what Burundi had was people. It's a mountainous country, most of the wildlife was killed off except for the river, a lot of crocodiles, a lot of hippos. Lions, tigers and bears had been pushed out by the great weight of people. I think I mentioned that it was the most densely populated along with Rwanda. The system was you divided up whatever you got among your sons, and of course, you would get smaller and smaller plots. People would have to go further up the mountain in order to till the land, and this would lead to greater and greater impoverishment.

*Q: Was there any kind of a population program?*

HAYS: I think I mentioned that AID did have a program but it wasn't particularly successful. Civilization was touching very lightly on most Burundi at this point. If you didn't live in the city, you were still very traditional. The Catholic Church was very active in the country, and so they were one step ahead of any population planners. So it was going to be a tough fight for the population guys.

*Q: Did the Catholic Church buttress the Tutsi domination?*

HAYS: They were perceived to be, and were, more on the Hutu side and recognized that 85 or 90% of the population was Hutu. The Church under Bagaza had a lot of problems. Bagaza kicked out most of the foreign priests, he imprisoned a couple of other priests, he would limit religious ceremony, he took away their media outlets and these things. That was a source of continuing discord between him and ourselves, the French, the Belgians and what have you.

*Q: To what extent did the U.S. Embassy have contact with the Hutu community leaders to try to encourage reconciliation or bridge building or whatever?*

HAYS: We did, but again the massacres of thirteen or fourteen years before had literally wiped out what was not a very big educated class in the first place. The people I would come in contact with would tend to be Hutus who were in their late twenties or early thirties and had just recently come back from university in Belgium or wherever. So they weren't really senior. By age they

hadn't hit the point where they could occupy key ministerial slots or what have you. There were a few token Hutus in the cabinet, but really the whole mass of the population had been deliberately kept down and so they weren't in positions to do this.

*Q: We had an IMET program and USIS maybe had some exchange training programs, AID may have. Did we make a conscious effort to try to train Hutu?*

HAYS: We had a number of programs. We were supposed to be tribal blind in how we did this. Part of the problem was you could never be exactly sure who was what. There were tall Hutus and short Tutsis, Tutsis with broad noses. And when you consider that the first military strongman had been trained by the Belgians because they thought he was Hutu because he happened to be fairly short. He came back after he had been trained and he lead a coup, and they discovered in fact he was a Tutsi. The government also as a policy tried to downplay the differences. From their prospective, this was a way to not have it be as much of an issue, and so they didn't end up counting how many people in the Ministry of Agriculture fell into which category.

*Q: What about the U.S. programs?*

HAYS: We tried like the IV programs. We made a conscious effort to build a program around a couple of the Hutu who we thought were going to be there in the future. I think in those particular cases it didn't work out, but nevertheless, the effort was there.

*Q: Anything else we should say about the Bujumbura DCM assignment? You were chargé a good part of the time.*

HAYS: I would say close to a third of my time there maybe because there was a gap between ambassadors, of course, and then there was the time during the coup when the ambassador couldn't get back, and then the sort of normal travel. The IMET program was a very important part of our program because it dealt with the military and it was something that the Burundi military liked and wanted. We were always looking to do more there. We saw it as a good way to establish links. For instance, my contact with Buyoya, who became the head of the country, was through the IMET programs because that fell under his bailiwick. The Burundi were good students. Of course, the Tutsis tended to be tall and not so much in the upper body strength and so we always had to have them run around and do push ups before we sent them off to Lackland AFB.

One small anecdote; when I first arrived, literally my second day there, I went to say goodbye to this guy who was going off to IMET training. About two weeks later I got a message that he was in the hospital and was dying, and I thought wow, what happened? They said, "We don't know, we're not sure what the problem is, but it's bad." Two days after that I got a message saying, "We're very sorry; we have to report that he's brain dead. Would you inform his family and the military?" So I went over to the ministry and told the Chief of Staff that this bright young guy who two weeks ago we were toasting, is dead and then telling his family. It was just a horrible scene. This was on Thursday. On Tuesday I got a report that the patient was sitting up and responding to commands, and I go, wait to minute, if he's brain dead, how's he's sitting up and

responding to commands? It turned out he had cerebral malaria, and no one had seen that in Texas. They didn't know how to handle it, so they finally called in someone from CDC (Center for Disease Control) who came over. He took a look at the guy and said this is cerebral malaria; do this, this, and this, which they did, and in fact, he went from being brain dead to sitting up and answering commands. The poor guy came back, but they had also discovered he was HIV positive. Through all this, he had complete renal failure and lots of other problems. He came back and went on active duty again, and then died about a year later.

*Q: Your contact with Buyoya through the IMET program was more one of selecting candidates? Did he go on the program himself?*

HAYS: He did not. He wanted to, as I remember, but he was never in the pool of people to go and again because I think he was in the pool of people that Bagaza was worried about. He probably didn't want too much contact with the Americans; that would be a dangerous thing. We also had a number of programs that came into the country to do training, and that worked out pretty well. EUCOM in Stuttgart would send down training teams.

*Q: What was the role of the Burundi military at that point?*

HAYS: Bagaza was commander of the army in addition to being president of the country. Military officers occupied all the key economic spots, and there were civilians who were part of the government. Buyoya was a civilian, but the military had the power.

*Q: Did the military have any role outside the country, either in U.N. peacekeeping or in the region?*

HAYS: I remember that under IMET we sent a couple who sort of tagged onto a peacekeeping mission somewhere. I don't remember where, but they liked that a lot; it was a lot of fun.

*Q: I heard Jim Bullington talk once about a cultural group that had come to Burundi. Was it blue grass? The mountain boys or something?*

HAYS: It was the blue mountain boys or the green mountain boys or something.

*Q: These were cultural exchanges?*

HAYS: He loved that. He was a big blue grass fan, and so I'm sure when the people at the USIA headquarters saw the request for a bluegrass band to go to Africa they scratched their heads a bit. But he brought them over and played with them. He was a pretty good musician, and in fact, on his next home leave, he went back and toured with this group for a while so he was pretty good.

**JAMES D. PHILLIPS**  
**Ambassador**  
**Burundi (1986-1990)**

*Ambassador Phillips was born in Illinois in 1933. He received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Wichita in 1957 and his Master's in 1958. After serving in the US Army from 1953 to 1955, he entered the Foreign Service in 1961. Postings throughout his career include Paris, Elizabethville, Luxembourg, The Gambia, Copenhagen and Casablanca. Mr. Phillips then became the ambassador to Burundi and Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 5, 1998.*

*Q: What did you know about the status of Burundi at that time?*

PHILLIPS: I didn't know much about Burundi. I had served in Zaire, which is in the neighborhood. Burundi has a border with Zaire but it is in the south near Bukavu, not near where I had been in Lubumbashi or Kinshasa. I of course knew about the tensions between the Hutu and the Tutsi ethnic groups, particularly about the genocide in the 1970s. But in 1986 most people in the State Department thought that that sort of violent hostility was a thing of the past, rather like lynching in the south. You knew it existed at one time but thought it was long over.

I learned more from my Washington briefings. Burundi was a Marxist one-party state with a Tutsi President named Jean Bagaza. Although the Tutsi comprise only about 11 percent of the population they hold political power in Burundi. Next door in Rwanda the Hutus are in control. But the Hutus in Rwanda are overwhelmingly in the majority. I saw that I would have to work with Bagaza and keep an eye on ethnic and regional issues. Burundi is not a rich or strategically placed country and at the time it was not considered a particularly important one in terms of United States interests. Most Americans could not locate Burundi on a map. Still, I looked forward to the assignment.

*Q: What about confirmation? Any problems?*

PHILLIPS: Yes. My group of nominees was held up by Senator Jesse Helms who put a hold on us and it took a little longer to get through the Senate than anyone expected. I think Helms wanted to have somebody appointed to a post and the State Department disagreed. He was using our group as a bargaining chip. Eventually we had our hearings and I was confirmed..

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

PHILLIPS: I was there from 1986 until 1990.

*Q: What did you find when you got out there? Do you think this might be a good place to stop.*

PHILLIPS: Because events that had happened in Burundi and Rwanda while I was there put both countries on the map, so to speak, it might be interesting to go over my observations in some detail.



*Q: I think we should go into some depth. You went to Bujumbura. You were there from 1986 to 1990. We have talked about you preparing and getting confirmation, but we haven't talked about when you arrived yet.*

PHILLIPS: Right.

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*Q: Today is the 13th of July, 1998. Dan, when you went to Burundi did you have any kind of mental agenda you were carrying in your private attaché case of things that you wanted to do?*

PHILLIPS: Yes. I before I left for Burundi I read the literature that was available, which was not extensive. Most books on Burundi are in French. I read them and of course was well-briefed by the Department. I was keenly aware of the demographics. The Tutsis make up about 11 percent of the population and the Hutus 89 percent. The regime was authoritarian, verging on totalitarian. President Bagaza was a military officer and a hard-line Tutsi. He was also a Marxist. In those days Burundi was firmly aligned with the East. There was a huge North Korean and Chinese presence. I hoped to establish a working relationship with Bagaza that would permit decent relations with the United States. We always had business to do with Burundi whether regionally or in the UN. I also knew that ethnic relations were potentially explosive because of the past. The history was not encouraging. In Rwanda Hutus had massacred Tutsis and in Burundi Tutsis had massacred Hutus. In both cases the scale of killing had approached genocide. Of course I also kept in mind Burundi's place in Africa and the role it played in and East-West politics.

*Q: Burundi-Rwanda is sort of a generic, sort of like damn Yankee. It is a one-word thing. Did you find that congress itself, congressional staff, the black caucus or other groups felt deeply about the situation there? Was there a tie that you would feel that they would have or maybe they were true believers on what side or the other that we should do something? Did you detect anything like that?*

PHILLIPS: No, Burundi was just a blip on the U.S. radar screen at that time. There was one nuance in regard to the position of the black caucus in Congress. Conservatives who supported South Africa contended that the U.S. should move slowly in opposing apartheid because the alternative might be worse. They often pointed to Burundi as an example of a black African country where an oppressive minority ruled. They charged that opponents of South Africa were hypocritical in not criticizing Burundi as forcefully as they criticized South Africa. The black caucus was eager to rebut that charge and its members were harshly critical of Burundi. So if there was any interest in Burundi it was derivative. Of course everyone hoped Burundi would adopt a more equitable system of power-sharing but it was not a hot-button issue.

*Q: In small African countries often the major focus is on UN votes. Where was Burundi falling when you went there?*

PHILLIPS: Burundi was voting with North Korea and Cuba. If you had a scorecard and 100 represented the best record for voting with the U.S., Burundi would have scored about a 3. It was very much in the anti-American camp.

*Q: You went out there in 1986. Could you describe how you saw the country at that point?*

PHILLIPS: Most people think of Africa as either jungle or open savanna. Burundi doesn't fit either image. It is hilly, to the extent that it is called the Switzerland of Africa. It is green and lush and has lots of forests, as opposed to jungles. Its main crops are tea and coffee. There are almost no minerals. It looks a bit like the hill country of the American Appalachians. Its Capital, Bujumbura, is a port city on lake Tanganyika, which stretches all the way from Burundi in the north to Zambia in the south. There is a fishing industry and some shipping and commerce but these sectors are small. Burundi is basically a rural country whose inhabitants are overwhelmingly poor peasants. It is a country of astonishing natural beauty. There was a little restaurant by the lake where you could have a drink in the evening and watch hippos frolic in the water as the sun went down. It had its charm.

The beauty of the country and the people, especially the tall, handsome, soft-spoken Tutsis, masked at first the ethnic tensions. It appeared a first glance to be a poor but fairly well-run country of peasant small land holders and larger coffee and tea plantations.

*Q: Were these absentee owners?*

PHILLIPS: The plantations were owned mainly by Belgians and a handful of wealthy Tutsi. There was a huge income gap between the peasant farmers living in the hills and the Europeans and Burundi elite living in Bujumbura. The peasants, both Hutu and Tutsi, were among the poorest people on earth. Let me give you an example. I was visiting a self-help project funded by the embassy. You know, "self-help" is the program that gives an Ambassador \$100,000 in discretionary AID funds every year that can only be used for mini-development projects, such as village gardens, community wells, and so forth. Anyway, on a visit to one of these projects a little boy asked me if everyone in the United States was rich. I said not all Americans were rich. He thought for a minute and asked if everyone in the United States had shoes. I said yes, and he said triumphantly "then everyone is rich." That was the criterion. If you had shoes you were rich. Most Burundi had only the bare necessities; their clothes were tattered and they lived in mud huts. Wealthier people in this milieu had corrugated metal roofs on their huts. That was a sign of wealth; the first thing you did if you got a little ahead was put a tin roof on your shack.

So the poverty was apparent, but because the country was so lush people weren't actually starving to death. But one felt famine wasn't far off because of the population explosion. Most families had an average of 10 children. That was the norm. Often a man would take a second wife to be sure of reaching or surpassing the 10 child goal. And Burundi is a small country in terms of area, so it was teeming with people.

Because Burundi is so hilly there are no villages like one sees in other parts of Africa. People live in separate, extended-family compounds in the hills. The compounds consist of a four or five mud huts with cone shaped thatch roofs surrounded by a thorn brush fence. They are largely self-sufficient units. The people farm the side of the hill. They have a few farm animals, chickens, a goat; wealthier peasants might have a cow. They might go once a month into the nearest town to buy supplies. But they do not have a village life. It was an isolated, extended family life. On any

hill that housed more than one extended family the people tended to be all Tutsi or all Hutu. But the ethnic groups otherwise lived in close proximity. There would be a Tutsi hill right next to a Hutu hill. Tutsi peasants were not materially better off than Hutu peasants. Wealth and status differences could be seen in the cities, particularly Bujumbura, where Tutsis had a near monopoly on government jobs and positions in the military and commerce.

My first impression was of a placid country with a troubled history making gradual progress towards economic development under the iron rule of the Tutsi military. It didn't take long to suspect however that there was a lot of turmoil beneath the surface. It was hard to know what was happening because there were no newspapers and almost no television. There was radio, but broadcasts were in the local language that few non-Burundi ever learned. But missionaries would come in from the countryside with tales of rising ethnic tension. There was no Peace Corps at that time, which was a contentious issue. We had offered a Peace Corps program but President Bagaza was dithering. He was not keen on establishing one because he saw the volunteers as potential American spies. We did have a small AID program and AID officials working outside of the Capital would also recount stories of serious ethnic tensions and increasingly oppressive measures against Hutus.

At first, I had good personal relations with Bagaza. He was a young military officer and we didn't have a lot in common but he did speak French. He clearly did not want to antagonize me. He wanted to keep the U.S. presence in Burundi and the AID program. But he was afraid of the Peace Corps and never got around to signing the agreement we had worked out at a lower level.

As time went on, however, Bagaza's behavior became more and more bizarre. In response to increasing pressure from the West on human rights, he appeared to be preparing Burundi to become a sort of African Albania; that is, a closed, self-sufficient, authoritarian society. He seemed prepared to forfeit outside assistance from international institutions like the World Bank if it meant he could guarantee the predominance of a Tutsi regime in the future. He thought a Tutsi elite could maintain itself with the tea and coffee revenues and let the rest of the country scrape by as best it could on subsistence agriculture. He knew western countries would not use military force against him. He felt he could do whatever he wanted; expel the nagging human rights activists, clamp down on the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church played a special role in Burundi. It was the only institution that rivaled the government in influence. The church was well established in the countryside and churches were the only places Hutus could gather and feel a sense of unity. On Sundays crowds of peasants would flow down from the hills to go to church. Bagaza saw the church as a rallying point for Hutu opposition. And the church did militate against the poverty and the regime's oppressive policies. Most priests were slightly pro-Hutu but not to the extent that Bagaza thought. Still his concerns weren't entirely paranoid. The church was supporting the Hutu cause in the sense that it helped them organize and gave them a sense of solidarity.

So Bagaza began shutting down churches parish by parish. A church would be burned down here or a priest would be expelled there. Foreign priests were expelled, Burundi priests were arrested. Anti-Catholic harassment came to a head about eight months after I arrived. The army arrested a Catholic priest, a Burundi, on clearly trumped-up charges and put him in jail. Western diplomats

protested. The Vatican joined forces with human rights groups to alert the international community about the ongoing religious persecution. Belgium felt some responsibility for its ex-colony and took the lead in insisting that the priest be released. Bagaza ordered his release, but the following Sunday the priest gave a sermon in which he thanked God for his freedom. This so infuriated Bagaza that he had him re-arrested for not acknowledging that it was he, Bagaza, who had released him, not God. The incident showed that Bagaza was losing touch with reality. What could be a worse public relations gesture that re-arresting the priest because he thanked God for his freedom? After all, he was a priest and he would thank God. The anti-religious campaign caused U.S. relations with the regime to deteriorate badly. Catholics in the United States put pressure on the Administration to do something.

Herman J. Cohen was the African Director at the NSC and Chester Crocker was the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Both let me know that the situation was becoming intolerable. They told me Bagaza had to ease up on the Church and make some effort to improve the regime's overall human rights record or the U.S. would take steps towards breaking diplomatic relations. They said, and I agreed, that we couldn't just passively witness what was going on. I so informed Bagaza and it was during this conversation that I got the impression that he wouldn't mind if we left. He talked about how Burundi could survive well enough by modeling itself on Albania. I reported this back to Washington. But Tutsi political and military circles consisted of moderates as well as extremists, the classical division of doves and hawks. Moderate Tutsis were becoming alarmed with Bagaza's erratic behavior and did not share his enthusiasm for the Albanian model. Many Tutsis traveled regularly to Belgium, had children in schools in Europe and had no interest in Burundi becoming an international pariah.

In June of 1987, about a year after I got there, Bagaza went to a Francophone meeting in Quebec. He got on the plane and never came back because there was a bloodless coup d'état. The moderate Tutsis in the army ousted him and replaced him with a young officer named Pierre Buyoya. He was President during the rest of my time in Burundi. His first actions were to release the Catholic priests in prison and give top priority to mending relations with the Vatican. He became very close to the Papal Nuncio in Bujumbura. He also made a real effort to mend relations with the United States. He sought me out at a diplomatic reception and told me that many of the officers who took part in the coup had received military training in the United States. He said he wanted to send more of his officers to the United States for training. He also said he would be delighted to have the Peace Corps in Burundi. We set up a good Peace Corps program and did send more Burundi military officers to the United States for training.

Buyoya was a moderate who wanted to move Burundi closer to the West. He dismantled the old Marxist apparatus and started thinking about how Burundi could become a democracy. By this time the East-West dynamic was changing. The Berlin wall hadn't fallen but was showing cracks. Gorbachev no longer saw Africa as a pawn in the cold war. There was movement in Eastern Europe and democracy was making gains worldwide. All of this made my life easier. There was no longer any thought of breaking diplomatic relations. On the contrary, Buyoya apparently saw me not only as a representative of the United States but as someone he could talk to frankly. I would be at home in the evenings and a Mercedes would pull up in front of my gate and the driver would ask if I could come to see the President. No telephone call or advance warning. I would get in the car and be taken to Buyoya's residence. He would be in shirtsleeves.

There would be two bottles of Primus beer and a couple of glasses and some peanuts on the table. We would sit and talk about democracy. The problem was how to make a one-man-one-vote system work in a country with Burundi's demographics and history. It posed the central question of democratic theory: How to assure power for the majority while protecting the rights of the minority? It was in many ways analogous to South Africa's problem. De Klerk and Mandela faced the same dilemma, with the whites as Tutsis and the blacks as Hutus. Buyoya admitted he was afraid democracy would mean not only political suicide for the Tutsis but perhaps even physical extinction.

Hutu refugees were in refugee camps still in existence in the aftermath of the 1971-1972 massacres. There were camps in Tanzania, Zaire, and of course in Rwanda. Hutus in the camps were arming themselves with the intent of bringing down the Tutsi regime.

*Q: What about in Uganda?*

PHILLIPS: No, Uganda shares a border with Rwanda, not Burundi. The refugees in Rwanda were Tutsis. Rwanda presents a mirror image of Burundi. In Rwanda it was the Hutus who drove out the Tutsis. The President of Uganda was part Tutsi so he was more sympathetic towards the Tutsi cause. Oddly enough, Bagaza, when he came back to Africa from Canada after the coup that forced him from power, ended up in exile in Uganda. He remained a rather sinister presence there, always trying to stir up trouble in Burundi.

*Q: This problem was there in South Africa. In the Burundi context could you see any way of doing this, where you able to come up with any ideas?*

PHILLIPS: South Africa had begun a process of bringing moderate blacks and whites together for regular discussions. I told Buyoya he should try that approach. The first step was to create a forum where Hutus could meet with Tutsis. It couldn't be the Parliament which consisted of hard-line Tutsis and docile Hutus. I argued it was important to start a meaningful dialog with Hutus who represented real Hutu constituencies. I don't want to take too much credit here. Buyoya had other advice and could himself easily see the merit of preparing the groundwork for democracy carefully. It was clear that he couldn't just announce elections in say six months time and have any chance of success. So he convened a group called the Council for National Reconciliation consisting of 16 prominent Hutus and 16 prominent Tutsis, all of whom were moderate and willing to work together. The goal of the Council was to begin healing the old ethnic wounds.

The Council decided that the first item on its agenda would be history. It counted as one historical period the pre-colonial era, another as the colonial era and another as the post-colonial era. They got through the first two eras quickly but then they started lengthy discussions about their history, taking it year by year from 1961 to the present. I thought that seemed like a rather laborious process. But Buyoya told me it was necessary because only by agreeing on what had happened after independence could they find a common frame of reference for the future. So they proceeded at a very deliberate pace.

While the Council was meeting, events occurred that underscored the gravity of the situation and gave an inkling of what was to come later. In the northern part of the country some Hutus went on a rampage and killed a number of Tutsis on neighboring hills. They massacred at least a 150 Tutsi men, women and children. They did it in a very barbaric way, with machetes, leaving dismembered bodies along the roadside, then they just faded back into the hills. Why they did it was never fully revealed. The Tutsi military got to the scene within 24 hours. They saw the carnage and reacted very brutally, massacring about 10,000 Hutus. They systematically went around the area killing Hutus.

This came as a great shock, because it was inconceivable that 10,000 people could be killed in a matter of days no matter what the provocation. We had thought that bloody Tutsi-Hutu conflicts on that scale were a thing of the past, but we were wrong.

Buyoya acted quickly and responsibly to bring the killings to a halt. He changed commanders in the field, personally went to the area, and eventually invited the diplomatic corps to the area to see it that the killings had stopped. He tried to repair the damage through a series of measures that were effective, but only in the short term.

The massacres brought international media attention to Burundi for the first time in many years. Reporters came from the New York Times, the Associated Press and CNN. A freelance reporter for the New Yorker magazine came to do a special in-depth report. The reporters stuck together. They traveled together in a cluster. They didn't speak the local language, and some didn't even speak French. I got an unsettling view of how the media works. I saw that stories feed off of each other and once a story line is established it is hard to correct.

Most diplomatic observers, relying on local contacts and on-the-scene accounts, had come to the conclusion that about 10,000 people had been killed. The journalists, however, came up with a much higher number. I think they checked their files and found entries like "Burundi, 1971 genocide," and assumed something similar had occurred. Buyoya gave the media free rein to travel anywhere in the country, which was a night-and-day difference in approach to what his predecessor would have done in a similar situation. So a group of journalists went to a hospital in the interior where a missionary doctor was treating injured Hutus. The Hutus of course had horrific tales of what had been happening to them. The doctor had been working for 48 hours without any sleep and was completely exhausted. The operating room was covered with blood and the reporters were probably a little traumatized as well. One of the reporters asked the doctor how many people had been killed. The doctor said he didn't have any idea. The reporter said that they were saying in Bujumbura about 10,000, and the doctor replied "multiply that by 10." He had no knowledge of the extent of the carnage beyond what he had seen in his small hospital. Nonetheless, the New York Times reported the figure of 100,000 killed and that became media gospel. The State Department urgently asked me to account for the difference between my estimate of 10,000 and press reports of 100,000 casualties. I rechecked the figures with my sources. I actually went to the hospital, about a days drive from Bujumbura, and talked to the missionary doctor. He admitted that what he told the reporters was just a figure of speech, that he had no idea how many had been killed. I told the reporters this, and they half-accused me of being part of a cover up. The estimate of 100,000 took on a life of its own. The New York Times story was picked up by Le Monde and eventually the 100,000 dead estimate appeared in virtually

every media story about Burundi for the next several weeks. I was able to convince the State Department that the 10,000 figure was more accurate, largely because virtually every Western Embassy in Bujumbura had come to the same conclusion. This was important because the extent to which we were able to support Buyoya in his efforts to restore calm depended to some extent on how the story played among human rights activists in the United States. If 100,000 Hutus had really been killed, and if the Burundi government was trying to cover up the extent of the massacre, pressure would have been intense to apply sanctions against the regime. Some Belgian scholars are working on a history of that period and I believe their work will vindicate our lower estimates. It was still a terrible massacre but not on the scale of what followed in Rwanda a few years later. After a several weeks the press left but the story had a shelf life of another couple of months.

The killings set off a stampede of Hutu refugees; probably 100,000 or more fled across the borders into Zaire and Rwanda where they set up make-shift camps supported by the UN. Buyoya wanted to get them back. He put guards around the hilltop compounds to keep squatters out. The guards protected not only the land but household goods and tools. He posted ownership lists in community centers and churches to assure that everyone knew who the land belonged to. He declared an amnesty for any refugees who might be accused of having taken part in the killing of Tutsis that set off the violence. He convened a regional summit which included the presidents of Rwanda and Zaire to discuss the return of the refugees. He allowed foreign workers from the aid agencies, UNICEF, UNDP, and others to establish a foreign presence in the area. So refugees began to trickle back across the border at night. They would see that their property was intact and they would report this back to the camps. Within three to six months the refugees began coming back en masse. They returned because their land was secure and their safety was assured to some extent by an international presence. They didn't trust the Tutsi military, but the presence of priests, missionaries and NGOs like Doctors Without Borders reassured them. Between 75, 000 and 100,000 refugees came back home in less than six months. It was unprecedented.

Let me get ahead of my story here for a moment. Hutus committed genocide in Rwanda in 1992 by systematically killing nearly one million Tutsis. A Tutsi guerrilla army moved from Uganda into Rwanda and ousted Rwanda's Hutu leadership. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus fled Rwanda for refugee camps in Zaire. I was a diplomat-in -resident at the Carter Center in Atlanta in 1993-94, and I wrote an Op Ed piece for the Atlanta Constitution on the refugee problem. I described what Buyoya had done to lure the refugees home and suggested it might serve as a model for defusing the current crisis. It didn't, however, because the Rwandan government, now dominated by Tutsis, was not prepared to do the sort of things Buyoya had done. Amnesty was the main sticking point. In Burundi in 1989 the Tutsis only lost about 150 people. In Rwanda in 1992, nearly a million Tutsis had been slaughtered in cold-blood and the new Rwandan government felt it could not declare a general amnesty for people who had killed on that scale. So the refugees never went back to Rwanda and the problem continues to fester to this day.

But back to 1989. Buyoya got the refugees to come home. The massacres, however, increased the sense of urgency about finding a long term solution to the power-sharing problem. Moderate Tutsis continued the talks with moderate Hutus. Buyoya named a distinguished Hutu as Prime Minister. You have to go back to the 1960s in Burundi to find that kind of ethnic cooperation.

Buyoya did in fact hold free and fair elections which he lost. I was gone by then, but earlier I had asked him what he would do if he held elections and lost. His first reaction was that he wouldn't lose because he was popular among both Tutsis and Hutus. I pressed him by saying he had to be prepared for the possibility of losing. He said if he lost he would step down which, when the time came, he did, and rather graciously. Buyoya is one of the few African leaders that turned over power to a democratically elected opponent. His successor was a moderate Hutu named Ndadaye. There were high hopes that he would lead the country to a period of increasing Hutu/Tutsi cooperation. But it was not to be. Ndadaye never got control of the military which was still 100 percent Tutsi. Now I am talking about things that happened after I left the country. A handful of hot-headed Tutsi military officers could not tolerate a Hutu in power so they assassinated Ndadaye. This threw the country into turmoil from which it hasn't recovered. As we speak today, Buyoya is again President but he was appointed by the military. He is still trying to work out a power-sharing solution but has less leeway because of the genocide in Rwanda. I talked to some Burundi friends recently, some formerly moderate Tutsis, who have become quite hawkish. If Tutsis had not retaken power in Burundi, they argued, their fate would have been the same as that of the Tutsis killed in Rwanda. Its hard to convince them otherwise. So the situation is again back to an ethnic stalemate in both countries which probably cannot be resolved for many generations to come.

*Q: Just going back a bit you said that when you first arrived the North Koreans had a very large embassy. What they hell were they doing?*

PHILLIPS: They built roads and a sports stadium. They were basically operating where they were welcome. If there was a friendly environment they would be there. They were also doing some mindless spying on the western embassies. Today they are so broke they can't do anything, but at the time they had funds which I suspect came from the Soviet Union and China. They invited third world leaders to North Korea to pay homage to their "Glorious Leader" Kim Il Sung and possible see their country as a development model.

*Q: Did you find that the Belgians and French were too close to the situation and that the role of the United States benefited because it was somewhat removed from the colonial issues in Africa?*

PHILLIPS: Yes, that helped enormously. The Belgians in particular had problems. They of course felt some responsibility for conditions in Burundi because it had been a Belgian colony. And they hadn't set a very good example of ethnic togetherness. When I was in Bujumbura, there was a mostly African and a mostly European section of the city. But when the Belgians were in charge it was segregated four ways. There was of a Tutsi section, a Hutu section, a Flemish section and a Walloon section. The Belgians were not in a good position to influence Burundi. They had lost all taste for trying to exercise power. Belgium's interests and energies were directed towards the Common Market and most Belgians preferred to let the colonial past go.

*Q: Of course, they have an abysmal record in the Congo. Was that saying that there weren't many Burundis or Rwandans that had received an education?*



PHILLIPS: That is right. And those that the Belgians had educated a little, enough to become minor clerks and priests, were Tutsis. Some Belgians had a guilt complex about this favoritism towards Tutsis and tended to over-compensate by taking the Hutu side in the post-independence era. But the Hutus could do terrible things, as events proved. The French had some influence, but tended to defer to the Belgians. The Vatican, the UN and the United States were the most influential powers during my time in Burundi because, for different reasons, all three had credibility with both Tutsis and Hutus. I tried to be even-handed in my relations with Tutsis and Hutus. Contact with Hutu political leaders was all but illegal when I first arrived. But under Buyoya I could meet with Hutu leaders without being declared persona non-grata by the government. I had some influence with both sides simply because America was a super power, but also because Americans don't have any colonial baggage. Also our economic model worked. I sent many Burundi leaders to the United States on USIA international visitor grants and they come back impressed. And this may sound immodest, but I think my diplomatic skills and ability to deal with people from all walks of life allowed me to influence events in a positive direction. There is an argument for putting career ambassadors in places where professionalism makes a difference.

*Q: And often those posts are used to put a non-reelected congressman or the equivalent.*

PHILLIPS: The most unhappy person I met at that time was the U.S. Ambassador in Rwanda. His name was Leonard Spearman. He was a wonderful guy. He was a black American who had been the president of a college in Texas and was a long-time Bush supporter. Leonard had an outgoing personality. He was bigger than life and wanted to make friends with everyone but he didn't speak a word of French. I saw him deteriorate. He liked to play golf and he would come to Bujumbura to play with me. He even started a little golf club in Rwanda. But he became isolated because he couldn't communicate in French. He stopped going to the embassy and stayed mostly in his residence. He admitted he was miserable. In Washington people had assured him that as a highly educated person he would easily pick up French. But at 64 years old you don't just pick up French. He stopped going to functions and dinner parties where he was the only one who couldn't follow the conversation. He had some influence at the White House and after two years he was transferred to Swaziland, which is English speaking. He hated his time in Rwanda and was certainly not as effective as his talents would otherwise have suggested, simply because of his lack of French. I think it is wrong to put political appointees in those kind of situations, and it is often done because no one foresees the importance of a small country. But Rwanda turned out to be important, if for all the wrong reasons.

*Q: How about UN votes and things of that nature? Did that change?*

PHILLIPS: That changed. Burundi became part of the main-stream African group in the UN. They voted less with the North Koreans and Cubans and Libyans and more with the United States.

*Q: There were two events at the end of your time. One was the end of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe and the other was the Gulf War.*

PHILLIPS: Those actually came later. I left Burundi in 1990. I was in the Congo during the Gulf War and Gorbachev was still in power. It was still the Soviet Union. The full break-up hadn't yet occurred. What did occur was the Chinese crackdown in Tiananmen Square. That was in June 1989. Until then, the Chinese Ambassador had been almost a part of our western group. We worked together closely and shared information during the ethnic crisis. There was a gourmet dinner group we both belonged to that met once a month. The Chinese Ambassador would have elaborate Chinese meals and his dinner was always the event of the year. He was a close friend. But after Tiananmen Square he kept his distance and tried hard not to make eye contact with me at diplomatic functions. I believe he was deeply embarrassed by his government's bloody crack down on the students. A personal friendship was no longer possible. We did not sever relations with China but contact with Chinese diplomats beyond what was called for by protocol was inappropriate.

*Q: How well supported were you by the embassy?*

PHILLIPS: I had an excellent staff, both American and Burundi. Both of my DCMs became ambassadors. All of the American guys were young and energetic.

*Q: You said guys. At that time there was a lot of strong pressure to make sure that women were not being excluded from being the DCM career.*

PHILLIPS: Absolutely. When I got there I inherited a DCM named Dennis Hayes. He was a terrific officer and a wonderful person. He had been President of the America Foreign Service Association. He was a superb young diplomat and extraordinarily helpful to me, but he left for another assignment a year after I arrived. When the question of his replacement came up personnel made it clear that I couldn't have just anyone that I wanted. I was given a short list of officers to choose from and if I chose a white male on that list rather than a woman or a black or another minority I had to justify it. So the system of giving an Ambassador immense leeway in choosing his DCM had changed. It was still your choice because it doesn't make sense to impose an officer on an Ambassador, but you had to justify your choice. My next DCM was David Dunn who was a white male who had served in Paris, spoke excellent French and had African experience. He had qualities that none of the other candidates had, particularly the French language. He was invaluable during the period of unrest. He was one of the first diplomats to go to the area where the massacres occurred. The Burundi government didn't want ambassadors in the area during the first days of the troubles because the security was uncertain. I didn't want David to go but he said he would be fine. So he went with a group of UN experts and some others and I didn't sleep that night. When he finally got back to Bujumbura around five in the morning he called and said he was okay. He was a very courageous and astute officer and a good writer. We had our 15 minutes of fame because of the massacres and the refugee problem and world attention was focused on Burundi for a short time. We wanted to get our reporting on events and our recommendations to the Department right. David was a large of part of our success.

*Q: Did you have any problem with AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] at that time?*

PHILLIPS: Yes, AIDS was at pandemic proportions when I was there. It was a horrible carnage and you could see people dying almost before your eyes. For some reason AIDS victims in the United States seem to linger. Your impression of an AIDS victim is of someone who is very thin and weak and dying slowly. But in Africa they don't linger. I would meet a person and six weeks later learn that he had died. Medical resources were unavailable to keep them alive. Burundi has a sexually promiscuous culture. There is emphasis on having many children and polygamy was not sanctioned but wasn't frowned on either, so a lot of people were exposed to the virus. There were no corner drugstores selling condoms. Most people didn't even realize the extent of the danger. So AIDS was a huge problem and still is.

*Q: Were you running the figures and seeing that if you had some many cases, it seems like and almost infinite number of deaths?*

PHILLIPS: We would run the figures as best we could and occasionally send Washington a report on the epidemic. We got numbers from hospitals and from missionaries in the field. Women were passing AIDS on to their fetuses and children were born with AIDS. It was tragic. Through USAID we tried to sponsor condom distribution, but the Catholic Church opposed it. Burundi culture placed great value on virility. That along with the church's opposition to birth control, its insistence on no sex as opposed to safe sex, increased the spread of AIDS. This was true throughout the region.

*Q: You left there in 1990?*

PHILLIPS: I left on a high note in 1990, well before the genocide in Rwanda and the elections in Burundi that I described earlier had occurred. Buyoya was still in power. He had turned around the refugee crisis, was steering the country towards democratic elections and a free-market economic system. The image of Burundi in the United States had vastly improved in the four years since my arrival. The Burundi government gave me some credit for this and organized elaborate farewell ceremonies for me. I had to turn down a number of gifts from Tutsis and Hutus alike. Ordinary people thought I had played a major role in calming the country after the massacres and then bringing the refugees back. I did play a role but I think it got exaggerated in the public mind.

**CYNTHIA S. PERRY**  
**Ambassador**  
**Burundi (1990-1993)**

*Ms. Perry was born in Indiana in 1928 and graduated from Indiana State University and University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She was appointed ambassador to Sierra Leone and Burundi. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.*

*Q: At the end of the Reagan Administration, you went to Burundi in 1990. How did that come about?*

PERRY: When Mr. Bush became President, I knew I had only a few months to remain in Sierra Leone as Ambassador. Most political ambassadors would be recalled, as in any change of administration. So, I returned on short leave to talk to the new White House transition team, to make known my interests in serving Mr. Bush as ambassador. I informed the person interviewing me that I was the only black woman, political ambassador, serving abroad in the Reagan Administration. I felt I had done a good job in a hardship post in Africa; I was always a Bush supporter, and I wanted to go out again to serve Mr. Bush's administration. Then I returned to Sierra Leone to complete my mission. The upshot was, within a few weeks, I received "the" call from President Bush asking if I would go to Burundi.

Burundi is French-speaking, a former Belgian colony. My French was minimal and I knew I was going to really have to get to work on it but it would be a good opportunity to learn French so I said, "Yes."

*Q: So you served there from 1989-1993, the whole Bush Administration?*

PERRY: Yes.

*Q: When you got out there in '89 what was the situation in Burundi? Can you describe Burundi at that time?*

PERRY: I left Sierra Leone in August, 1989, but due to language training and required surgery, did not reach Burundi until February, 1990. I found the country much like Ethiopia, people look like Ethiopians, especially the Tutsi people. And, historically they stem from that direction. They were difficult to fathom. As an outsider, you had to be liked very much before they would open up and share anything. That was the first opinion I had. I had to submerge memories of Burundi in the past months in order to focus on Sierra Leone for *All Things Being Equal*. Now, I am sharply focused on Burundi for the next book, *O Burundi, Thou Bleeding Piece of Earth*, in order not to confuse events which took place in one place and not the other.

Bujumbura, with one main street, reminded me so much of Texas, the early Texas towns. The city and countryside were absolutely gorgeous, with the backdrop of Lake Tanganyika and the glorious clouds that formed above and below the blue mountains of Zaire - 25 miles across the lake. Lake Tanganyika is the longest lake in the world, and the second deepest. I had a breathtaking view of all this from my front verandah and I painted it, that painting above the fireplace in my living room.

I found all the people to be very gentle, kind, and respectful - but inscrutable. It was impossible to read their thoughts. They would say that Burundi is one country, with one people, with one language, but you had the sense it wasn't a nation of peace or one without division. For all my time in the country, I did not always know which were Hutu and which were Tutsi by their features or their speech patterns. But, I learned to recognize differences, although they were not consistently identifiable due to the pattern of intermarriages between the two. They were all handsome and intelligent people.

I guess my first real memory of coming face to face with the underlying friction was my first attendance at Armed Forces Day. All Ambassadors were invited to come out and sit in covered stands to watch the parade of French-made tanks and mounted guns. They were polished, shining in the bright sunlight like new money, ready for combat; the troops all stood tall, disciplined; the drums were fearsome, their deep and strong sounds reverberating through one's chest, stomach, head. The army in its state of readiness was indeed impressive. I turned to one of the Burundian authorities and said, "Who's the enemy?" He looked at me like "Stupid." I continued to ask that question. If there is no threat from the outside, why such a war effort? Rwanda has no interest in Burundi; Zaire doesn't want any part of it; Tanzania shows no interest. Who is the enemy? When I finally asked the right person, he informed me that it's the Hutus - they are the enemy, the internal threat. So that well-oiled military machine I was looking at was all Tutsi; no Hutu could serve in the fighting military. Of course, I had been briefed about this, but it was nearly overwhelming to observe the hundreds of these men, six-feet and over, pass before you. When you hear at the same time the amazing drummers of Burundi, definitely a part of the war machinery, not just drummers, you saw them as a part of this ferocious military. The ceremonial drums built fear in the hearts of the Hutus. That's the impression I had of the country on my arrival. But when I met the President, I felt only respect and warmth for him.

*Q: Who was the President?*

PERRY: He was Pierre Buyoya, a military man, who is also, by the way, the current President of Burundi. His public speeches always centered on the need for unity and peace. Although he also was Tutsi, he recognized that they were a small albeit powerful minority, surrounded by 80% Hutu majority. He knew at some point it would come to a head. The Belgians, he said, had been very cruel as colonizers - more cruel in the manner they left the country. It was simpler to place the blame on the Belgians for the inability of the Burundians to live peacefully as one people.

*Q: Their rule in the Congo is renowned for its viciousness.*

PERRY: Same thing. According to historians, the Belgians killed off people, hacked up people, committed all types of atrocities to place fear in the minds of the people. Then, they chose an intelligent warrior group, a small minority--the Tutsis, to rule the country upon their departure. President Buyoya, picked by the Tutsis to lead, I sincerely believed, wanted to bring peace to the country. He followed much of our advice on establishing a democracy, agreed to the formation of multi parties and a democratic election--he was really with us the whole way. He believed he could win the election; he was beloved by most of the people for his efforts to bring peace and equity. But sheer numbers were against him and he lost. I wasn't there at the end because I was recalled by the Clinton administration six months before the whole thing collapsed. President Buyoya made an appeal to the State Department to keep me there six months longer through the election, noting the hard work I had done in the previous years to bring together all the factions. I had indeed worked very hard to get this democratic election and I spent my final year meeting with these various groups, the ethnic groups and their branches, the inter-tribal and intra-tribal concerns. I would get them together to eat at my house, with an excellent French translator there who could get all the nuances that I might miss from my understanding of French. I was never told what decisions had been made, but they would go off and try to work it out. When they reached an impasse, we would set up another dinner and work it through. So we saved the

democratic election when it was doomed to failure. And, then I was recalled. President Clinton did not immediately appoint another Ambassador. So within six months following the apparently peaceful elections and the formation of a new Hutu government, it all collapsed with the assassinations of the President and five of his Ministers. The war was on.

*Q: Our interests in the place are really to make sure they didn't kill each other. Do we have other interests?*

PERRY: We had a truly great interest in preserving the peace in the Central Africa Region which was critical to our national interests. Burundi had been a stable key to that peace. Zaire was entering an unstable and troublesome period and the U.S. Government was rapidly losing favor and influence over the affairs of this vast nation. Mobutu thought he had served the U.S. well when they needed him and now they wanted him to bow out, and to allow democracy to take root. He strongly refused and the country became chaotic. Rwanda 's situation become more volatile with the hour. It was quite evident that unless the U.S. intervened to stabilize Rwanda and Burundi, the region was going to collapse. We did not, and, it did.

*Q: Did that same ethnic diversity - i.e., the Hutu and/Tutsi - exist in Rwanda as well?*

PERRY: Differently, but yes.

*Q: How was it different?*

PERRY: The Hutus were in power in Rwanda. As opposed to Burundi, the Belgians left Rwanda in the hands of the Hutus, the majority ethnic group. The Hutu majority became the power brokers, but they did not wisely use the Tutsi, who were the educated, moneyed and powerful people. In a particularly bloody uprising about 40 years earlier, Tutsi families were massacred by the Hutus; those remaining were forced to flee Rwanda and were given exile in Uganda. Years later, Museveni built a strong military comprised of many fearless Tutsi warriors, with whose help he ousted the hated Idi Amin, When he became president of Uganda, he vowed to support the Tutsi return to Rwanda, even by force, when the time came. It was rumored that he himself was half-Tutsi.

*Q: Was there any connection between the Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi and the Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi?*

PERRY: Of course. They are the same ethnic groupings. Their languages are slightly different, but very much the same, and they also understand each other. They worked together from time to time. The relations between the two countries were cordial and relationships between the individual ethnic groups were also strong: Hutu to Hutu; Tutsi to Tutsi. The ethnic war began first in Rwanda with insurgencies from Uganda by the exiled Tutsis. In retaliation, Hutus began to massacre the Tutsis in the interior of Rwanda, who then began to flee into Burundi. They settled into refugee camps in the northern part of Burundi which was closer to Rwanda.

It is a long and difficult problem. It is not possible for me to give you in an interview more than a quite simplistic view of a hideously complicated war. I urge you to read my book, *Thou Bleeding*

*Piece of Earth*, which gives a more in-depth version of the situation as well as a critique of the response or non-response of the American government to the bloodbath, the killing fields of Rwanda and Burundi - a genocide that many of us feel could have been avoided.

*Q: Was there an effort made to go out and check on how things were going along the border lines and all that?*

PERRY: Yes, my security officers as well as regional security people kept close watch on incidents along the borders and traditional trouble spots in the country. I myself went often just to observe and to be observed. We checked out all rumors of genocidal killings which, in spite of loud denials from the government and rebel groups, were often found to be true. Burundi had become a haven for refugees from Rwanda, from Zaire, from Tanzania, both Hutu and Tutsi. And, insurgents were definitely among them taking up positions for later war, hiding themselves well in the countryside and forests; they were guerilla fighters on both sides, who felt they had a cause, many hidden and aided by sympathetic or intimidated countrymen. This raised some serious concerns about the welfare of our missionaries.

*Q: How did you deal with the missionaries because often as I do these interviews they say, "Well the missionaries say they don't want help and they don't want to be bothered by the Americans," until all of a sudden they are in trouble and then they need it?*

PERRY: Well, in both countries I stayed close to the missionaries, visiting them periodically at their various locations. I always invited them to celebrations at the Residence. In fact, I gave them permission to use the swimming pool on weekday afternoons, especially useful for families with small children in the close area. A great many of them were United Methodists and other Methodist groups, but there were also Baptists, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists and others - all really good people who contributed to the health and welfare of the people. I made it my business to go up country quite often, many times staying overnight. We would talk about our families, nothing to do with what the Government was doing or anything like that. The Embassy sometimes utilized the missionary radio bands for communicating with them and our Peace Corps volunteers when caution was to be used. The country was nervous and they needed to be aware to use caution. There was a great deal of cooperation between us on matters of security. Some lived just over the Burundi Border in Eastern Zaire, and were fiercely independent. They managed their own affairs, had their own airplanes and could get out if need be. But, they were rather fearless. Sometimes they would let us know of problems brewing, and if serious enough, they would travel to Bujumbura to take refuge. But, the majority were not intimidated by the local skirmishes and would remain in place to protect their holdings. They were not our informants, and we could not ask them officially to pass us information, but they would advise us of rumors or actual happenings for our follow-up.

Once, I received a call from a New York Missionary Diocese, to say their Burundi members and some American missionaries were being mistreated in central Burundi. The military had allegedly invaded the sanctuary and were threatening the parishioners. They had reportedly cordoned off the missionary compound, and confined the group to a small area. The caller demanded that the American Embassy do something about it. I questioned why or how his members could reach him in New York, but couldn't get word to me just a few miles away.

The situation was indeed a serious one, if it had validity. As Ambassador, I was committed to the protection of American citizens in the country. While my staff prepared an official protest with government officials regarding the alleged incident, I pulled together two post security officers and a translator for a quick discussion of possible actions and outcomes. Then, we drove immediately up country, directly to the Governor's office (about 60 miles away) in a two-car caravan, the American standard flapping furiously in the wind. The Governor of this region, whom I had met previously, seemed to be expecting us, and received us quite graciously. Approaching the matter as gently as I might, I repeated the rumor I had received from the Diocese and the request from my government that I investigate the rumor. I spoke of my commitment and mandate to protect American citizens in the country from harassment and harm. He responded reproachingly, that members of the church were Burundian and it was his responsibility, not mine, to keep them from harm while maintaining peace and security in the community. He said, "Your government has no voice here; I checked and we don't have any of your people up here." I said, "Oh, yes, there are three." He said, "No, no, no, no. We only have one white woman up here, and she's British."

It was my turn to be belligerent. I said haughtily, "I hope you know that not all Americans are white. Look at me!" He said, "I never thought about it." He was terribly embarrassed. He and several of his officers accompanied me to the missionary compound, explaining along the way that a traitor with a cache of arms and ammunition had found refuge there. The police had unearthed the weapons, but could not find the man. They were trying to isolate the man within the compound and to force the missionaries to tell where they had hidden him.

He said, "I won't make that mistake again; we have no quarrel with the church or Americans and we will free your people. Understand that for our own national security, we must find the person who created our problems." They were immediately released, along with their members. In truth, two of the missionaries were Nigerian-born and in their fear, hadn't been able to convince their captors of their American citizenship. The other American girl looked like a Burundian. But the missionaries around the country learned of my intervention and they passed the word, "Our American Ambassador is fearless." Not so, but I didn't think I would be harmed for doing the right thing.

*Q: What about the French? Were the French playing any role?*

PERRY: Indeed. We had fights all over the place. Their real claim to the country was the language; they perceived the French language as their strength and basic claim to ownership of the country. Anything that was to be done in that country had to have the approval of the French, rather than the Belgians. That was particularly galling to American business. Once, the Burundian government requested bids to build a telecommunications tower, at the tune of 40 million dollars or more. The French said that they would do it, and took it for granted a French company's bid would be honored. An American firm advised me they had also presented a proposal for the tower and sought my support. This was followed by a question from a government official as to whether I would support the American proposal. I argued that telecommunications was truly an American industry, and such expertise needed is normally best provided by those who know the technology. The government shortly after awarded the contract



to the American company, whereupon the French ambassador advised the government that they would cut off a commensurate amount of their foreign aid if the contract were not awarded to the French firm. The Minister of Finance called me and said, "We refuse to be coerced by this threat. Your company has the contract." After that, the French Ambassador wouldn't speak to me. I became an enemy.

*Q: Were the French doing anything in the way of support to the Hutus or Tutsis? Were they mixed up in this sort of thing?*

PERRY: They were accused of being involved; e.g., supplying arms, training and information to the Tutsi army. Many of the Tutsi political groups were located in France and were reportedly receiving monies to promote the war. The former Tutsi president of Burundi was exiled in France and was reportedly involved with insurgent groups coming into the country. He also was said to have fostered divisive mischief among the Tutsi factions upon his pardon and return to Burundi.

*Q: Later the French were accused of being staunch supporters of the Tutsis.*

PERRY: It was that and the Catholic Church was also accused of the same. All of that put together. The French had a strong influence there, more than you might think since they did not colonize the country. It was actually the Belgian French, the Flemish, who colonized Burundi. The Belgians still had tight control of the economics, especially the coffee export; they were the staunchest trade partners in Burundi. One of the strangest encounters I had with the Belgian government, came about through a liaison between a Belgian citizen and a Burundian girl resulting in the birth of a little girl. They were never married. When the Belgian returned to Brussels, he decided he wanted that child and would go through the Belgian courts to get it. In the meantime, she married an American Peace Corps fellow, which brought me into the matter. Would you believe that top Belgian Ministers telephoned me repeatedly asking me to insist that the Burundian government release the child to her real father? I refused to take any action at all because the Burundian mother signed a statement saying she wished to keep her child. Washington asked for my opinion and judgment on the case, but left the decision in my hands. It was a complicated affair, but we stood our ground, and eventually managed to get both the mother and the baby to the States with the American husband, who insisted the child was his, at any rate. O for the advent of DNA testing.

*Q: Why would an Ambassador get involved with such matters?*

PERRY: No, they called it international kidnapping, which was prohibited by international law. I said, "Well, the U.S. is not signatory to that law." They insisted that the U.S. government had signed it. But, we had not.

*Q: Also a man has no legal claim. When you left there, did you feel that the Hutus and Tutsis were going to go at each other again? Was it building up?*

PERRY: Yes, there had been some serious skirmishes outside the main city, Bujumbura. I didn't want to leave the country because I had begun a series of dialogues between the government and

the opposition groups which seemed to have some effect. I would like to have remained there until June of that year - 1993 - to continue these negotiations through the first democratic election. But, I was recalled in March. A replacement was not assigned for a whole year, after war had erupted.

I had a fortuitous and unexpected airport meeting in Addis Ababa with President Buyoya last November, and also spent an evening in South Africa with the director of the UN refugee program, who was from Burundi, and a number of his friends and relatives. They all brought me up on events that had taken place since I left Burundi. I feel deeply saddened that things I put in motion, which may have delayed or prevented the war, were not carried forward.

*Q: What was the problem? Was it just that the Clinton Administration took a long time to get its act together or something like that?*

PERRY: That was a contributing factor. A number of countries were placed on hold while the Clinton administration was getting its act together. In some cases, inexperienced people were sent to posts or actions were delayed by designating ambassadors who couldn't get through the Senate confirmation, that kind of thing. I think Burundi was one of the last posts to be considered and perhaps hardest to fill because of the unpredictable conditions of war. Senator Krueger was appointed Ambassador in 1994, when the war was at its most vicious height - after the assassination of the Hutu president and five of his Ministers - too late to effect any real change. It was a brutal war. I received many letters saying had I remained there, the war would not have happened. That broke my heart - surely they understood I had no choice in the matter with the change of administration. I doubt that I could have done more than to delay or postpone the inevitable. That may have given time for continued dialogue without violence. I feel that had the small interventions made during my tenure to support the basic democratic institutions been strengthened by the immediate arrival of a new Ambassador--prior to the first democratic election, before all hell broke loose--things would have been vastly different. Both sides would have done all they could to remain in the favor of the United States. That's what they wanted. And it didn't happen. Nobody seemed to care.

*Q: What about social occasions? Was it difficult to get Hutus and Tutsis together?*

PERRY: No. They would all come out, especially for American activities and celebrations. To be invited to the American residence was very big thing, and most invitations were accepted. Our Fourth of July festivity would have 1,000 people and the overwhelming percentage would be Tutsis who represented the government primarily as well as local businesses. We made sure that numbers of prominent Hutus were invited. Social affairs put on by the government tended to have a good mixture of Hutus and Tutsis, but activities such as dinners tended to be somewhat exclusive. We felt very much at home there with either group.

**GLENN SLOCUM**  
**Director, USAID**  
**Bujumbura (1990-1993)**

*Glenn Slocum was born in 1940. After finishing graduate school at the University of Maryland in 1969 he joined AID. His career includes positions in Cameroon, Senegal, Paris, Washington D.C., and Burundi. Mr. Slocum was interviewed by W. Haven North in November 1998.*

*Q: Where did you go from Mauritania?*

SLOCUM: I left Mauritania after only two years because of the phaseout, and Burundi opened up unexpectedly. For the first time in my career I was going to a different region, East Africa. Except for some of my early training assignments, I had been dealing with French-speaking countries of West Africa, including the Paris job. So, I packed out, returned to Washington for the swearing-in, and arrived in Burundi in August 1990. The World Bank Resident Representative in Mauritania was a Burundian, so I looked him up when I came to Washington. He gave me a perspective, most of it very helpful since I knew very little about the country, but he was off the mark in some curious respects. He told me not to expect any decent bread because “we don’t have good bakeries in Bujumbura.” That turned out to be wrong. I discovered perfectly good bread in Bujumbura. Etienne Baranshamaje had lived outside his country for more than 20 years, so he was a little out of date, even though he returned annually for family visits.

He talked honestly to me about the Hutu-Tutsi phenomenon. The Tutsi is the ruling group but a minority, only 14 percent of the population. The Hutus constitute about 85 percent of the population but are way under-represented in professional positions relative to their numbers. There is also a very small group called the Twa, which are the original, indigenous pygmy group. Etienne was clearly Tutsi, very tall and lanky, with aquiline features. I had asked him for names of people I could look up whom he would recommend for me to meet and to help me get acquainted with the country. In providing some names, including some fairly senior officials, he offered that he didn’t know any Hutus because “all my Hutu friends were killed in 1972.” He was referring to the worst massacre in Burundi’s history, when, in retaliation for attacks by Hutus on Tutsi civilians, the Tutsi-controlled Army, supported by the government, eliminated all adult educated male Hutus. So, it became clear fairly early that this was going to be in the background, the historical enmity between the two ethnic groups. It did not become a major issue during the three years of my assignment there. The military president was enlightened, realizing that he had to lead his people out of this penetrating ethnic hate. So I arrived to hear him preaching “national unity.” It was no longer inappropriate to utter the words Hutus and Tutsis, as it had been, but the order of the day was “we are all Burundians.” President Buyoya’s vision helped attract donors, and our program flourished.

Burundi is a very beautiful country, situated in one branch of the Rift valley. The capital city sits on the edge of Lake Tanganyika against the mountains of eastern Zaire, which has now reverted to its former name of Congo. This area of eastern Congo is called Kivu. Burundi is a mountainous country, and its people reflect the reserve often associated with the topography. Like other mountain people, the Swiss, for example, they are not very trusting and it takes time to develop relationships with them. I had been briefed on these features and arrived with minimal expectations of developing close relationships with the people, just as I had arrived in Mauritania

with minimal expectations of that country. As it turned out I found Burundians quite charming, very nice, very competent to deal with, well trained, at least at the level at which I dealt with them professionally. It is a country that is self-sufficient in food, which I hadn't seen in my Sahelian experience. Most of these countries were not food self-sufficient. But Burundians were in many respects self-reliant. They have good agriculture in the plains, mountain agriculture elsewhere and they produce high-quality coffee and tea for export. They also produce tobacco, which is the major foreign exchange earner in the plains. The country had about six and a half million people when I was there.

I inherited a program with a number of active projects. As in Mauritania, we supported the national agricultural research program. There was a vaccination program linked to basic health services, and a program of private sector support in the context of the structural adjustment program was just getting under way. We were becoming involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and control through social marketing of condoms. A lot of my time was spent managing a growing program because Burundi, a development pariah since the massacres of 1972, had begun redeeming itself under the political and economic reforms of the Buyoya regime.

Rwanda is the neighboring country to the north, and with similar characteristics. About the same size of population, though slightly larger, the same exact ethnic proportion of Hutus and Tutsis. The minority Tutsi population controlled the political, economic, commercial and the security systems because of historical circumstances. Over the centuries they had gained the upper hand over the Hutus through conquest, and by the time Europeans arrived a hundred years ago, a fairly rigid social structure was in place, Tutsi rulers and Hutu subjects. At the time of independence, each country took a different direction. In Burundi the royal Tutsi group maintained its hold on power. In Rwanda, the Tutsis were overthrown and a Hutu government installed. Burundi maintained its status quo and Rwanda began its independence with a revolution.

Because the Hutus in Rwanda had overthrown the Tutsis in a violent way, with thousands killed and many more forced into exile, the remaining Tutsis were very disadvantaged. Because the Tutsi minority in Burundi retained its hold on power, they maintained their advantage in a somewhat different way. They could not threaten to wipe out the entire Hutu population as the Hutu population later tried to do to the Rwanda Tutsis in 1994. But, what they did do was to periodically target certain Hutu groups for extermination, 1972 being the most egregious example.

Beginning in the late sixties, Burundian Hutus were inspired by their Hutu brethren in Rwanda and resisted the dominance of Tutsis in the ruling structure, which controlled the economy, the finances, the military, the political system, and held all of most of the key posts in government. Periodically the Hutus would get upset about this and take their frustration out on the Tutsi population. Usually they would start killing Tutsis in the countryside in order to challenge the Tutsi hegemony but also to show that the status quo was unacceptable. Because the Tutsis controlled the military, the military would conduct massive reprisals against the Hutus, targeting educated Hutus. The worst episode was the 1972 massacres, when all educated Hutu men, civil servants, teachers, professionals, business owners, etc. were brought in for "questioning" and never seen again. The documented stories are incredible and show the dark side of the Burundian mentality. The Hutus would be herded into areas, such as the local stadium, and slaughtered by

the soldiers. The story is told, albeit incredibly, that when the sun went down, the soldiers would tell the remaining Hutus to go home and come back in the morning. And they did, according to published reports of the time. This “do-what-you’re-told” mentality, as baffling as it appears, was also responsible for the genocide of Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda in 1994.

*Q: In 1972, they returned to be killed?*

SLOCUM: Yes, it appears the victims accepted this fate. By the time I got there in 1990, 18 years later, I met young Hutus in their early to mid twenties who remembered that their fathers had left for work one morning and they never returned. By 1990 many of these young men and women had entered the higher-education system, and carried within them the pain of 1972. They told stories not just of their fathers being taken away and never seen again, but the confiscation of their fathers’ cars and bank accounts, and of cases where mothers had to take their children back to the farm, because the authorities had seized their houses in town, the surviving widows having no property rights. As you can imagine, there was a great deal of repressed anger about this. For many years after 1972, it was forbidden to talk about any of this within Burundi. Throughout the seventies and eighties, because of 1972, Burundi was a pariah country. Its government was reviled and saw a succession of poor military leaders, and the country received very little foreign assistance. In 1987, the eleven-year rule of a man named Bagaza was ended and a young colonel named Pierre Buyoya replaced him. He began to approve some political reforms and, the following year, in response to a bloody ethnic outbreak in the north of the country, he began working in earnest to encourage fundamental political changes in hopes the two sides could see through their historical enmity and achieve enough common ground to forge a new political approach. He must have realized that the Tutsis couldn’t keep the Hutus down forever, because they constituted 84 percent of the population. But his task was tricky: Hutus had to be empowered in a way that wouldn’t expose the Tutsis to risk. He undertook to open up the political system to give Hutus a sense of their proportional power. So, he did a number of things.

By the time I got there in 1990, two years later, the international community was recognizing Burundi for the reforms Buyoya was trying to promote. He had realized how close the country had come to another 1972-like conflagration when violence erupted in northern Burundi in 1988, in which several thousand killings took place. Though he managed to limit the area of atrocities and damage, he must have said to himself, “there must be a better way.” Somehow he had to change institutions and enact measures that would bring the two groups together and get them to start talking. So, he had a constitutional commission formed with broad representation. There was a successful referendum on the constitution after I was there, I would say it was in 1991. Then, after opening up the political scene to political parties, he scheduled elections for the presidency. My three years in Burundi were a period of dynamism and hope for the country. Donors reacted positively to these hopeful signs of political evolution and major investments were being developed. A Structural Adjustment Program, which our program supported closely, signified Burundi’s “recovery” from its 18-year pariah status. Though a program of support to private-sector reforms, health and agriculture were already in place, we were developing a new strategy to react in tune with the positive changes. It was an exciting time to be in Burundi. At times the President would enlist the help of the American ambassador to encourage leaders of the new political parties to move forward. The American establishment was well regarded, since we had no “baggage” from the colonial period as did the Belgians and the French. We thought we

were having a positive impact with our program, and were playing a supportive role in the political liberalization.

In terms of our own program, we developed a \$50 million, 10-year health activity which was probably the best-designed program I had ever been associated with. A design team was assembled, of course, but it operated in a very collaborative way with Burundians and other donors. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Health chaired weekly meetings during the design process. Design team members would report on progress of the design — it was called the Burundi Health Systems Support Project (BHSS). All the donors were invited to comment on the evolution of the design. The result was a product that had the ownership of the Burundians, fit in neatly with what other donors were doing, and had every chance of having a major impact on health-service delivery systems for the next 10 years.

*Q: A lot of participation.*

SLOCUM: Yes. The design was affected by those weekly sessions. A lot of what we did while I was there, in addition to agricultural research and structural adjustment, involved close consultation and collaboration with other donors. The BEST/BEPP program was a combined technical assistance and budget support vehicle working with the World Bank on the structural adjustment program. BEST was the acronym for Burundi Enterprise Support and Training, which was the project side, and then we had a policy reform side called BEPP, which was the Burundi Enterprise Promotion Program. As they enacted policy reforms to help the private sector environment, we provided annual transfers of cash to support the adjustment program. This work included a fair amount of assistance on their privatization program. I was fortunate to have a good team which worked well with the Burundian officials.

*Q: Were the meetings with both Hutu and Tutsi mixed?*

SLOCUM: The professional cadres were, and are, predominantly Tutsi. This is the effect of the 1972 atrocities, which wiped out the educated male adult Hutu population. Some survived, fled into exile, or whatever. So there was increasingly an effort to put balance into the ethnic composition of the ministerial cabinet. I recall that some key ministers were Hutus, such as the Finance Minister. The Prime Minister appointed by Buyoya after the 1988 events was a Hutu, the first in the country's history. But in general the great majority of our Burundian collaborators were Tutsis. But, 18 years after the massacre of Hutus, their children were now old enough to begin entering the work force after university graduation. So you did see growing numbers of young Hutus getting trained for professional-level positions. But make no mistake about it, power remained in the hands of the Tutsis.

One indicator of the disproportional influence of the Tutsis in Burundian society was the National University, which had about 3500 students, of whom only about 800 were Hutus. Given that the population is 85 percent Hutus, but the university student body is mainly Tutsi, that does tell you something about the social structure. But, the fact is, I met Hutus at the university who weren't politically plugged in. One young man, whom I got to know well, and his family, exemplify the opportunities that awaited Hutus who worked hard and could get into the University. This young man came from a peasant family whose father, a Hutu, had been killed in

1972. Although his mother was a Tutsi, if you are of mixed parentage, you follow the father's lineage. So, he was a Hutu, and identified himself totally as a Hutu. He made it to the university level. But Hutus still had a hard path: to show you one example, virtually every professional position at USAID was filled by a Tutsi, until we identified a qualified Hutu to occupy a senior FSN position in my last year there. Because educated Hutus were not very numerous, at least not yet, there was strong competition in the job market for them. But you were better off if you were a Tutsi.

*Q: Did you run into conflicts between the two groups?*

SLOCUM: Not visible conflicts. But, the horror of 1972 had been suppressed for many years. It was only under Buyoya that the existence of two ethnic groups and their bloody history could even be acknowledged in public. I was at a conference on the ecology of Lake Tanganyika, where I met a European woman who had been there in 1972. I asked her about the experience of living through that period. She said, "We couldn't talk about it. We knew that lots of people had disappeared, but couldn't utter a word, not even in private."

An anecdote demonstrates how suppressed the topic of ethnicity was. An American woman in the AID office who had been there eight years could compare the relatively liberal atmosphere of the early 90s with the repressive rule of the previous regime. You may recall there was a movie, I think in the mid eighties, called "Tootsie" with Dustin Hoffman. The lead character was an actor who was unable to find acting jobs, so he dressed as a woman and found work. Lorraine told the story that she was with her husband and other friends in a restaurant one night, talking about the new film they had just seen, "Tootsie." Conversation at neighboring tables stopped abruptly, and they were met with astonished stares. You weren't even supposed to say the words Tutsi or Hutu. Just saying the word was a violation of convention.

By the time I got there that wasn't true. You couldn't politely come up to somebody and say, "Are you a Tutsi or Hutu?" That would be too bold. But, after getting to know a person you could inquire.

*Q: But you didn't find conflicts among your staff or elsewhere?*

SLOCUM: Not openly. It was underneath, but it was there, much as we deal with racial issues in our own society. As I said, we had no professional Hutus until my last year; they were all Tutsis. That was also true of the Embassy. USIA had one professional Hutu. To give you an idea of the sensitivity of this, the Ambassador, who was an African-American woman, said one day in a country team meeting, "We have to do something to break this. I want all of you, each agency head, to make a considered effort to hire professional-level Hutus." I came back to my American staff and very discreetly said, "Here is the Ambassador's policy. She's right; let's make an effort at the next opening of a professional slot to identify a qualified Hutu. We held this meeting in my office, and this subject occupied perhaps one minute of the meeting. We were successful in hiring a Hutu within a few weeks, something I was very happy about. You know, within weeks word got out to the Tutsi community that the Ambassador had declared that no Tutsi would in the future be hired to work at the Embassy. What had been very quietly touted as an effort to identify some Hutus was interpreted (I don't know how it got out) by the Tutsi community as:

“no Tutsi need apply,” which was totally false. The fact is, all of the professional-level people were and probably still are all Tutsis. But, that, again, is for historical reasons, a lot of the professional Hutus having been wiped out a generation ago.

That being said, there was a rising “class” of educated Hutus who found themselves in demand. I would guess that, by the time I arrived in 1990, nearly half of the cabinet was Hutu. Key ministerial posts and the army were all Tutsi-occupied, of course. When political parties got established, there were two main parties and a proliferation of less important parties. It turned out that what had been the only ruling party became a predominantly Tutsi party and the other principal party was predominantly Hutu. The constitution tried to prevent parties from being ethnically identified. A party couldn't form based on ethnicity or regionalism. Despite the best efforts to de-ethnicize the new parties, the fact is that the 10 or 12 that were allowed were considered as one or the other.

In the course of time, things looked quite positive on the surface and the president, although a military man, was clearly trying to lead the country into a new era which would have offered a more promising future of national unity and common purpose. He eventually set the stage, once parties were approved, for presidential elections. Each party came up with a candidate. Some compromised and came up with joint candidates. The candidates of the two major parties were the most prominent and the race was really between those two individuals, and their parties. One was the existing president, Buyoya, and the other was Melchior Ndadaye. Buyoya, we felt, was very popular and the incumbent leader who had brought the country to this point. He looked like a winner. In the meantime, I, because I lived near one of the campuses, had established some relationships among some of the students over time as I often took evening walks up the hillside behind my house. I had gotten so that I could speak a little more frankly with some of that group, some were Tutsi and some were Hutus, though they tended to keep to each group. I noticed they didn't socialize with each other very much. The ones I spent more time with for no particular reason happened to be Hutus. About three weeks before the elections, I was in a car driving with another AID person and three Hutus in the back seat. We were going outside of town to set up a trail for one of our Hash House Harrier runs. The Burundian Hutus in the back seat began saying that Ndadaye was going to be elected. This was the first we had heard this. We in the foreign community felt that the incumbent was so popular he would be a shoo-in. He would win a five-year mandate by the people and consolidate real democratic gains. These fellows kept saying that this was not true, that Ndadaye was going to win.

I took that back to the next country team meeting and said, “Some of my Hutu friends are saying that Ndadaye is going to win.” Only the economic officer, who also served as political officer, was prescient enough to realize the situation and, ten days before the elections, she called Ndadaye the victor, but the DCM made her take the prediction out of her reporting cable. He wouldn't let the Embassy go on record as calling it. Well, she was very right. We provided, along with the European donors and the UN, significant assistance for electoral monitoring. The DCM was having a dinner party for the monitors after the elections, and at 7:00 that evening the news was announced on the radio, but in the national language. I was due to be at the DCM's house at 7:30. My household staff, my cook and my housekeeper were listening to the news on the side porch of my house. Of course, I couldn't understand the announcement, but it didn't matter. At the moment they announced the landslide Ndadaye victory on the radio, I was



standing on the porch with my employees, up on a hill overlooking the city. The population of the neighborhoods below broke into screaming and applause. For forms sake, I asked Amas who had won. I need not have, of course. Ndadaye had won 2 to 1. What would happen next? Would the army come on the radio and cancel the results? I didn't know what to do. Do I dare even go out that night, to the DCM's dinner? As I drove the few blocks down to his residence, the streets were bare: no cars, no people. In the total uncertainty of what would happen next, I wondered if I should return home. But I kept going. I had called the DCM and he said he wasn't canceling the dinner; come ahead. So I drove down, nobody in sight, got to his house and about the time I got there the head of the armed services, equivalent to our chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, was coming on TV. We got the cook to come out and translate for us and he was saying, "We accept the results of the elections." We knew that was the defining moment. It didn't matter what the chairman of the elections committee said. As the Embassy political officer, standing beside me watching the military chief's statement, said, "He is the one who has to say it."

A month later, July 1993, five days before I left the country for good, a very moving ceremony marking the transfer of power took place, and Melchior Ndadaye was inaugurated the first democratically elected president of Burundi. Outgoing President Buyoya passed the symbols of authority to the new president. The head of the Structural Adjustment Program, Sylvie Kinigi, with whom I had worked so closely, was named Prime Minister. She was a Tutsi, and a member of the major Tutsi party. She had been at a dinner party offered by the Government the night before for me. She had arrived late, and rumors were rife that she was to be the New Prime Minister. She was very shaken, her pallor ashen, but she had the grace to come to my dinner. Everybody knew, but no one spoke of it. The next morning, there she was on TV at the inauguration, sitting unsmiling and looking very ill at ease. She was the new Prime Minister.

I had three very positive years in Burundi. I haven't talked too much about the program yet.

*Q: Well, let's hear about some of the programs you were concerned with and how they relate to this situation, if any?*

SLOCUM: The underpinnings of Burundian society were very fragile. There were a lot of things beneath the surface that we didn't see and probably should have been a little more careful to make ourselves aware of. We programmed as programmers do. We helped to support the Structural Adjustment Program, which was certainly worthwhile because there were some major distortions in the economic structure, especially in the government's role in the productive sectors of the economy, which created major inefficiencies, so we did a lot of good in that area and in promoting private sector development. We had provided private sector services to new businesses forming. We looked very closely at women's issues because women suffered from inequitable legal constraints which were gradually disappearing. For example, a woman could not start a business without her husband's signature in applying for a business license. Nor could she have a bank account in her own name. So, we dealt with a lot of those things, and over time the reform picture was nearly complete.

HIV/AIDS was becoming a phenomenon that had to be dealt with. A society of fairly conservative, reserved people did not like to deal with open discussions of matters such as

HIV/AIDS, and it took some concerted activity to get Burundians to recognize the issue. That became a major area of involvement for us.

I have already talked a little bit about the design of the health program, which, had it gone to implementation, could have been a model of collaboration and ownership. Another innovation we introduced was creation of a project support unit, set up to handle administrative support for all programs, using project funds. That brought efficiencies to that element of the program. We were so positive about the direction the country was taking that we got permission to use local-currency generated from our program assistance, the BEPP, to buy an office building. We also bought two residences, from the same trust-fund source. Everything pointed to our being there for the long term. The democratization efforts I discussed earlier were worthy of support. I will talk a little bit more about that later. All of these positive indicators enabled us to develop a new strategic plan which built upon the results we were already achieving. In the private sector, for example, we proposed to enhance business opportunities in the agricultural economy, notably by helping expand its small export market.

*Q: What did your privatization program involve?*

SLOCUM: We got involved after seeing the efforts being supported by other donors - the World Bank, EU, France, and realized we could help accelerate the momentum. We looked at two state-owned enterprises. One was cotton and... I don't recall the other; I hope it comes back to me. We invited people from the International Executive Service Corps to advise on updating the technical side of the operations and make them more self-sustaining and competitive in the international marketplace.

*Q: Did it work? Were you able to privatize some?*

SLOCUM: By the time I left, we were at the stage of engaging contracts to value the assets of the two companies, and I did not participate in the follow-up. You will see, as we discuss events in Burundi later, that, three months after I left, political events went very sour, and USAID had to phase out. In that sense, it was Mauritania repeating itself.

But, getting back to the privatization effort, it was a part of what I thought was an excellent private-sector promotion program, the Burundi Enterprise Support and Training (BEST). BEST was managed by Chemonics, who employed the best chief of party and technical assistant I have ever seen. Jean-Robert Estime is a Haitian, a former foreign minister and ambassador to the Organization of American States, and educated in France and Belgium. His father had been a president of Haiti for a few months in 1949. A lot of the Burundians he worked with had also studied in Belgium because Burundi and Rwanda had been Belgian trusts (colonies), and he knew some of those officials from his student days. He was very elegant, extremely smooth and substantively very skilled. Here we had somebody who spoke the language fluently (French), who had credibility and worked with his counterparts with complete respect, many of whom he had already known from a younger age.

*Q: Was he an American citizen?*

SLOCUM: I don't believe so, but he must be a permanent resident because his children are being educated here.

*Q: How did we hire him?*

SLOCUM: Chemonics had placed him as the private-sector adviser on the T.A. team, and when the original Chief of Party left, Jean-Robert replaced him. I don't really know what in his background made him so expert in private-sector skills, but he had them. He also had superb interpersonal skills, which of course makes all the difference in the world. I'm sure you've known competent people whose deficiencies in dealing with people hampered their professional performance. He currently is chief of party of a private sector/cum environmental program in Madagascar.

*Q: The government was supportive of the privatization effort?*

SLOCUM: How supportive requires some analysis. Burundi is a landlocked country, historically isolated from the world at large and even in many respects from its own neighbors. After independence it had developed the kind of economy which was seen in most African countries, in which the government drove many of the investment activities where it didn't really have the comparative advantage and where its involvement stifled private-sector growth. This happened, I think, because the newly-independent governments were feeling their way, and in the flush of victory over the colonial powers, the new leaders saw the government as the only show in town. Besides, Africans were not trained, by and large, to manage their resources and institutions. They were forced to learn by trial and error. So by 1990 Burundi had monopolistic parastatals which employed people and were seen as valid extensions of the civil service. Schools prepared its graduates to enter the civil service or quasi-civil service (a.k.a. state-owned enterprises). When the economies became badly distorted over time, structural adjustment programs were imposed/introduced (take your pick) to get economies on tract. I imagine it was very hard for countries like Burundi to move away from the security offered by parastatals and pave the way for an embryonic private sector whose future path was uncertain.

It also has to be said that the peculiar ethnic structure of that society, in which it is a relatively small minority group that controls the reigns of power, including the economy, made privatization reforms threatening. A small group was involved in both the government and the private sector, and part of this clique controlled the investments. Further distorting the picture was the fact that state-owned businesses are great places to employ lots of people. So, a lot of factors and interests argued against privatization. To deal with Burundians in this environment required the right kind of person who understood the scene and was capable of giving the right kind of advice. We had a very good person.

I mentioned the head of the Structural Adjustment Program who became the prime minister under the first democratically elected President, Melchior Ndadaye. Her name is Sylvie Kinigi. She was competent and strong-willed and a close friend of President Buyoya's wife. (Buyoya, by the way, retook power by a military coup in July 1996.) She was an economist by training but she didn't let the traditional African male apprehension over advancing roles for women prevent her from doing her job. She was quite forceful, and I was not privileged to escape the brunt of

her force. I remember once there was a misunderstanding about something we were proposing — I think it might have been allocations of the counterpart budget — and she said to me, “Mr. Slocum, this whole episode risks injuring our relationship.” This was on the phone and I suddenly sat up straight and said, “Madame Kinigi, I had better come over and talk to you so we can straighten this out.” She was very effective as well. We had a good joint team on the private-sector promotion program, both on our side and the GOB.

During my second year in Burundi, we developed a new strategy which included the new health program I described earlier plus continued work in the private sector, with an agricultural-sector strategy more closely linked to the private sector reforms. Of course, HIV/AIDS was becoming an increasing problem, and we proposed to increase our efforts. And we had an excellent human resources development program.

*Q: What were you doing on the agriculture side?*

SLOCUM: When I arrived, we were well into training of Burundians in alternative crop research to expand crop choices for the farmers. About 30 research scientists received Masters degrees, mainly at land-grant American universities (Title XII). (I recently learned that 15 of them are now dead. You will learn why later.) The agricultural officer at post when I arrived, Larry Dominessy, had been there for about four years, so he was very engaged and knew the sector thoroughly. Shortly after my arrival, he took me on a tour of Burundi (not very hard to do in a country the size of Maryland!) and showed me the results of a completed peat development project in the highlands that wasn't very successful. (The only users of peat for energy uses turned out to be hospitals and prisons.) There were also some small agricultural activities that had terminated but whose history Larry was very familiar with. But, the current thrust was research. The Director of Agriculture for the Ministry was a man named Cyprien Ntaryamira. He will also figure a little later in the story, because after the assassination of President Ndadaye, he became President for a few months until his death in the shooting down of the plane in Kigali, Rwanda, in April 1994. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

So we brought a new strategy in and got it approved. On the democracy side at that point in 1992 we weren't very far along and the Embassy and State wanted us to do more to assist in the country's democratic transition. We asked them to examine whether the stability was going to hold. Their assessment was that the positive factors underlying the opening would hold. I recall at the time that I had asked them to assess the impact of the Tutsi-dominated army: what was its probable impact on democracy? One of the assessment team, who had lived in Burundi three years while her husband was serving as the U.S. Ambassador, declined to include the military factor in the report. It was considered too sensitive, and the Embassy was very reluctant to open this issue to analysis and debate. These turn out to have been critical mistakes.

This is not to say that the military issue was off the table. Earlier, before political parties had been allowed, President Buyoya had asked the Ambassador for some help in funding and organizing a regional seminar on the role of the military in a democracy. We went back to Washington with that request and the request almost got turned down over the issue. The Democracy/Governance (D/G) specialists loved the idea, but insisted that to be effective, the seminar should be uniquely Burundian, not regional. Negotiations went back and forth, but

Buyoya wouldn't (couldn't) budge. The compromise was that other African countries would be allowed to send not only delegations, but also some of their own academic experts on the subject. The African-American Institute was contracted to organize the agenda and the seminar. It was an unusual event, and had little precedence. Although AID's role on the ground was peripheral — the Embassy wanted the money but not our involvement; they believed that dealing with the military was no business of AID's - we did provide the funding, or rather, the Global Bureau did. The event drew much attention. This was a country whose military had been one of the most repressive - of its own population - of any in Africa. Yet its leader, a military officer, had asked for help in having its military leaders and some civilians debate the role of the military in a democratic environment. You get a sense here of how positive the trend appeared to us. By the way, the AAI official opening the two-day seminar was Vivian Derrick, now the Assistant Administrator for Africa at AID. AAI assembled a number of experts. Representatives of about 10 other African governments came, and African experts from countries which had the experience of making the transition to democracy. This included the former military leader of Mali, who had voluntarily ceded power to a democratically chosen leader. It was a French-speaking conference, and came off very well, with extensive local press coverage. The President helped open the conference. But there were curious little things beneath the surface. For example, a Togolese academic offered an analysis of the Togolese military. Togo, like Burundi, had had its military composed of one ethnic group, the president's ethnic group. And over time the military had been reformed to include more ethnic balance reflecting the Togolese population. The point, he emphasized, was that you can't have a mono-ethnic military, it doesn't work because it does not receive the support of the population at large. In the local coverage of his presentation the following day, this last point was omitted. It hit too close to home, in Burundi.

*Q: How was that conference received? Did you get a sense of its effect on the military?*

SLOCUM: How do you answer that question? If you look at future events the answer is that it didn't have any effect at all. If it raised the military's need to sensitize themselves to what a military's role is in a democracy, maybe it opened up a few eyes.

One thing I didn't mention about Mauritania and I need to mention it with respect to both countries, including Burundi: I came out of my Club du Sahel job imbued with the importance of donor coordination, so I made a strong effort to coordinate our programs with those of other donors in both countries. I was fortunate in both countries in having very good deputies who had good program officer skills, and who were good managers. This allowed me, as the director, to spend some of my time externally focused, which was useful and necessary. I think in subsequent years as AID has progressively downsized there are fewer deputy positions anymore, so it is going to be harder for a director to balance his or her time between those demands.

*Q: What did you do in the aid coordination business?*

SLOCUM: I was so full of my Club experience, where I spent much of my time trying to get donors and host governments talking and coordinating their programs and policies, that I was convinced this made any bilateral program more effective if it were carefully linked to what others were doing. In both countries the first thing I did was to set up appointments with the

donor representatives, one at a time. So I presented myself, asking them what their programs were and what they thought we could be doing to complement them or what were we doing that might be of interest to them. Unfortunately, I don't think the AID system rewards us for spending time externally in coordinating, but the extent to which you can do some of that at least harmonizes programs a little more closely. I think it was worthwhile.

*Q: Was there a Consultative Group for Burundi?*

SLOCUM: No, but the World Bank had an office. Burundi was a "Round Table country."

*Q: Did it function?*

SLOCUM: Not formally. The GOB took the leadership on coordination meetings, which is the ideal, of course. But both the Bank and the UNDP held briefings when important missions came through. Most coordination meetings, as I recall, took place at the sector level. Because of the importance of the Structural Adjustment Program, the World Bank had the most clout.

*Q: These were local meetings?*

SLOCUM: All the meetings took place in Bujumbura. There were never any external meetings that I recall, not while I was there.

*Q: But there were sectoral meetings too?*

SLOCUM: The UNDP convened meetings to provide donors details of their consultations with the Burundians on their development plan. These plans had sector goals with a fair amount of detail. Donors would come to these meetings, but I can't say that this mechanism produced important results. My recollection is that these meetings served as information exchanges, but they failed to get donors to change their sector programs in ways that complemented them more closely, either with Burundian priorities or with other donors.

*Q: Who led those? USAID people?*

SLOCUM: No, usually the UN chaired those meetings. And the World Bank called meetings on the macroeconomic reform policies.

*Q: Did you find those particular sector program meetings effective?*

SLOCUM: Mainly as information exchanges. I have always felt that the ideal development strategy is directed by the citizens of the country in which you are working, in which the host country invites donors to work, in the earliest stages, on development of the plan, and then they decide mutually on which donors will invest in which sectors. In this way, a three- or five-year development plan, including an investment strategy with names of pledging donors by sector or programs, would reflect joint ownership. Donors could decide to invest in the plan by sector or by region of the country or by any other criteria. This is too idealistic, of course, and will probably never work in practice, but such a system provides a vision for us to be guided by.

Maybe if we work towards that ideal and achieve only ten percent of it, we would be do better at coordinating than we do at present. Each donor has its own programming and funding cycle, and a legislature which provides not just the appropriations but the categories of assistance by sector. So planners on the ground do not have total liberty to commit their own government's funds.

*Q: Was it only the donor program cycles that caused a problem or was it more basic than that?*

SLOCUM: Well, certainly ownership of the coordination process is one major issue. The other is individual donor priorities. Most donors are sometimes constrained by the appropriations process by their parliaments, in our case the Congress, as to how funds should be allotted and to what sectors.

*Q: You didn't have any instances where you saw this vision, even the 10 percent, working?*

SLOCUM: In the case of the Burundi Health Systems Support program (BHSS), the design was substantially affected by the weekly meetings with the Ministry of Health and the views of the Ministry and other donors who came and suggested modifications. So the final product really was a jointly owned design. That is a good example. We talk about participation, empowerment, ownership, attention to women's issues and now, in recent years, decentralization of authority and community involvement in decision-making. BHSS went a long way to incorporate these principles.

But there is another factor that is more fundamental which I touched on before. Donors who fail to include in their analysis the underlying social realities do so at their own peril. I think we saw that in Mauritania. To be fair with Mauritania, one would have had difficulty predicting that the Moor/African tension would have flared up so quickly and caused so much destructive disorder. In Burundi, we knew full well that there were some basic inequities in that society that were, and are, unsustainable. We knew that there had been a huge massacre bordering on what today we would call genocide in 1972 and that the international community failed to deal with it, effectively sweeping it under the rug and allowing the status quo to go on and without making corrections. So, you had this huge mass of population of angry young Hutus who felt very vengeful. You had power concentrated in the hands of an ethnic oligarchy. I think the key African problem linked to democracy and economic growth is that national power, by which I mean economic, financial, commercial, political, security, etc. is in the hands of an oligarchy. So you have very much a top-down approach within the country to managing its own resources. By not addressing these issues in their strategies, donors are deluding themselves. And, unfortunately, the makers of foreign policies want it that way. They fear that to address the fundamentals could be more destabilizing and harm their bilateral relationship.

I think one of the collective efforts of the donor community has to be: how do you get these largely oligarchic governments thinking about shifting the focus of power away from the center, giving up some of their power and allowing their societies to flourish? There are a number of efforts in this direction, and we are beginning to see some areas which we can foster and encourage, but during my time in Burundi, we all knew about the very sensitive area of ethnicity and its potential for disaster. We went merrily along assuming that the right economic policies would spur economic growth and raise incomes across the board, and that this economic

empowerment would bring with it an adequate amount of political power-sharing. It was not to be. Sure, we made some attempts to address the problem, such as seeking more Hutu professionals on our staff, but they were feeble when measured against the depth of the problem.

This was a very strong lesson to be learned. But has it really been learned? I think this has been happening in the decade of the nineties, as evidenced by Mr. Atwood's (former USAID Administrator) linking of relief and development increasingly in different parts of the world. He is confronted by widespread concerns that USAID may be irrelevant in the post-cold-war world. There is an attempt to come to grips with these issues, but it remains to be seen whether the Agency will be successful in redefining its role in the family of foreign-affairs agencies. The fact that in many parts of the world, especially in Africa, more AID and other U.S. government money is going for relief and humanitarian aid than for development signifies the challenge. When you look at the proliferation of peacekeeping requirements around the globe, but especially in Africa, you are talking about an enormous financial requirement which cannot be met. But these resources are going to have to be found if the international community wants to keep these countries from getting even worse and creating more human disasters.

What we saw in Burundi in 1993 happened in Rwanda in 1994 and is happening now, since last year, in Zaire. A forum known as the Great Lakes Policy Forum, which meets every month at the Carnegie Foundation and is sponsored by a coalition of NGOs and official organizations to assess current events and programs in Zaire (Congo), Burundi and Rwanda, has become an important body. Ambassador Bogosian, who is now retired but works for AID on the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative, usually provides an analysis of events in Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo—DRC) from the U.S. Government. At the last session, he said that things are going to get very bad in Congo and ex-Zaire. There is going to be a lot more fighting, yet no one has a solution to mitigate it.

I guess the point I am making is there are a lot of fundamental challenges for those of us who continue to work in Africa, including USAID. It is going to take a lot of imagination and dedication to keep dealing with these crucial issues. I haven't yet described the events that occurred after I left in July 1993, but they have had a profound impact on me. A year later I wound up heading the office back in Washington that dealt with Burundi and other countries in East Africa.

*Q: What stood out in your mind about the effectiveness of the program? You mentioned health and some of the others, but in terms of its impact and its reaching the people, etc. what stood out in your mind about development programs?*

SLOCUM: I am going to start this off a little differently than your question but will get to your point.

*Q: All right.*

SLOCUM: The American presence in Burundi was important because, unlike the Europeans, especially Belgium and France, we had no "baggage." They were not trusted, but we were. Therefore, I think we had a special role to play. So, anything we did attracted a certain quality of



attention, which gave us some unique leverage; not in the way the Bank and the Fund have leverage, of course, but in terms of the political reform agenda, the President and his Prime Minister often came to us for help. I cited the example of the PM's request to the Ambassador to get the heads of the new parties talking to each other and help them get some fundamental understanding of their roles in a democracy. And the holding of the regional seminar on the role of the military in a democracy. (Would that the army had learned some lessons here!) So, while other donors had more money, we had a comparative advantage in some areas, such as in legal reforms in support of the private sector. This kind of "entree" enabled us to have influence on behavior change in the socially sensitive area of sexual practices with the HIV/AIDS prevention and control program. We were funding through Population Services International (PSI) some very graphic training materials in cities and villages, letting people know why HIV/AIDS was being spread. In a very traditional society this was a new venture, but it was effective in imparting needed information. So I think we broke a number of barriers in those areas. On the policy reform agenda, we worked very closely with the World Bank and I think it was a good model of collaboration.

*Q: But you did provide balance of payments assistance.*

SLOCUM: Yes, with the cash transfers under the Burundi Enterprise Promotion Program (BEPP), which annually provided a tranche of cash in return for specific reforms.

*Q: What scale of funding did we have?*

SLOCUM: Do you mean the entire program or just the balance of payments?

*Q: The AID program.*

SLOCUM: It was about \$20 and \$25 million annually, of which the cash transfer was, as I recall, around \$10 million.

*Q: That was a good size program. Well, continue on, you were talking about the impact of the program.*

SLOCUM: Yes, the uniqueness of our role there at a pivotal time in Burundi's attempts to enact profound reforms. I've covered the major programs. Our style of operating, the kinds of people we had running our programs, some of the chiefs of party, also impacted on the program. I was most fortunate to have a good team. A tandem couple covered the program and project sides. Toni Ferrara was the Program Officer, and she was excellent. Though not deeply experienced at that point, she made up for this in hard work and eminently good sense. Her spouse, David Leong, was an excellent PDO and served as my deputy. The PSC health officer working for him, Janis Timberlake, was the leader of the major health project design which became a model of collaboration and host-country ownership. She is now the TAACS advisor (Technical Assistance in HIV/AIDS and Child Survival) in Tanzania. I was equally fortunate to have two great support-staff heads, Mike Fritz as the EXO and Jimmy DuVall as the Controller. Rich Newberg and Duca Hart headed up the agriculture and private-sector portfolio management. These were (and are) all good officers and their competencies and dedication made my job a delight. In the

subsequent years of budget and personnel cuts, Missions could not count on such an array of talent within the Mission.

*Q: Did you find your health care services were spreading out throughout the country?*

SLOCUM: Well, health received a lot of donor assistance given the widespread poverty and the Government's need for support in financing the social sectors. Our newly designed project would have tied a lot of elements together with what the other donors were doing. It's distressing to imagine how bad things are now, with five years of civil war. But during the time of my management of the program, we assisted the national vaccination program with commodity and vehicle support to the MOH [Ministry of Health], and got involved deeply, as I said, in the social marketing of condoms.

*Q: Are there any projects that preceded you that you ran across? We often have remnants of things we have done before, were there any that stood out in your mind?*

SLOCUM: I talked earlier about the peat project. That did not succeed because the planned market for peat did not materialize. It turned out to be uneconomic for household use, and became viable only in a limited number of large institutions. I think there was a problem with burning inefficiency. And then there had been smaller agricultural commodity projects in the 80s and I recall that the larger research project built upon those earlier activities. Keep in mind that Burundi had received very little development aid between 1972, the Tutsi army massacre of Hutu civilians, and 1987, the end of the Bagaza regime.

*Q: Any road projects?*

SLOCUM: Not in Burundi. Other agricultural projects, linked to the research activity, included cash crops in the plain north of Lake Tanganyika which goes up towards Rwanda. It is a very flat and fertile plain thanks to the Ruzizi river flowing southward out of Lake Kivu. But as an essentially mountainous terrain, there were also numerous opportunities with highland crops, such as potatoes, beans and farm vegetables. Thanks to that, we were able to find on the market in Bujumbura such products as artichokes, broccoli and cauliflower. Introduction of these crops had a very positive impact on household food security - but not because these crops changed the peasant diet, but because farmers could sell them in the city markets.

One area that was running against the agricultural sector was soil degradation due to overpopulation and tree-cutting. Other donors were doing a lot of tree replanting which was restoring environmental balance, or at least beginning to.

*Q: On the Structural Adjustment Program there had been criticism that it was insensitive to the poverty conditions of the country and in fact impoverished more people in the process of trying to get the economy straightened out. How did you find it in Burundi?*

SLOCUM: The program in Burundi was recent enough that the reforms had not yet had a discernible impact. But, from other studies that have been done elsewhere, the evidence is that those countries that have committed themselves to a solid reform agenda have seen positive

results in terms of impressive economic growth rates higher than for those countries which haven't reformed. Now, that still doesn't answer your question about the extent to which the lowest economic groups in Burundi were affected. Because of the overall food self-sufficiency of the population and the historical reliance on cash crops, mainly tea or coffee, the population was relatively well off, despite generally low incomes. Unlike most countries, and this probably makes Burundi atypical, the negative impacts of adjustment were in the cities where the educated classes live: civil servants and employees of state-owned enterprises. But rural Burundians, farmers and herders all, probably benefited more readily from the effects of adjustment. It's not adjustment that harmed them, but political instability and civil unrest.

*Q: Anything else on Burundi that you want to add from your time there? You finished up when?*

SLOCUM: I left in July 1993. The story gets very sad a few months later, but we can come back to that because a future assignment put me back in the thick of Burundi.

**GLENN SLOCUM**  
**Director, East Africa Office, USAID**  
**Washington, DC (1994-1997)**

*Glenn Slocum was born in 1940. After finishing graduate school at the University of Maryland in 1969 he joined AID. His career includes positions in Cameroon, Senegal, Paris, Washington D.C., and Burundi. Mr. Slocum was interviewed by W. Haven North in November 1998.*

SLOCUM: Burundi plunged into disorder as a result of the assassination of Ndadaye in 1993, then Rwanda, reacting to that event, brought itself to one of the worst genocides in human history.

The problem that occurred to me was when Burundi and Rwanda exploded. I had some expertise from having been in Burundi and a number of visits to Rwanda. Because of the downsizing in general in the Bureau, USAID staff are very stretched. In the course of my two and a half years in that job Burundi and Rwanda had four different desk officers because it was just so stressful. I found I had to spend a lot of my time just dealing with that. Briefing papers, interagency meetings, talking points for the administrator, etc. I depended on my office deputy to watch the country programs and directly supervise the desk officers so that I could spend more time on Burundi and Rwanda. That worked out fairly well. What happened over time, though, was a perception that I was spending "all my time" on Burundi and Rwanda, which was not true, to the detriment of the other country programs. Well, in fact, we had a structure where the deputy was keeping me abreast of the other countries. I represented the USG at Consultative Group meetings in Paris for Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. I chaired the meetings on the country strategy reviews. In addition to Burundi and Rwanda's demands in Washington, Sudan was also a major pull, not because of AID so much but because of policy considerations and overall U.S. policy towards Sudan. Somalia had actually gotten pretty quiet. The war was over and we had pulled back people to Nairobi.

*Q: What was happening in Burundi and Rwanda to take up so much of your time?*

SLOCUM: In October, 1993, four months after his inauguration, President Ndadaye was seized in his residence in the middle of the night by some Tutsi soldiers. They moved him to a nearby army camp and some hours later killed him, allegedly after torturing him. Underlining the organized and planned nature of the event, at the same time, several Government ministers and the head of the National Assembly were hunted down and killed. Other senior officials of the new government fled to western embassies for protection. Sylvie Kinigi, the new Prime Minister, fled to the French Embassy. Ex-President Buyoya camped out with his family at the American Embassy for several days, though this has never gotten much public attention. When news of the presidential assassination got out, Hutus in the countryside went on a rampage and killed hundreds of innocent Tutsis in retaliation for the murder of “their” president. Then the Tutsi military dispatched soldiers to the scene of the violence and cracked down with their own indiscriminate killing of innocent Hutus. What is sad is that most of the victims were innocent, poor, rural civilians. So there was general chaos and violence. This event set in motion just about all the other events in the region which have made it today one of the most unstable in the world. I was personally touched by these events. A number of people I knew in the Government were slain, others forced into exile.

As an illustration of the senseless yet logical nature of the killings, I will provide an example of someone I knew. He was the son of peasants, in his mid-20s, and worked in a low-level ministerial job in Bujumbura. He happened to come from a region not far from Bujumbura where a lot of killing took place, in both directions. Influential Tutsis from that hillside, furious at the destruction of their property by angry Hutus, provided lists of names of Hutus from the hillside who had no connection with the violence. But, in the tit-for-tat, eye-for-an-eye tradition of the Tutsi defense strategy, the young man was taken from his small house in front of his family and neighbors, told his papers were not in order, and carted off. The following day his body was found off the road to the airport, his throat slit. What makes this doubly tragic is that his family and neighbors saw the soldiers who picked him up and could identify some of them. Yet to this day not one of them has been brought to justice, and I predict will never be. These revenge killings went on for years, slowing down into a few of single-episode revenge and counter-revenge murders.

*Q: Was this a maverick group of Tutsis who set all this off by taking the President or was there some concerted military fear of his presence, or influence? Do you know?*

SLOCUM: I think we know. The Tutsis, being a minority in what to them is a hostile environment where they are outnumbered 7 to 1, have legitimate security concerns. Unfortunately, the “hard-line” radical Tutsis take an all-or-nothing approach to assure their security. Taken to its extreme, the most radical approach, as practiced in 1972, is to eliminate any Hutu that is thought to be a threat. The point is, the Tutsi community is not monolithic, but there is a tendency in the Tutsi power structure to approach the issue of the Hutu majority with great apprehension, and when the Hutus go on a rampage and start killing Tutsis when their frustration boils up over the extent to which Hutus are disenfranchised from the centers of power, the only way the Tutsis know how to react is a massive crackdown especially targeting the

educated Hutus. That is what happened in October 1993. Keep in mind, though, that it was Tutsi soldiers who set the whole thing off by assassinating the first democratically elected president of Burundi. Tutsis in positions of authority now try to distance themselves from this reality by saying the operation was carried out by a renegade band of noncommissioned army officers acting on their own. No one believes that, and human rights reports point to higher-level command involvement.

*Q: This was triggered by the Tutsis?*

SLOCUM: Yes.

*Q: What frightened them that they would take such action?*

SLOCUM: The fear that the new president would not be able to control Hutus' desire for revenge over what happened to their people in 1972. Another reason is that most of the Tutsi military were very reluctant to go along with Buyoya's democratization efforts. In getting the army to do so, Buyoya pulled off a major achievement. The army leadership had to agree to elections in the first place, and then to their results, the victory of Ndadaye. We probably will never have the whole picture, but within three or four months some elements of the Tutsi military, and probably other parts of the Tutsi power structure, concluded that the election of a Hutu president was too dangerous, and that Ndadaye would not be able to control the desire for "revenge" by some Hutus. In a worst-case scenario, all Tutsis would be killed and/or forced into exile. A lot was at stake for them; in fact everything, if you accept the possibility of the worst-case scenario. "So, let us retake power while we can" must have been their reasoning. Within a few hours of Ndadaye's death, Burundi Radio announced the establishment of a new, multiparty government with a Hutu figurehead, but the reaction, both domestic and international, was so opposed that this newly announced government never sat. Instead, the two major parties kept trying to adopt a formula for power-sharing that went on for three years, in fits and starts. Multiple efforts over the next three years to cobble a unified government met with only limited success. Although the mainly Hutu party dominated the parliament, the Tutsi party was careful to out-manoeuvre it. They vetoed a number of choices to succeed Ndadaye as president. Finally a compromise candidate was chosen. They agreed upon Cyprien Ntaryamira as the new Burundian president. We knew him well. He had been Director of Agriculture during my time there, and was our key interlocutor in that sector. The mainly Tutsi party jockeyed for greater share of ministerial posts and influence. Negotiations continued, ceased, recommenced, new accords, periods of unrest and fighting. Two Hutu parties fled into exile and became an armed rebel force, which is rising in influence.

In July 1996, while I happened to be in Burundi, Buyoya, since 1993 a private citizen, took power in a military coup as a last-ditch effort to prevent a total collapse into anarchy and civil war. The Hutus became more radicalized. Rebel groups operating in the countryside supported by their parties in exile in Tanzania, continued to create disorder in much of the country. Increasingly, the Tutsi army and political leadership has made Bujumbura and its environs a Tutsi fortress. It is very dangerous to travel around the country. A couple of years ago, while on a trip in the northern part of the country, the American Ambassador's convoy was fired upon on

by unidentified attackers shooting from a hillside. Well, you see that October 1993 was a very bad event for Burundi. But not just for Burundi.

In April 1994, the Hutu government in Rwanda, which had had its own series of struggles with an invading Tutsi army force from Uganda in 1990, unleashed its “final solution” to the “Tutsi problem.” The Tutsi exile army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had sought to redress the rights of their people forced into exile in 1959. The RPF was becoming more influential in the north and taking more territory. There had been a series of attempts to work out an arrangement between the two groups, the Hutu power group and army and this invading Tutsi military group. The Hutu power structure in Rwanda, deeply fearful over the assassination of the first Hutu president in Burundi six months earlier, concluded that there was no way they could let the Tutsis return “because we know what Tutsis do when they have power and we can’t trust them.” One night, as the Hutu president was coming back from the last of many peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania, coincidentally with the Burundian president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, the plane was shot down as it was landing in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The two presidents were killed and within 45 minutes the army and paramilitary militia were out in the streets of Kigali with lists of Tutsis to round up and kill on the spot. The horrible Rwandan genocide of Tutsis was underway, and the killing went on for three months.

Because the RPF occupied part of Kigali under one of the Arusha agreements, Tutsis living in that part of the town were protected and survived. But the fact is, the Rwanda Hutu army, known as the FAR for its French acronym, supported by militia groups known by their Kinyarwanda name as the *Interahamwe*, began spreading throughout the country and giving orders to local officials and the population to begin killing Tutsis. Estimates are that between 800,000 and a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed between April and June 1994. Since September 1994, I have been in Rwanda several times and have talked to people who survived this period. Over time the RPF army, though outnumbered by the FAR, was able to drive the Hutu army west into Zaire and eventually take control of the country. I am simplifying events. Eventually a determination of genocide was made and a structure was set up to deal with its aftermath.

I happened to go there with John Hicks, the Assistant Administrator for Africa, in September 1996, not long after hostilities had ceased. We drove up from Burundi. It was an eerie sight to see the effects of war as soon as we crossed the border into Rwanda. I had never seen a war zone before. The destroyed buildings, the cars along the side of the road with bullet holes and bloodstained seats, the paucity of population along the road except for the occasional child who would run out from his hut and wave to us as we passed. Some nascent signs of activity were appearing, but no economic activity at all, not yet. The only vehicles moving were UN and NGO relief vehicles, and trucks loaded with relief supplies. NGOs were in full force. Reaching Kigali, we met a few FSN survivors that night at the Ambassador’s residence, one of whom I knew fairly well. His name is Bonaventure Niyibizi, a longtime USAID economist who in 1997 became Minister of Commerce. He lost many members of his family, including his mother. His and his own family’s survival is a marvelous, heartrending story captured by Philip Gourevitch in his book [We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will All Be Killed with Our Families](#).

When we made it up to Kigali, the Ambassador informed us that we were five minutes late for a meeting he had arranged for John with the Rwandan president, Pasteur Bizimungu. (The RPF

victory had been so rapid and complete, that a new Government, an RPF Government, was already in place.) The new president was a Hutu, but the real power resides in the vice president and the head of the armed forces, General Paul Kagame. We were taken to the president's residence near the airport and only later did we learn that the room in which the President received us was the same room in which the bodies of the two presidents and the other passengers had been taken and laid out after the plane crash.

*Q: How did this affect you and AID and your role in AID?*

SLOCUM: Because of my familiarity with the two countries, especially Burundi, I was called upon to be active in deliberations - interagency meetings, contributing to policy papers, advising the Bureau and the Administrator on program options.

*Q: What kind of response were you recommending? What were we doing?*

SLOCUM: Rwanda was quickly moved to a different level because of the genocide determination, a legal determination by the Department of State which recommends to the United Nations Security Council that the world body make such a declaration. This engages a number of international conventions, such as the jurisdiction of the International Court to adjudicate crimes against humanity. So, we proceeded in Rwanda on many fronts. One was to support establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to develop and process cases of people accused of genocide. AID was able to reestablish itself on the ground fairly quickly after the civil war had ended. The fighting had broken out April 4, 1994. The Tutsis had pretty much consolidated their hold on the territory by July, so by August things were stabilizing much sooner than expected. AID immediately began programming humanitarian relief through OFDA and related offices.

*Q: Stayed through the war?*

SLOCUM: No, at the sudden outbreak of violence and generalized disorder in early April, all foreigners had been evacuated within days. A token UN military force stayed in a defensive position, and a small UN humanitarian operation was operating throughout the war, but these were modest efforts relative to the crisis. Only in July did relief workers begin to arrive in force.

*Q: The function of AID at that point was relief?*

SLOCUM: Yes, entirely. In fact when John Hicks and I went up there in early September, an OFDA DART team was fully operational. "DART" means Disaster Assistance Relief Team. The Africa Bureau had someone on the ground very soon after our visit, certainly sometime in the fall of 1994.

*Q: What kind of activities were you undertaking?*

SLOCUM: Massive relief supplies: food and other necessary goods, medicines, mobile clinics, etc. This relief effort was aimed both at Rwanda but equally at the Hutu refugees who had fled into Zaire along with the defeated FAR and *Interahamwe*. Estimates went as high as two million

refugees in the camps, though later that number was reduced. However, counting the refugees outside Rwanda and the internally displaced population (IDP), an estimate of 4 million is usually used. Because an agricultural season had been lost, an essential relief commodity was seeds and other inputs. Another urgent need was for the immediate restoration of water, power and communications, which donors worked together on. There had been a lot of destruction. The government had been pretty much devastated. Most of the people staffing the civil service positions were either dead or had fled. One study I saw in 1997 estimated that the Health Ministry, for example, had only 17 percent of its positions filled, two years later. So, following the emergency phase, and connected to it, was the urgent requirement to restore services. By 1995 a staff of four Direct Hires was in place, and AID developed a transition strategy consisting of the restoration of key Ministries, including justice, health, agriculture, rehabilitation and finance, reestablishing a police force, and working with the ICTR. These were a good start, but was it enough? I think Mr. Atwood had this vision, centered in the GHAI, that if AID could not prove its worth in responding to these kinds of crises and making a demonstrable difference, then it was unlikely that the Agency could justify its continued existence to Congress and the American public. Again, this was part of the dilemma of what AID would be in a post-cold-war world.

Analytically, when you realize what the problem areas are, where do you strike? Where can you be most effective? The needs were so vast and total, one could start almost anywhere. But there had to be a rationale, and this led the Mission to develop an Interim Strategy Paper (IPS). Because the RPF set up a functioning government so rapidly, with the same professionalism as its army, we had counterparts with whom to develop priorities and plans. The Mission focused upon restoring justice, demining, police training, provision of basic services in key ministries, and health/humanitarian and food aid.

I said that an AID office was reestablished, but it was difficult to find people to go there. The previous staff had been allowed to transfer to new positions for a number of reasons, including the trauma of their having witnessed the outset of the genocide and the loss of many people they knew; and the fact that no one expected a military solution so quickly. So most of them had already gotten new assignments. The Agency by this time no longer had the numbers of people it had had in the past to tap.

*Q: Was it the same kind of function in Burundi?*

SLOCUM: Burundi still had a full operating Mission despite the events of October 1993. Over time, of course, the programs would be wound down because of their inability to function in the tense political atmosphere. But at this time, we tapped the Burundi Mission to support Rwanda. We even came up with a name for the joint Mission, COBRA, for Combined Office of Burundi and Rwanda. This turned out to be not such a good idea. At the time, it made perfect sense to tap the Burundi Mission while Rwanda was in chaos and everyone had departed. But over time, as Burundi became increasingly unable to implement its regular development programs and Rwanda's management demands expanded exponentially, trying to run things from Burundi became problematic, to say the least. Daily decisions had to be made on the ground. And the Mission Director in Burundi, my successor, had a management style that didn't favor delegation of authority to the Program Officer in Kigali, who was the senior AID person at post. But this



was temporary, and by 1997 Rwanda had its own Mission Director, George Lewis, and was developing an innovative program which, I believe, stands out as a model for responsive “transitional” assistance in a post-conflict environment. We proved that with police assistance, which required a Presidential Waiver, by the way, rebuilding the justice sector by providing new equipment and training magistrates, etc., AID could make a difference. We also provided creative technical assistance, such as a French-speaking law professor with prosecutorial skills.

*Q: These are happening now and are working?*

SLOCUM: Yes, this is a long-term effort. It’s really twofold: first is rebuilding capacity in general, given the killings and flight. The second is dealing with the crimes committed in 1994, which poses an additional burden on the government. As we speak, the justice system has jailed well over 100,000 suspects of complicity in the genocide, but the justice system is unable to handle anything near that caseload.

**ROBERT J. KOTT**  
**Rwanda-Burundi Task Force**  
**Washington, DC (1995)**

*Mr. Kott was born and raised in New York City. He earned degrees from St. John’s University in New York City and from the University of Oregon. After service with the Peace Corps in India, Mr. Kott joined the Foreign Service in 1971. An African specialist, Mr. Kott served in, Togo and Cameroon as Economic and Political Officer and in Malawi and Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Indonesia and Canada. Mr. Kott was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: From there, where did you go?*

KOTT: Well, that’s another story. That’s when things start turning south in my career. I must say, I don’t know how much Personnel you want to hear, but I thought by this time that I was ready to perhaps get my own post. Perhaps my ego got in a way, I don’t know. It didn’t happen. So I went back to Washington, really unassigned, effectively. Thinking that once I get there I’d do a little bit of lobbying, it worked the time before when I thought I was going to Somalia and I didn’t and lobbied for another job and got Senegal. So I thought, based on precedents, I ought to be able to rustle up something half-way decent. I was offered a couple of office directorships in EB (Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs), which didn’t interest me at all. Again, in hind-sight, perhaps I should have taken that, maybe I was being too fussy, but I just didn’t, they didn’t appeal to me quite frankly. And I also to be honest with you preferred to serve overseas than in the Department, but that shouldn’t come as a surprise.

In any case, I got back there and after a few weeks rustled up a job as Dick Bogosian’s deputy. He headed up something called the Rwanda-Burundi Task Force, or something like that. In fact he was the point man on the post-genocide situation in Rwanda and the on-going civil war in

Burundi, as our chief negotiator, if you will. And I became his deputy. It really wasn't much of the job, I don't want to say too much at this point, there wasn't much substance to it. And it was a short tour. It was considered a short tour so it wasn't going to be more than a year.

Towards the end of that year, I decided there was an opportunity in another agency, actually CIA, for at least one, possibly two-year stint out there, to work with Ambassador Montgomery in an office that works on intelligence sharing with other governments. So I accepted, it was an interagency office, State Department having, of course being in the intelligence community through INR, State Department having one slot in that office along with other intelligence agencies. So I went out there for a few years and that's where I retired from.

*Q: In this short tour Rwanda-Burundi, you didn't travel out to the region?*

KOTT: No.

*Q: That was just in Washington.*

KOTT: Yes. I might say that probably my major duty was as the interface especially when Ambassador Bogosian wasn't available to do it but increasingly turned it more over to me, interface with the NGO community. Which I must say was very influential in Washington under the Administration of the day. With Tim Wirth heading up the G, the Global Bureau and Tony Lake over at the White House, both of these people were very highly influenced by the NGO community, non-governmental organization community. As Dick Bogosian once said to me, "We ignore them at our own peril." They had the ear of Administration. There were certain NGOs that if they called up the White House, they'd get a call back from the President or Tony Lake.

*Q: This was a period after the genocide but before the things have really spread in Congo, Zaire...?*

KOTT: Yes. Right. The refugee Hutus from Rwanda, of course that's the genesis of so much of the problems that we are still experiencing in Congo, had spilled over into Congo of course. There were still many concerns. One was the concern on the part of the Tutsi led and dominated Rwandan government, post-genocide, their concerns about the armed Hutu militias that were basing, largely but not exclusively, out of the Congo. And the cross border raids, which were actually real. There were Rwandans being killed by this so-called Hutu militia. There was the issue of justice and judicial proceedings in Rwanda itself.

*Q: Had the tribunal been established, the special tribunal?*

KOTT: Not yet. We were working in providing aid and personnel to the Rwandans, working with the UN to get something launched. The entire elite, structure of the Rwandan government was decimated. The judges were killed. There were no judges. There were no police. There were no investigating magistrates, there was nothing. I guess there was the Arusha Tribunal was started up, now that I think back on it.

*Q: But it hadn't gone very far?*

KOTT: Not at all. They certainly hadn't any major trials at that point. They'd captured a few people and there were a few being held, four or five major alleged perpetrators. Some of whom were later convicted. And then the Burundi situation of course. There was a coup d'état. Actually Pierre Buyoya was in my office one day, asking for money to go back to Burundi. Not as the new head of state. He had already been president, he was on a sabbatical at Yale. He came down to visit with us and after the meeting with Dick Bogosian he came into my office and said, "I have a little problem, my payments aren't coming through." It was a bureaucratic issue. I knew Foltz, professor Foltz was up in Yale so I gave Bill a call and I said "Bill, Pierre Buyoya is in my office, or was in my office a few minutes ago and was asking me for help." And I explained it all to Bill and Bill helped me get in touch with the right people and get it all straightened out. So I sort of take indirect credit for Pierre Buyoya now being president once again of Burundi. Because of the money we were able to get him he went back and staged a come-back, through another coup. So he was the once and future president. And he's still there. Burundi is still of course undergoing a lower level but intense civil war situation, which is still ongoing, Hutu and Tutsi. Tragic situation. Anyway, it was not a fun year.

*Q: Anything else we should say about either that short tour or the time at detail to CIA?*

KOTT: No, I don't think it would be too appropriate to say too much about the tour at CIA at this point. It was, I can't say it was rewarding. It was somewhat eye opening. More from a bureaucratic point of view than substantive. It makes one coming from the State Department appreciate how well we do with so little, if you take my point. Coming from a building where the joke used to be that we were so broke that the Ambassador in London was burning the Benjamin Franklin furniture to keep warm in the winter. Bit of hyperbole of course. But we all know what the budget situation has been and how it has deteriorated over the years at State. And when you are used to that and you come face to face with this behemoth juggernaut called the CIA, and their resources. I remember, part of my time out there they were talking about a one billion dollar cut in the intelligence budget, so down from whatever 30 billion, it was eventually admitted that was the budget, down to 29 billion, people were gnashing their teeth and flailing themselves, and all we State Department people could do was laugh. The redundancy is just tremendous out there. Any issue, any country, doesn't have one analyst, it has 10, falling all over themselves. I don't know how they keep busy. That's on the DI (Directorate of Intelligence) side of the house. The DO (Directorate of Operations) side is another matter and I didn't get, I had some dealings with them but I didn't get involved very heavily, I was not covert out there, I was overt.

**CHARLES H. TWINING**  
**Bureau of African Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (2004)**

*Charles H. Twining was born in Maryland in 1940. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1962 and an MA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1964. After entering the Foreign Service in 1964 his*

*assignments included Tananarive, Dalat, Abidjan, Bangkok, Cotonou, Douala, Ouagadougou, and Honolulu with ambassadorships to Cambodia and Cameroon. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Ambassador Charles H. Twining in 2004.*

*Q: What have you been doing since our interviews concluded in mid-2004?*

TWINING: I was asked to return to the Department of State in Washington for four months in 2004 to work in the Bureau of African Affairs on Burundi. That country had been going through a very delicate process of uniting the many rival Tutsi and Hutu groups to bring a halt to the civil war and restore peace, to culminate in the merging of armed forces and police and in an election process leading to a new government. Someone was needed full time in Washington to backstop what our able envoy in Bujumbura, Ambassador James Yellin, was working assiduously to support. At the same time, there was finally consensus to organize a UN peacekeeping operation in Burundi, and my past experience was useful, I hope, in allowing me to contribute to formulating the U.S. position in support. It was a period of hope for that strife ridden country, and events since then have proven the hope was not in vain.

*End of reader*