

GUINEA

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GEORGE LAMBRAKIS
Administrative Officer
Conakry (1959-1961)

George Lambrakis was born in Illinois in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1952, he went on to earn his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1953 and his law degree from Tufts University in 1969. His career has included positions in Saigon, Pakse, Conakry, Munich, Tel Aviv, and Teheran. Mr. Lambrakis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2002.

LAMBRAKIS: Bill Lewis was my immediate boss. And after two years in INR I was given my choice of three African assignments, I chose Conakry because it was a brand new post, and I spoke French. So I went to Conakry, Guinea, which was the one country in the new French empire that De Gaulle was creating from the former French colonies, which had said "no," they didn't want to join the empire. The first chargé d'affaires, Bob Rinden and I went out there. We were stopped on the way. We were stopped in Dakar, Senegal, because opening our post had not been cleared with the French. The European bureau in the State Department was very nervous about what De Gaulle was going to make of it. We spent, I think, 10 days or two weeks sitting in Dakar waiting. Finally we were allowed to go to Guinea. As we arrived in Guinea, we knew that the British and the Russian ambassadors had gone there, and they had been received with red carpet treatment and bands playing and all that. So Bob asked me, "What do you think? Should we be the first or the last off the plane?" We decided on being the last. We got off the plane, and there wasn't a soul around. We walked into the airport, and a guy came up to us and said, "You must be diplomats. I work here. Do you want me to help you?" So on that basis we were received in Guinea by the guy who, I later realized, was the head of immigration there.

At which point we were immediately taken to a visit with the president, Sekou Toure. I shouldn't say immediately. We did get into the hotel first. Just before that, Telli Diallo, who was the Guinean ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations, came to us at the hotel and said, "You will be seeing the president in another hour." This was Friday the 13th of the month, by the way. He said, "You know the president is planning to fly to see his friend President Kennedy on Monday." So Bob Rinden's first job on meeting the president was to explain to him that he could not just fly into Washington and see his friend Kennedy next Monday.

Actually Sekou Toure never did go to the United States on an official visit. We did have a tough time because of the French connection and the fact that the United States had to play a role between the French and Sekou Toure. Also, let's face it, Sekou Toure was a dictator, a fairly brutal one, although with a very lovable surface. The French had left there pulling the light sockets out and everything. Then, I am jumping in time to get ahead, at one point later on where we had gotten to know the cast of characters there, one of the most friendly ones who was married to a French woman whom we all knew quite well, was among those who had asked

Sekou Toure if it wasn't proper to have an opposition party. Sekou Toure told him, "Yes, petition me. Sign your names." Some 50 or so of these guys did, and they disappeared. At that time, Sekou Toure had already accepted Soviet, and particularly East German, assistance. There was at least one torture camp where some of the most terrible things you can imagine were being done. We never saw this guy again. His wife was deported back to France. He was just one of many people who disappeared.

Q: In the first place did the French have any representation there or did they really not just clean out the light sockets, but did they have any residue there?

LAMBRAKIS: Oh, yes. The French not only had representation there, which by the way going back to Laos, in Pakse, I had gotten to know the French representative very well, as well as the military there who were still in Laos. But in Guinea too, the French were still there, and what's more, there was a big French business community. I was assigned in Lonaksy as consular officer, not political or economic. The Chargé did the political and economic work. I did the consular and administrative work until we got an economic officer, a fellow named Curtis Strong, and Darrel Keene came out as administrative officer. Eventually the new Ambassador came out. Because Bob Rinden was an East Asia hand he was unhappy there and eventually got transferred back to East Asia when the new ambassador came. He was a non-career African-American professor from North Carolina. The first ambassador to Guinea, and I think he has written a book. His name was Mornow.

Q: Well, on the French...

LAMBRAKIS: The French were still there. In fact the reason I went into all that is that I spent most of my time there dealing with Frenchmen more than Africans because of the job I was doing, and I'll explain why. We had two important administrative things to do. To import goods and household effects for a growing embassy, we needed to fill out long forms for the customs. The only people who knew how to fill them out were two Frenchmen who had remained. The only place you could find them was if you knew which cafe they were drinking in at that time. So I used to go around and find them, buy them a drink, get them to fill out the papers, take them, go to the Guinean chief of the customs, listen for about an hour while he questioned me about what the CIA had done to Lumumba in the Congo. (Lumumba had been killed at the time. I was explaining how the CIA didn't do it). After about an hour of inconclusive discussion, he would sign the papers and I would go off.

Meanwhile we were living in the one decent hotel, the Hotel de France, where they had the best restaurant in town and where all the best French business types used to come. Eventually I got to play poker with them and get business done easily. The other key job I had was to find housing for new people coming to the embassy. I think I became the real estate agent for 23 different houses which we rented from various people. We even had a Frenchman building houses to rent to us, and I had to find office space, taking care of all of that. Then when the first administrative officer came, he sat next to me, but we had to write memoranda to each other because he wanted to document the files. This used to drive me crazy. The embassy was in a two bedroom apartment, even when we had an ambassador, a DCM, an economic officer, and a CIA guy who came out as labor officer. You know, there were six or seven of us. There were a couple of local

employees there. Still we had to write memoranda so that future generations would be able to read what happened.

Guinea at that point was just coming out, becoming independent. I said earlier, they had a brutal government. The big thing in their economy was the extraction and production of aluminum. There was an old Canadian company doing it, but there was also a big new French operation there at FRIA, in which an American company had a minority share. I remember when the Americans came out after independence to discuss what would happen with Sekou Toure. They were interested in that sense. But otherwise Guinea's importance began to fall away as things developed later on in Africa. I was there when Nkrumah visited. Nkrumah, of course, despite having studied in the United States, became quite anti-American, so the two of them had a jolly time being anti-American for a while. But I think we managed a pretty good relationship with Guineans.

I could throw in a couple of other items. For example, the fact that every morning I used to drive to the airport. I tell my students this when I am teaching diplomacy. I was the consular officer. The planes from Europe would come in late in the morning. There was the immigration chief there. Everybody arriving in Guinea was supposed to have a visa. There was nowhere in the world you could get a visa, but you were still supposed to have one. The only place you might get one is if you caught Ambassador Telli Diallo running around in the UN in New York or in Washington and he personally gave you one. So my job was to manage to get every American arriving into the country. I never lost one. However, in the beginning I had a tough time with this chief of immigration who was a bit of a smart aleck, like I was at the time. One day I got on the telephone to the Foreign Minister to complain that he was giving me a hard time on this perfectly innocent traveler. The Foreign Minister said, "Put him on the phone," I was so angry I said, "You call him yourself," and I hung up. The Foreign Minister wanted to PNG me. He came back to Sekou Toure. Bob Rinden and I went up there. Rinden said, "If Lambrakis goes, I go." I think they realized at that point that this was a serious problem, so I stayed on.

However on a second occasion they again wanted to PNG me. This was because you needed exit visas to leave the country. By then we had a USIS public affairs officer, as well, who had to go to a meeting elsewhere. We had put in for his exit visa two or three weeks in advance. Nothing was happening. So the night before he had to travel, I went down to see Mr. Banka, (I still remember his name), a young man who was in charge of American affairs at the Foreign Ministry. I said, "We need this exit visa." He said, "Oh that's too bad. The chief of security has gone home. He has to sign it." I said, "I am sitting here. I am not leaving until I get it." So after about an hour, they sent out for it, got it signed, and our man could travel the next day. But then they talked about PNGing me again. I think they knew me by then and they decided not to PNG me. The next time I saw the chief of security, he kept me waiting, I think, two hours in his outer office before he received me. But we got along fairly well. He was a pretty nasty guy, but he was nice with me. Amusingly when I was transferred after two years, he was the one Guinean official who came to the airport and walked out to the airplane with me. As I tell my students to this day, I don't know if it was a friendly gesture or he just wanted to make sure I was getting on the plane and leaving the place.

Q: You met your wife there, too.

LAMBRAKIS: I met my wife. She had come down for six months as a French nurse for the Canadian mining company on an island across from Conakry. We met, and she stayed on. She worked for another doctor in Conakry. She stayed there for about a year. We didn't actually get married until about five years later. She went back to Paris. We kept in correspondence and saw each other from time to time, until we finally married in Athens (when I was later stationed in Tel Aviv).

Q: At that time human rights was not a particular issue. In other words if Sekou Toure was being nasty, which he was to his people, this essentially was not our concern.

LAMBRAKIS: Yes. Well if you think about it, human rights did not become our concern until Carter made a big thing out of it. Sure, occasionally it would pop into the news, but there was no question that anti-communism is what counted. Africa was the land in which you want one way and then the other. Every time the communists took a step towards getting a better hold in a country, the U.S. had to take a step counter it. A good example is the waltzing that was done with Ethiopia and Eritrea, as the Soviets and we exchanged clients after the Ethiopian revolution.

Q: Well now, how about the Soviets? Did you get involved in the cold war in there?

LAMBRAKIS: Yes. Well first of all Guinea had problems financially. From one day to the next, they broke out of the French franc and they made their own currency which had been printed in East Germany or Czechoslovakia, I am not sure which. Suddenly we had money which was worth nothing outside the country. The Soviets were there. I didn't see much of them because I didn't have much occasion. But for example the Poles were there. When I left Guinea, the Poles bought most of my furniture because they would buy anything with the money there. It all looked good to them. Our first chargé d'affaires, Bob Rinden, got in serious trouble because when we first were there, just the two of us, we had one-time code pads to do our reporting. One time pads is a coding system if you don't have a code machine to code. The one time pad is a laborious hand done job, and we had to use the public telegraph service and pay for it, so we were rather strict on what we sent by telegraph. Well, unfortunately, Bob wrote a long message about the arms deal that the Czechs had made with Sekou Toure, but we sent it by pouch, not telegraph. The Czech deal hit the news long before the pouch message got to Washington, and we got this bomb out of Washington saying "why haven't we heard about this deal. What is happening anyway?" So Bob had to go back and explain why. It is hard to think of today's modern Foreign Service realizing the conditions under which people were working not so long ago.

Q: Were people sitting around, were you all analyzing why he did his anti-French thing?

LAMBRAKIS: Well, I think that Sekou Toure in many ways was a precursor of what happened with the rest of Africa, you know, unlike Houphouet-Boigny in Ivory Coast and Senghor in Senegal at the time, both of whom were French educated elite. Sekou Toure had come up through the labor movement. He was radicalized. He actually had at least one communist Frenchman as an advisor in a key position. I assume he just wanted independence. I think, as in many cases, if you broke away from a western power, the Soviets were quite prepared to help

you with arms or anything else you wanted. He accepted a good deal of that. His monetary situation became pretty difficult after his monetary reform because from one day to the next we stopped getting goods. Of course the country was fairly poor anyway. If they could not get goods from Europe, it probably hurt them less than us foreigners. But what did happen with us was that rumors spread quickly. You knew if cheese arrived in town, you would drop whatever you were doing and rush out to buy whatever was available. This is what such monetary “reform” can do in a country.

JOHN HOWARD MORROW
Ambassador
Guinea (1959-1961)

Ambassador Morrow was born and raised in New Jersey and was educated at Rutgers University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Sorbonne. A professor of languages at several universities, Ambassador Morrow was appointed US Ambassador to Guinea in 1959, where he served until his appointment in 1961 as US representative to UNESCO in Paris with the personal rank of Ambassador. He later joined the faculty of Rutgers University, where he held the position of Chairman of the University's Senate as well as Faculty Member to the Board of Governors. The Ambassador died in the year 2000. Ambassador Morrow was interviewed by Celestin Tutt in 1981.

Q: Dr. Morrow, could we begin by your telling us about the events which led to your entry into the diplomatic service and of telling us about Guinea and how it gained independence?

MORROW: Thank you very much, Madame Tutt. It will be a pleasure. First, let me observe that the impact and emergence of many African nations on the international scene caused people throughout the world to take a second look at the huge African continent which itself is shaped like a question mark. The challenge of those who would understand Africa rests in its unpredictability. The element of political unrest, uncertainty and surprise make it impossible to look into a crystal ball and predict how it will all come out. Many African leaders, thrust for the first time into positions of power and influence, have been puzzled at times by what they considered to be complacency on the part of the West. People from western countries have labeled Africans as truculent because they have demanded insistently their rights and just and fair treatment in all areas.

Now the severance of ties between the former West African - French West African territory - Guinea and Metropolitan France in September 1958, not only gave Guinea its independence but led to a cold war confrontation between East and the West in the newly created Republic of Guinea. Irked by the bold, dramatic step urged upon the Guinean people by Sekou Toure, charismatic Guinean labor leader, President Charles de Gaulle of France withdrew from Guinea all French teachers, technicians, and civil servants as well as all economic assistance. Eastern European Communist bloc countries swiftly moved in with offers of barter trade agreements and worked unstintingly to make Guinea not only a show place, but also a strategic

bridgehead for further operation in Africa. The nations of the West, and particularly the United States, delayed recognition of the Guinean Government. Even after the recognition, the Western powers waited before offering economic and technical assistance so desperately needed by the struggling African Republic. The United States did not recognize Guinea until November 1958, and then waited until February 1959 before sending in a chargé d'affaires, accompanied by a young, newly inducted Foreign Service officer, the United States ambassador to Guinea until July 1959. Now I think this is a logical point as any to answer the question: How did I become involved in diplomacy and end up as a United States ambassador to, of all places, the Republic of Guinea?

Strangely enough, I can only conjecture about this. How would you feel if all out of the clear you were to receive a phone call from Washington asking you to come to the Department of State to meet with officials about a matter that is not disclosed? That's what happened to me in April 1959, in Durham, North Carolina, where at that time I was professor of French and chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages at North Carolina College. The only conclusion I could draw at that time was that the United States Information Service wanted to offer me a post as a cultural affairs officer in some French-speaking country.

What would have been your reaction if, during a conference in Washington with Ambassador Loy Henderson, then in charge of administration at the Department of State, and with Joseph Satterthwaite, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, the lead-off observation was: "Dr. Morrow, we probably know more about you than you know about yourself. We have read everything you have written, and we know about your contacts with African leaders and students, as well as with French officials when you were in France last summer, 1958." I thought, "What a bunch of prime 'so and so's'!" Yes, I had been held up in Paris in the summer of 1958 and had been kept out of Algeria and French West Africa, which were still under French rule because of a revolt among the French paratroopers in Algeria. It happened that the French Army threatened revolt when it appeared that de Gaulle, then recalled to power, might grant independence to Algeria.

Yes, I had talked with individuals, the individuals mentioned, plus Algerian students and French citizens. I was collecting data for a book on the French political situation in Africa, and since the French Government kept me out of Africa, these talks were admittedly a very poor substitute. But what the hell business was it of the United States Government what I did abroad as a private citizen? It was at this point in the 1959 conference that it would reveal to me that the State Department was very much interested in trying to get me to go to the newly formed Republic of Guinea as a first American Ambassador. Guinea? Who knew much about Guinea? A little bump on the hump of West Africa, an Atlantic coastal state where it rained in some parts for six months and is dry for six months. A country about the size of the state of Oregon bordered on the northeast by the Republic of Mali and on the southeast by the Ivory Coast, bordered on the northwest by what used to be Portuguese Guinea, now Guinea Bissau, and the Republic of Senegal, bordered on the south by Sierra Leone and Liberia; a country some of the citizens of which were among the friendliest in all of Africa; a country in which young people were keenly interested in receiving an education.

He was a dynamic labor leader, Sekou Toure, president of Guinea since 1958, who got his

followers to vote “no” in the referendum sponsored by France in the summer of 1958. Guinea thus achieved its independence, but in retaliation, as previously stated, General de Gaulle withdrew all economic aid -- French teachers, government functionaries and technicians. Officers were stripped of all valuable equipment and in Eastern bloc Communist nations, to fill the vacuum created by the departure of the French, Russia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany established barter trade agreements to exchange consumer goods, machinery, all sorts of things for Guinean bananas, pineapples, peanuts, palm oil and so forth. What did the Western powers do in this crisis, one may ask? They stood along the side lines and delayed recognition of this new Republic out of deference, so the Guineans insisted, to France, a then NATO ally.

The United Kingdom was the first Western power to recognize Guinea in October 1958; the Federal Republic of Germany followed suit shortly thereafter. The United States recognized Guinea, November 1958, but waited, as we have indicated, until February 1959 before sending in the chargé d'affaires and that young, newly inducted Foreign officer to open an embassy in the Republic already piqued because of the delay in official recognition. I wasn't sent over until July 1959.

Now in retrospect, it is difficult to understand how the United States, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, and France could have been caught by surprise by the vote passed by the people of Guinea in that September constitutional referendum. For in the August 1958 confrontation between General de Gaulle and Sekou Toure, which had taken place in Conakry during de Gaulle's African trip in support of an affirmative referendum vote, Toure had made it clear to de Gaulle that Guineans would prefer poverty in liberty to riches in slavery.

It was generally known that de Gaulle had left Guinea thoroughly dissatisfied with the tone and implication of Toure's remarks. And then in September, just eight days before the referendum, Toure had asserted publicly that Guinea would be independent after September 29th. Nevertheless, the powers of the West reacted almost with startled disbelief that any former French African territory would take such a bold, costly and fateful step as to refuse to join the French community. What is even more incredible is the painful slowness with which the Western nations moved once the fact concerning the Guinean action became known. The Guineans, irked by these delays, accused the West of holding back out of deference to France, a NATO ally. It is true, also, however, that the Western powers, and in particular the United States, were simply not prepared for the dramatic action taken by the Guinean people under Sekou Toure.

On the other hand, the Guinean Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Telli Diallo, had already been accredited to the United States Government in Washington for four months and the Government of Guinea had become more and more sensitive over the failure on the part of the United States to send a representative with the rank of ambassador. The U.S. posture in Africa at that moment was depicted ever so clearly in a report prepared under the capable guidance of the late Dr. Melville Herskovitz of Northwestern University. “The United States had never had a positive, dynamic policy in Africa,” said this report. “Until very recently we have looked to continuing control by our friendly European powers as a guarantee

of stability and dependable cooperation and have been reluctant to acknowledge the principle of self-government as fully applicable to its people.”

This I must admit was very definitely true prior to the Kennedy Administration, and there are some who believe that this fact became true once again in 1967 and 1968. Russia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland, East Germany were not plagued in 1958 with any concern about what France might think about their establishing relations with Guinea. Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, as well as the Soviet Union, opened embassies in Conakry. East Germany set up a resident trade mission. The barter agreements offered by these Communist countries were readily accepted by the inexperienced and beleaguered Government of Guinea, that found itself pressed to the wall by the unexpectedly severe action taken by the de Gaulle government and by the initial unwillingness on the part of Western powers to ensure economic and technical assistance. And when the bloc countries moved to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the French and the abrupt cessation of French economic assistance, they were not making a leap into the void; they fully expected to reap the benefits from their prompt action and ensure friendship and solidarity. There was no question that they intended to make Guinea their show place.

In addition to a barter trade agreement, for example, Czechoslovakia made available a supposedly unsolicited gift of small arms, light artillery and armored cars. The international press reported that two ships, loaded with Czechoslovakian arms and equipment, delivered their cargo to Guinea on March 24 and 27, respectively, in 1959, and along with the several thousand small arms, the light artillery, and armored cars aboard the first vessel, there were eighteen Czechoslovakian military advisors headed by a general. The second ship, of Polish registry, brought additional Czechoslovakian arms and equipment. A third ship, a Polish freighter, reached Guinea on April 17 with military and farm equipment from Czechoslovakia. Just four months after the shipment of arms, the Soviet Union offered the Republic of Guinea a thirty-five million dollar line of credit. East Germany agreed to set up a supervised running of a huge printing press in Conakry.

The reports concerning the shipment of Czechoslovakian arms to Guinea aroused concern, particularly among the Western powers. They were becoming more and more perturbed by what appeared to be the deep bloc penetration of the struggling African Republic.

However, Guinean Ambassador Telli Diallo, a lawyer by training, charged at the United Nations that colonial powers had sought to use Guinea's acceptance of a gift of Czech arms to discredit the Guinean Government as anti-West. Then President Sekou Toure chose this moment to reveal that he had appealed to President Dwight Eisenhower for one or two thousand rifles before accepting the arms gift from Czechoslovakia. Toure stated that the Guinean arms requested had been made through President William V. S. Tubman of Liberia in November 1958, before diplomatic relations had been established with the United States. Toure declared that he had not received any answer to his request. But the United States Department of State reported on April 30, 1959 that the government of Guinea had not replied to suggestions concerning direct talks on the matter.

Nevertheless, during his official state visit to the United States in October 1959, President

Toure stated emphatically, and no Washington official denied it, that he had never received any answer to his request for arms. He asserted further that the United States was the only country from which Guinea had attempted to secure arms, and he regretted that this nation had found it impossible to help his government in a moment of real crisis in the development of the Republic of Guinea.

The dramatic, solitary stand taken by Sekou Toure and his political party vis-a-vis France, struck a sympathetic cord in the hearts of Africans throughout Africa. On that September day of the referendum, eighty-five percent of the eligible voters in Guinea had gone to the polls. Ninety-six percent of these eligible voters had voted "NO" and had thus ignored General de Gaulle's appeal to come into the community. This move by Guinea to secure immediate independence gave pause to many African leaders, who repeatedly in the past had uttered high-sounding phrases concerning the necessity for independence. These leaders, though talking and, in some instances, wishing for independence, did not believe it to be wise to reject the French economic assistance which they knew to be essential for raising their living standards. Unlike Sekou Toure, these African makers of policy were unwilling to break with France at that time. They harbored the belief that France was as interested in maintaining rapport with the African republics as these republics were interested in receiving economic and technical assistance.

Toure was viewed with admiration, respect and even awe by the young people in North Africa, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, for he seemed to represent the epitome of bold and fearless action in the face of overwhelming odds. And even those individuals who questioned the wisdom of Toure's course of action, and believed sincerely that it could only fail, grudgingly admitted that this young African leader was not lacking in grit.

The attention of nations both large and small became focused upon this leader of the small West African Republic, and their officials discovered in their probe how Toure had succeeded in getting his people to take a step which no other French African leader had succeeded in getting his followers to take. These officials discovered that Sekou Toure, a self-made man, was an extremely intelligent leader, as well as an astute politician. Toure possessed charm, dignity and poise, and fully aware of his limitations and educational training, he surrounded himself with the few Guineans that had been trained in law, pharmacy, medicine and administration. And through the years, the Guinean populace had become accustomed to seeing Sekou Toure in positions of responsibility and leadership; he had been Secretary General of the Postal and Telecommunication Personnel Union, 1945; he was one of the founders and the vice presidents of the important African political party, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, in 1946. He became Secretary General of the Guinean branch of this political party, which was called Le Parti Démocratique de Guinée, in 1952; and then went on to become Mayor of Conakry in 1955, and Guinean deputy to the French National Assembly in 1956. He was elected head of the African trade union that eventually claimed 700,000 members throughout sub-Saharan Africa: Union Générale des Travailleurs de Afrique Noire. And in May of 1957, he became a member of the Grand Council of France, West Africa.

Prior to the September referendum, Sekou Toure already had at his disposal a well organized and smoothly functioning political party that had silenced virtually all opposition in Guinea.

He had had the sagacity to appeal to the women of Guinea and to urge them to exercise their franchise. Toure openly insisted that women should play a more important role, not only in Guinean affairs, but also in the affairs of Africa. He supported the cause of monogamy in a Moslem country. He pointed out the inadequate health services and urged that there should be more building of dispensaries. He championed the cause of improved education and urged the construction of additional schools. He opposed tribal differences and a maintenance of village chiefs or headsmen. He considered the chiefs the main bastion of the indigenous feudal system. He therefore convinced the people of Guinea that they should elect their own leaders and do away with the old practice of chieftaincy. And by June of 1958, Toure's party had scored sweeping victories in local elections and had achieved real success in decentralizing the administration of Guinea.

This same machinery that had worked so well in giving Toure's party the ascendancy in Guinea, despite resistance from the French administrators, was used to get out the vote for the referendum. On the eve of the referendum, songs composed in the dialects of Sousou, Malinke, Fula (Foulah), Kissi were sung throughout Guinea, praising the exploits of Guinean heroes and lauding in particular the courage of Sekou Toure, who was struggling to put the French out of Guinea once and for all. Toure was compared to an elephant -- syli -- an animal of great strength and one most difficult to handle when aroused. He was compared also with Samori Toure, a fearless Guinean leader who had fought against French occupation in the latter part of the nineteenth century. These songs were heard constantly over the radio and were on the lips of even the smallest child out in the brush. No American television or radio saturation for political candidates was any more effective than this campaign in Guinea, where 90% of the people were illiterate. Thus it was that this all-out campaign developed into an ebb tide that swept through the ballot boxes of Guinea and changed this West African nation from a status of a territory into that of an independent nation.

Q: Dr. Morrow, thank you. Given the United States' hesitation or the delay in recognizing Guinea, how were you personally received in that country?

MORROW: Rightfully you should wonder how was I received in this country, caught up in its newly won independence. I admit, frankly, that upon our arrival at the airport in July 1959, the red carpet was certainly rolled out. On hand were the Guinean army band, a detachment of troops, a color guard, numerous Guinean officials and diplomatic representatives from Western countries. We rode in an open car behind a motorcycle escort made up of ten smartly clad Guinean policemen riding new Czechoslovakian motorcycles. And all along the eight-mile route leading into the capital city, Conakry, Guineans rushed to the roadside to applaud and to shout warm words of welcome: "Soyez le bienvenue, monsieur l'ambassadeur des Etats Unis." I shall never forget that warm welcome.

One couldn't be in Guinea very long, however, without discovering the malaise that existed beneath the surface. Despite the warmth of this welcome on the part of the people, I detected a decided anti-Western government sentiment among Guinean government members. This sentiment was not directed toward me personally. The Guineans had extreme doubts that the Western powers, and particularly the United States, really intended to help their country, not to speak of the rest of black Africa, progress economically, politically and culturally.

It is true also that the French who remained in Guinea, despite de Gaulle's orders to withdraw, were very anti-American. Unlike the Guineans, they feared an American take-over. And let's not forget the rumors concerning my second-class citizenship and the whispers about the U.S. effrontery in sending a black dupe of American capitalism to deceive naive Guineans. These rumors originated in America and were helped along by the French, Russian and Eastern European representatives.

It cannot be denied that a June 2, 1959 editorial that appeared in the Washington Post prior to my departure from America had talked about the element of condescension in sending a Negro ambassador to an African republic. The editorial concluded with the observation that the deep Communist bloc penetration called for an experienced and skillful career diplomat. To the credit of the Guinean Government, this matter was disposed of by revealing that all racism was ruled out even in its constitution. The Guinean Government declared that it had no interest in a person's color but only in an individual's merit and willingness to respect Guinean sovereignty. In a final analysis, Guinea had requested the State Department to send an educator and not a career diplomat, for it was felt that an educator would have greater sympathy for and understanding of the problems and aspirations of a developing country.

I admit very frankly that my role in Guinea was not that of a cookie-pusher or glorified paper shopper. The bloc countries were working overtime to make this new African republic their show place. It was not just a question of competing with Communist and other Western diplomats to win the confidence of the Guinean Government. I found it just as difficult to convince Washington officials that President Sekou Toure was a genuine African nationalist struggling to preserve Guinean independence as it was at first to convince Guinean officials that the United States did want to help developing nations preserve their sovereignty.

It was the additional challenge of winning the respect, confidence, yes, and loyalty of the white Americans on the American Embassy staff in Guinea, some of whom were still influenced and guided by the stereotypes of their youth concerning the question of race. To make the odds even more interesting, I didn't have at my disposal, as did the Russian Ambassador, a thirty-five million dollar line of credit with Guinea. Nor did I have a twenty-five million dollar interest-free loan as did the Chinese Communist Ambassador. I could not lay claim to supplying small arms at a time of need, as could the Czechoslovakian Ambassador.

However, a rapid assessment of my tour of duty in Guinea would reveal, among other things, that forty-two Guinean students came to America to study, the first of some one hundred and fifty selected for studying in colleges and universities in America. Operation Crossroads, a privately sponsored summer work program involving American college students, the forerunner of the Peace Corps, was admitted to Guinea. Eighteen American teachers worked directly for the Guinean Government; thirteen Americans participated in an English-teaching project under the joint supervision of the International Cooperation Administration and the United States Information Service; an American cultural center was opened in Conakry and remained open during my tour of duty; nine Guinean Government officials, in addition to the six who had accompanied President Toure and his wife on the first official state visit to the United States in October 1959, visited America. An economic and technical bilateral

agreement was signed on behalf of Guinea and America by the Ministry of Plan and myself, in Conakry, on September 30, 1960. United States planes, in August 1960, flying under the flag of the United Nations, transported Guinean soldiers to the Congo to join the United Nations force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the uprising there. Ships from the United States South Atlantic Fleet twice made goodwill visits to Conakry, December of 1960, February 1961, and were welcomed by the Guinean Government. My family and I had been warmly received not only in the cities but also the villages of Guinea.

Now these accomplishments seem very meager today, but please remember that they were achieved despite the barter trade agreement, despite the presence in the Guinean capital of diplomatic representatives from most of the Communist bloc countries including North Vietnam and Outer Mongolia, and despite the fact that the United States had yet to implement the economic and bilateral agreement signed in September 1960. During the period that had followed Guinean independence, the Communist bloc countries and the Western powers failed repeatedly to take seriously Guinea's foreign policy, which was based upon positive neutrality. The Communist countries regarded the Guinean policy as a facade that covered up favorable leanings toward the East. The Western powers interpreted the Guinean policy as meaning neutrality in favor of the East.

In retrospect, the Guinean flirtation with the Communist bloc countries carried it almost to the brink. That it did not become a bloc satellite may be attributed partly to Toure's expertise and brinkmanship, partly to mistakes by bloc representatives. If the Russians had not had such disdain for Guinean intelligence, they might have had Guinea with its seaport and airport as a base of operation for further African conquest. But the Russians became impatient and imperious and tried to drive too hard a bargain too quickly. They and their bloc colleagues failed to hire a single Guinean either in their chancelleries or residences. The Guineans took this for distrust. Furthermore, employment was badly needed. The materiel supplied by the Communist countries did not come up to expectation. The abandoned jeeps, trucks, buses, discarded for lack of spare parts, provided stark testimony of the weakness of certain aspects of barter trade agreements.

The abrupt and enforced departure of the Soviet Ambassador from Guinea, seven months after my arrival in Paris, on a new assignment in 1961, brought to an unceremonious close, for the moment, the honeymoon between Guinea and the Soviet Union. An aborted revolt in this African republic had revealed the extent of Soviet activities among Guinean youth organizations. President Toure's insistence on the recall of the Soviet Ambassador caused both the West and the East to take a new look at Toure's oft-repeated policy of positive neutrality.

It concerned me greatly at one point to learn, during an alleged American and Russian intervention in Angola, for example, that Russian vessels were reported to be departing from Guinea carrying Cuban missionaries to Angola. In the first place, this seemed to indicate that relations had been patched up between Russia and Guinea. Furthermore, it recalled my efforts, repeated efforts in fact, to convince Washington officials between 1959 and 1961 that Russia would one day take advantage of Guinea's airfield and seaport.

There's another matter that troubles me because it reveals how clearly disguised censorship

can prevent the truth from being disclosed. In the February 23, 1974 edition of the Saturday Review World, there appeared an article by Russell Warren Howe entitled, Black But Not African. One paragraph in Howe's article contained at least three untrue statements about the situation in Guinea between 1959 and 1961. Although I sent a rebuttal to Norman Cousins, the editor of Saturday Review, my reply to Howe's article was never printed. Here's the paragraph in question.

“Ten years earlier when President Eisenhower sent Professor Morrow, a black, to be America's first American Ambassador to Guinea, President Toure refused to deal with Morrow. He saw in Morrow's appointment an insult concocted to appease de Gaulle, who had opposed Guinean independence. And when a black USIS Officer was appointed, Toure closed the USIS library. But when Morrow was replaced by a white journalist, William Attwood, Toure swamped him with hospitality.”

Strangely enough, Howe, who characterized himself as a longtime observer in African affairs, never came to Guinea while I was there and thus was not in a position to make a first-hand or honest assessment of the Guinean situation. On the other hand, noted New York Times journalists such as Homer Bigget, Pulitzer-Prize winner Henry Tanner, the late Tom Brady, men known for intelligence, objectivity, and veracity, did make it a point to get into Guinea to learn of the complexity of the Guinean scene. It is not true that President Toure refused to deal with me; that my appointment termed by Howe an insult was contrived to appease de Gaulle; that the appointment of a black USIS Officer caused the closing of the USIS library.

Had Toure refused to accept my agrément, I could never have set foot in his country. Had my presence in Guinea later become a source of annoyance to Toure or his government, I would have been put out of Guinea as a persona non grata just as the Russian Ambassador was put out in 1961. How ridiculous to assert that my appointment was concocted to appease de Gaulle. De Gaulle detested Toure, the person who had insulted him publicly during his official visit to Guinea in 1958 by calling for Guinean independence from France. De Gaulle was certainly not appeased by the appointment of a black American acceptable to President Toure. It's a matter of record that the USIS library was never closed once it had been officially opened during my tour of duty. The Guinean Government officials were suspicious of the purpose of the USIS because the word “information” connotes the gathering of intelligence. My job was to convince these officials that the United States Information Service was not a branch of the CIA. And, incidentally, the head of the USIS staff in Conakry was white, as was his assistant. Only later was the staff augmented by a black American male and an African woman from Sierra Leone. A racially-integrated team was attached on a temporary basis to teach English. And this group was replaced by a permanent black American English teacher.

I will be the first to admit that any American policy geared to send black diplomats exclusively to Africa would not only be discriminatory and denigrating, it would be disastrous both for America and the African nations involved. A black skin carried no assurance either of automatic acceptance or success on the African scene. It follows also that a white skin is not necessarily the passport to diplomatic victory in Africa. The truth is that if the individual lacks sensitivity, judgment, patience, common sense, human compassion and an excellent knowledge of the official language, the culture and civilization, color will be of absolutely no help. There

are black and white persons in the diplomatic service as well as on the outside who are eminently qualified to serve the United States anywhere in the world. But enough of this.

I firmly believe that if the French had been more tactful, had shown more common sense and less pique in handling the severance of relations with Guinea, the situation might have been quite different. The French language was undoubtedly a unifying factor in a country with so many African dialects. The French had been most skillful in spreading a culture, civilization and language. But de Gaulle, angered at Guinea's failure to become a part of the new French community, did all that he could to make the Guinean experiment fail. It was indeed frustrating for me to witness the care taken by Washington officials not to offend de Gaulle by American activities in Guinea. But when I think of the shaky relationship that came to exist between France and America, there's little need for me to express my disdain for the vain efforts to appease the French leader between 1959 and 1961. It seems to me that United States policy toward a nation such as Guinea should not be determined by our efforts to obtain the good grace of such nations or our desires not to offend NATO allies, but by our adherence to a coherent and dynamic policy developed along the line of United States responsibilities and interests as a world power toward developing nations.

I am not advocating the deliberate ignoring of the views of our allies, but I submit that we must be prepared to ignore these views when they conflict with our inherent obligations toward developing nations. We cannot blow hot and cold in Africa and still expect for our policy to have credibility in that continent. And we must stop paying lip service to self-determination for nations and in the development of states that are politically independent and economically viable. We must stop giving African nations the impression that our interest in them is determined solely by cold war consideration. We must avoid the appearance of ignoring those nations which are consistently friendly and rewarding those that flaunt things for which we stand. We must convince African nations that our African policy is a coherent one and not something made up from day to day, as we move from one crisis to another.

These things we can learn from diplomacy, African style. And the presence of Africans in the United Nations and the United States in ever increasing numbers -- students and diplomats, business and trainees and visitors and so forth -- is most important in improving the lines of communication and in exploding myths about Africa and the United States. And though the general American public may still remain ill-informed about the real significance of Africa on the international scene, it is true also that there are thousands of Americans today who are knowledgeable about Africa and Africans, and this body of informed and interested people must exert every effort to convince our government that it has a part to play in helping these nations preserve their sovereignty and viability. Africans returning to their homeland must strive to convey to their compatriots the sincere interest and concern of Americans who truly want African states to attain their rightful place on the international scene.

Q: Dr. Morrow, your book, First American Ambassador to Guinea, published by Rutgers University Press in 1968, gives a very detailed picture of your tour of duty in Guinea. I wonder if you would please tell us about some of the significant events that you talk about in this book.

MORROW: All right, thank you very much.

First, let's say life was never dull in Guinea, whether I was engaged in averting a break in diplomatic relations or supervising the airlift of Guinean soldiers on U.S. planes down to the Congo, or representing the United States at independence celebrations at newly emerging African nations.

For example, one evening my neighbor, Ambassador Herbert Schroeder, called on me at the official residence prior to his return to Bonn where he had been summoned by his government. It was in early March of 1960 and the report was spreading throughout world capitals that the Republic of Guinea had become the first African nation to recognize the German Democratic Republic, which was East Germany. This report was supposedly based on pictures that had been made in East Germany reportedly showing the Guinean Ambassador to Moscow presenting his credentials to the East German President. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany -- West Germany -- had been adhering to the Holstein Doctrine according to which it would sever diplomatic relations with any nation that recognized the government of Communist East Germany. The calling home of Ambassador Schroeder on the heels of the news linking Guinea and East Germany seemed to be the first step in a break between West Germany and Guinea.

Despite the fact that no aid agreement existed between the United States and Guinea in March of 1960, it was generally accepted among the Western and Eastern members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea that I had successfully established strong personal rapport with President Toure and the members of his government. It was therefore not unusual for Ambassador Schroeder to seek my views in a moment of crisis. In addition, Ambassador Schroeder and I had established very friendly relations and often took our daily swim in the ocean to talk over mutual problems. I told the Ambassador that nobody could advise him on a course of action and that he undoubtedly would not only have to make his decision by the time of his arrival in Bonn. However, if I were in his place, I would, before leaving Conakry, send a message to my government recommending that it investigate the incident carefully before taking any action as drastic as severing diplomatic relations with Guinea.

I pointed out to the Ambassador that his country was the only Western power doing anything tangible toward making Guinea viable and it would be a tremendous blow to have this assistance cut off. I reminded him that the Guinean Government had resisted the efforts of the East German Trade Mission in Conakry to establish an embassy and I thought it significant that this report of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Guinea and East Germany had come at a time when President Toure was away from Conakry visiting his constituents in the brush. I assured the West German Ambassador that I would call unofficially on the Guinean Government to urge that every possible step be made to clear up this misunderstanding. Until I was presented with specific proof that Guinea had taken the action claimed by the West Germans, I intended to act as if the report were not true. We agreed, of course, that if Guinea actually had recognized East Germany, nothing could avert a break between his country and Guinea.

To keep my promise to Ambassador Schroeder, I called the next day on the Acting President, Abdourahmane Diallo, Minister of State, who happened also to be one of my neighbors in Donka. Diallo, never without his pipe, received me at the Présidence and we immediately got

to the matter at hand. I told him that I was there unofficially as a friend of the “court” and I wished to stress the seriousness of the situation confronting Guinea in its relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany. I said that it would probably be the responsibility of the Guinean Government to take the initiative to establish beyond the shadow of a doubt what a diplomatic representative was doing in East Germany, if he had been there at all. Guinea must do this if it wished the community of nations to continue to believe its professed policy of positive neutralism and its affirmed belief in self-determination.

Acting President Diallo thanked me for my interest and said that, to the best of his knowledge, the Republic of Guinea had not recognized the East German Government. He admitted that the East German representative of the Trade Mission in Conakry had made repeated efforts to get the Mission raised to the status of an embassy, but the Guinean Government had refused. The Acting President said that he did not have the full details of the Guinean Ambassador’s visit to East Germany, but he felt that it had nothing to do with the establishment of diplomatic relations. He assured me that word would be sent to President Toure to return to Conakry and that the matter would be taken up with the President the moment he returned.

I expected that there would be an increasing sentiment among certain government agencies of Washington to press for a break in diplomatic relations between the United States and Guinea in order to present a united front with West Germany and to chastise Guinea for its failure to adhere to a policy of “positive neutralism”. I felt that such an action on the part of the United States would strike a fatal blow to American influence in Africa. West Germany itself had not formally broken ties with Guinea; it had merely called home its ambassador for consultation. If the matter were settled in a satisfactory fashion between West Germany and Guinea, the United States, once it had broken, would find itself in an untenable position. Only as a last resort should a major world power break relations with a struggling developing nation that has yet to acquire skill and sophistication in things diplomatic.

I planned and launched a campaign to combat any attempt to initiate a break between Guinea and the United States. After a week went by and the Federal Republic of Germany had yet to report that it was going to break with Guinea, I began to feel slightly more at ease. President Toure returned to the capital, finally yielding to the insistence of the West German Government, and answered several specific questions concerning relations between the Republic of Guinea and the East German Communist regime. President Toure authorized his Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform me that his answers to these questions were to be hand-carried to Paris, where they would be delivered to the West German Government by the Guinean Ambassador to France -- Naby Youlah.

In the final stage of negotiations between Guinea and West Germany, West German officials came to Guinea during the first week of April 1960 and traveled to Kankan in upper Guinea to have talks with President Toure who was presiding over the national conference of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée. And shortly after these discussions, it became known officially that East Germany was not opening an embassy in Conakry and that there was not going to be a break between West Germany and Guinea. Before Ambassador Telli Diallo returned to Guinea, his government had requested the State Department in Washington to convey to me its warm thanks for the very helpful role I had played during the period of crisis between Bonn

and Conakry. Upon the return of Ambassador Schroeder to Guinea from West Germany, his first official act after his protocol visit to the Guinean Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to come to my office in Conakry to express, in person, the thanks of his government for my good services. This is one of the few moments during my stay in Guinea when I felt that my efforts had not been in vain.

My first confrontation with the Guinean Government concerning an American citizen came during the first part of August 1959. This incident provided valuable insight into the inclination on the part of Guinean ministers to do business only with the head man of an embassy. They were influenced in this respect by their own experiences in running their ministries.

Miss Joan Gillespie, a young American woman, arrived in Conakry to write articles on Africa for the New York Times and several American periodicals. Miss Gillespie had received her Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and served two years as a Foreign Service officer. She had written a book on the Algerian Liberation Movement. She had been drawn to Guinea by many conflicting reports on the Guinean experience in independence. Miss Gillespie called on me at the chancellery and let me know that she hoped to travel into the interior of Guinea to gather data for news articles. I told her that travel for civilians was still somewhat restricted and she would have to get permission from the Minister of the Interior, Fodeba Keita. The Embassy was ready to help, if possible, but the Guinean Government had been most unhappy over some of the articles about their country which had appeared in American periodicals and newspapers.

Two days after Miss Gillespie's visit to the chancellery, a call was received from the Ministry of Interior. Minister Keita wished to see me immediately. I sent word that the Minister could come right over. Another call came saying that the Minister would appreciate it if I would stop by and see him as he was expecting several important phone calls that morning. When I arrived, I found Minister Keita, who was usually quite relaxed and jovial, pacing back and forth in his office. He reported that an American journalist had attempted to file a story reflecting seriously on the Guinean national honor. He called me because he wanted me to ask this person to leave Guinea. I asked the Minister what the journalist had said in the story, and he replied that she had been writing about a matter that concerned only Guinea and another African nation.

The phone rang at that moment and a spirited conversation in Sousou dialect ensued, after which the Minister turned and, explained: "That woman journalist has just attempted to file a second story." He said a Ghanaian in difficulty with the Ghanaian authorities had been arrested at the airport in Conakry when he attempted to enter Guinea. The American reporter had witnessed the arrest, and when she discovered that the Ghanaian was still in jail twenty-four hours later, with no charges against him, she began to question police officials. Not receiving an answer satisfactory to her, she sent off a dispatch to New York about the seizure at the airport. And in her second wire she was questioning Guinean procedures for arrest and holding prisoners. She made comparisons between the Guinean police methods and those employed behind the Iron Curtain.

I explained to the Minister the American concept of freedom of speech and freedom of the press and said that his description of the journalist's activities suggested that she was performing the usual duties of her profession without in any way encroaching upon Guinean sovereignty. I told him that I could not ask a journalist to leave Guinea. In fact, one of my duties as Ambassador was to see to it that American citizens received full protection under the law of the land.

Miss Gillespie was not asked to leave Guinea either by the Guinean authorities or by me, but she was not given permission to go into the interior. After a week in Conakry, she left for North Africa and all of us were very greatly shocked when we learned some months later that, seven weeks after her arrival at Tunisia, she had died following a brief illness.

Q: Anything suspicious about the illness?

MORROW: No, I think it had something to do with her kidneys and her liver. That was a question which was raised immediately because I don't know whether it was at this time or not, but a chap by the name of Félix Moumié, who had been one of the so-called leaders in the Cameroons and reputedly was also involved in smuggling bombs and so on, was actually poisoned in Belgium by drinking a poisoned drink; so people were raising questions. But it was finally decided that actually she had died from natural causes. I got a very nice letter from her parents thanking me for having assisted her while she was in Guinea, which came also as quite a shock.

I want to say a word about what was called "le complot" or plot. A mere handful of those accused in May of 1960 of plotting to overthrow the Government of Guinea were former soldiers. Among the civilians condemned to death were a brilliant young Guinean lawyer, Ibrahima Diallo, and a religious leader, El-Hadj Mohammed, was from Conakry. In his May Day address President Toure revealed to the populace and diplomatic corps that a plot against his government had been discovered, and arms found at various points along the frontier between Guinea and Senegal. And the Ivory Coast also was included in this. Well, in a frenzied speech, Toure excoriated the saboteurs and asserted that the guilty would be caught and given the ultimate punishment.

Several days later, Toure summoned the diplomatic corps to the National Assembly Chamber and gave us a lengthy explanation of the crisis facing his government. He told us that the suspects would not be tried in the traditional courts of Guinea but would face a popular tribunal consisting of the members of the National Political Bureau; the deputies of the National Assembly; the members of the National Council of the Guinean Labor Union; the members of the National Council of Youth Organizations; and the Secretaries General of the three sectors of Conakry.

When I heard about the size of this popular tribunal and thought about the provocative nature of the radio broadcast and the public statements already uttered by Sekou Toure himself, I wondered just how much chance there was for a prisoner to receive a fair trial.

On May 4, 1960, we learned that a special committee appointed by an extraordinary party

conference was to draw a dossier of the accused, and the accused were to be confronted by their accusers. On May 8th, the members of the popular tribunal met at 6:00 p.m. to hear the result of the special committee's investigation and reach a verdict.

Two days later the verdict was announced. It was not possible at any time between May 4th and May 8th to discover whether the prisoners were defended by lawyers or given the opportunity to appeal the verdict. All that the public knew was that eighteen people were condemned to death, seven in absentia, one of whom, a Frenchman, had escaped in a private plane. A French druggist was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor and he was released later on in 1961. A Swiss national received a sentence of fifteen years at hard labor. He also was released in 1961. Twenty-one Guineans were sentenced to five years at hard labor and all those who had been convicted had their property confiscated.

The diplomatic corps and the Guinean populace were very surprised to learn that Attorney Ibrahima Diallo and El-Hadj Mohammed Lamine Kaba had been accused of being agents working for a foreign power and sentenced to death. I did not know the religious leader, but I was acquainted with Diallo. I found it difficult to believe that he was in the employ of a foreign power. I did know that he was dissatisfied with the one-party system in Guinea and had openly discussed the possibility of organizing a second political party. He'd made no effort to cover his dissent and he even discussed it at the April 1960 meeting of the party at Kaulsan. Diallo was intelligent and alert. Had he been working for a foreign power, he would have been clever enough to keep this hidden from his colleague. And I was aware that the religious leader, El-Hadj, had expressed his dissatisfaction with the Guinean officials and had accused these officials of doing nothing for the masses but merely looking out for their selfish interests. The unfortunate part about this alleged coup is the fact that no outsiders were admitted to the trials or had had access to the supposed evidence. It was never possible to determine whether the accused had been properly represented by counsel or given the opportunity to appeal the verdict. No announcement was ever made as to when, where or how death penalties were carried out. Nothing was ever done to refute the charges that the accused had been subjected to inhuman torture to induce confessions. Even in Algeria the Ben Bella government saw fit to announce when and how it executed those who plotted against the state. Perhaps in Guinea that secrecy had been necessary in order to avoid a tribal outbreak. However, this very secrecy gave rise to grave misgivings about the guilt of the accused.

Q: Did anything happen to the families of those men?

MORROW: In the case of the families, Diallo was married to a white French woman and I think she was finally allowed to leave the country. I'm not aware of what happened in connection with the family of El-Hadj Kaba, but I do know that there were a number of disillusioned people in the diplomatic corps at the manner in which these people were, should we say, done in. And the feeling was that it had not been a fair trial and there was a question of the fact that somebody had openly dissented against the party and that this could not be countenanced at that time.

Q: Were there any other instances of that kind? Was that the first major incident?

MORROW: Well, the major incident, for example, the second attempted coup, which I think that I've already given indication, the major source of disturbance this time was among the youth and the teachers and at that point this is when it was felt that the Soviet Ambassador had been involved in getting too close to the youth group and so on, and he was asked to leave. And when I learned of the Soviet Ambassador's departure, I thought about the numerous times I had warned my Guinean counterpart and several of his colleagues certainly, and that President Toure and his government would remain strong enough to withstand Communist infiltration tactics and might well prove to be their undoing. Always they scoffed at the idea and called to my attention that the nearest Russian troops were thousands of miles away. Now, they implied that I was not thinking about troops so much as about what would happen to Guinea if their youth organization, women's groups, Democratic Party in Guinea, and various ministries were successfully infiltrated. This could mean that one day they would wake up and discover that they had to seek jobs elsewhere, but of course, this is actually what happened in the case of the revolt of the youth, and the Soviet Ambassador was put out. I never did find out what they did to the youths.

Before I'm through, however, I wish to give a footnote of what happened after I left Guinea in connection with some of the members and ministers who were literally done in. I shall produce a letter later that I would like to put in as a footnote.

Q: Please.

MORROW: I think a word about that operation airlift in the Congo would be appropriate at this point.

Q: Proceed.

MORROW: In the latter part of August 1960, I was informed that American planes flying under the flag of the United Nations were going to arrive in Guinea within the next twenty-four hours to begin the airlift of troops to the Congo. I did not feel that this information presented any immediate problem to our Embassy since the operation was to be under the supervision of the United Nations' mission in Conakry assigned to aid the Guinean Government, for example, to develop administrative cadres. Naturally, I personally would cooperate in every possible way, but this was the United Nations' operation. The United States and other powers had merely offered to help in the form of transportation, communications and supplies.

The United Nations' mission in Conakry received word that a U.S. Air Force officer in charge of the logistics of the airlift, was to arrive on a plane coming from the American air base in Châteauroux, France. Merely as a courtesy gesture, I was at hand at the airport to greet the officer when he arrived several hours later in a huge C-119 transport plane. Major Behrens had expected to load the plane immediately with soldiers and supplies, but discovered that the first contingent from the interior had not arrived in the airport. A hasty consultation had brought the decision to postpone the departure for the next day. The next morning Guinean troops were assembled in the center of Conakry near the political party headquarters. President Toure made a brief speech urging the troops to comport themselves as brave men and to fight to liberate their African brothers in the Congo. He then asked Major Behrens to stand at his side as the troops

passed in review and marched to the buses and trucks waiting to carry them to the airport. The members of the Guinean Government then hurried to the airport to see the take-off.

The President and his Ministers were becoming somewhat impatient when the C-119 didn't take off immediately, but finally the soldiers assigned to take off with the first contingent were aboard. I had been standing near the C-119 watching the loading operation when suddenly I heard my name called. I turned around to see the Embassy political officer, John Cunningham, hurrying across the tarmac in the morning heat and Pat Cunningham -- we called him Pat -- was perspiring heavily by the time he reached me. I could see that he was very much troubled. In his hand were two telegrams, and when he handed them to me he said softly, "Mr. Ambassador, here are two more problems for your attention."

The telegrams had not been sent to me but were directed to Major Behrens and the captain of the C-119 and they had been sent in my care from Châteauroux through commercial channels, which meant that anybody in the downtown telegraph office in Conakry who could read English, already had had access to their content. The stark, succinct messages typed on those yellow slips of paper indicated that the airlift had been suspended and that the captain of the C-119 was ordered to return immediately to the airbase in Châteauroux.

Q: The airlift was cancelled?

MORROW: Yes. Cancelled! Cunningham, at this point seeing the airlift was cancelled, stood by in silence as I glanced hurriedly at the dismaying messages. Without a word to him I placed the telegrams quickly in my inside coat pocket, walked over to the Major and Captain and said, "Come on men, let's get this blooming plane out of here before Thanksgiving day finds us still trying to get to the Congo." My tone was quiet; I was not smiling. The Captain saluted smartly, thanked us for our hospitality, climbed into the plane and started the engines. He taxied the huge plane off the tarmac toward the airstrip as a military band struck up the Guinean national anthem.

The members of the Government were waving goodbye, and after a brief warm-up, the C-119 started down the runway with its very heavy load. As it approached the end of the runway, it still was not airborne. At that moment the terrible thought passed through my mind that possibly the runway was not long enough for a plane so heavily laden to get off the ground in the heat of the day. Seemingly with inches to spare, the plane with its precious cargo lifted off the ground, wavered for just a moment, and rose toward the noonday sun. As the plane disappeared in the distance, I turned to the Major and said, "Major, I've just done something which is probably going to cause all hell to break loose, but I want you to know that I stand ready to accept the sole responsibility for my act."

The Major was clearly surprised with what I had said, but he waited with quiet interest for what was to follow. "Did you see the two messages which FSO (foreign service officer) Cunningham delivered to me a short while ago? What I mean to say is, did you see him hand me two yellow slips of paper?"

"As a matter of fact I did, Mr. Ambassador, and I was wondering whether or not something

important had come up about our air operation.” “The truth is that something very important has come up which is going to complicate life for us here in Guinea for the next forty-eight hours or so.”

I gave him the two telegrams which he proceeded to study carefully. It was not until after I saw a faint trace of a smile beginning to form on the Major’s features that I began to feel a little more hopeful about the whole business.

“Major,” I continued, “I had to withhold those messages from you and the Air Force captain, for once you had seen them, you would have had to comply. I’m sure that you can understand that I would rather have faced a firing squad than to have been forced to go up to the airport balcony and tell President Toure, the Defense Minister and their colleagues that the airlift was off. What explanation could I have offered?”

“You were confronted with a tough decision, Mr. Ambassador, and you undoubtedly made it on the basis of your knowledge of the situation here.”

“Can you imagine yourself, Major, going into that plane to tell those soldiers to get off the plane, unload the supplies, ammunition and await orders to return to their encampment? How do you suppose they would have reacted, especially those who obviously are none too military? What would have been the reaction of that huge crowd of Guineans massed around the airport to see the triumphal departure of their first contingent of troops ever to leave the Republic of Guinea?”

After reiterating that I was accepting full responsibility for withholding the two official messages and stood ready to be recalled for so doing, I went on to explain that I had no alternative. It was my feeling that if the orders had been carried out as directed, the United Nations, as well as the United States, would have been in a position not only delicate but untenable. I said there had already been enough problems concerning Guinean troops going to the Congo without the United States taking any unilateral action that could be interpreted as blocking their passage. I requested the Major’s assistance in demanding the reason why the airlift was being called off and in urging that the operation not be suspended but carried out in keeping with the U.S. pledge to the United Nations.

The Major consented to help. We sent messages to Washington, Châteauroux, France, and had the local UN mission send one to New York insisting on an explanation for the cancellation of the airlift, and stressing the necessity of keeping the promise to transport Guinean troops to the Congo. Then began one of the most tedious waits of my stay in Guinea.

The Guinean Government had been informed that the schedule for the arrival of the next plane was somewhat uncertain, but word was supposed to come confirming the arrival time. At 8:00 p.m. the same day, the telephone rang at the residence and I recognized the voice of Minister Fodeba Keita. He asked me when the airlift was to recommence. I reminded him that this was actually an operation by the United Nations and I did not know exactly when the next plane would reach Conakry. The Minister informed me that if no American planes had arrived by the next day, the Government would have to seek its own mode of transportation to the Congo.

These words brought to my mind the picture of IL-18's, with Czechoslovakian pilots coming in from Accra to pick up the stranded Guinean soldiers.

I did not sleep well that night and found no difficulty in getting up at 4:30 a.m. when a ringing telephone added its noise to the heavy rainfall outside. An unfamiliar voice said that the caller was the airport commandant and wished to speak with the American Ambassador. I asked him what he wanted. He said he had been instructed to call me because an American plane was asking permission to land at the airfield. He could not grant permission unless the American Ambassador himself certified their permission to land. I told the commandant that the airlift was an operation of the United Nations. The United States had assigned these planes to the UN to be flown under the flag of the U.S. The commandant said his instructions were that I had to certify that permission to land.

I gave the commandant my word that I would come to the airport and told him that if another plane came over requesting permission to land, well, let them come on in. I also told him to call Minister Keita and ask him to meet me at the airport. I called my deputy, Tony Ross, and asked him to meet me at the airport within the next hour. I also called Major Behrens at the Hotel de France and asked him to come.

It was still raining very hard when I left the residence and dawn had broken. I reached the airport first and the saluting guards informed me that the commandant was upstairs in the restaurant with some Americans. Standing in the door of the restaurant with a crew of young American pilots was a somewhat upset airport commandant who could speak no English. He smiled with relief as I approached. The captain of the American plane stepped forward and in a broad Southern accent told me that he was surely glad to see me. He explained that a number of C-130's had landed in Dakar. One plane had continued on to Conakry, arriving there 1:00 a.m., but had not been given permission to land.

It was decided in Dakar that the difficulty was due to misunderstanding because the person in the tower had not spoken English clearly. Under the present terms of the United Nations agreement, the Czechoslovakian national was working in the tower at the Conakry airport. The next plane sent in had a French-speaking American aboard and it received permission to land. I discovered that the airport at Conakry had not been equipped for night landing and this American plane had come in to an unfamiliar airfield during a rain storm by means of the plane's landing lights and some flares sent up by the Guineans on the airfield.

I then learned that telegrams from Châteauroux, announcing the suspension of the airlift, had failed to say that the delay was only temporary. Someone at the air base had discovered that the airport's runway was not long enough for heavily-loaded C-119 planes to take off with safety. The order had been given to take the C-119's out of operation and replace them with C-130's, which could easily take off fully loaded after a short run. Nobody had thought of notifying Conakry that there had been a change in planes or that there would be a thirteen-hour delay while sufficient C-130's were called in to carry out the airlift.

By this time Minister Keita had arrived in very good humor at the prospect that the airlift would go on. He ordered breakfast for the American crew, Major Behrens and his staff, and

Ross and me. He said arrangements were made for meals to be served to all American airmen who would arrive during the next two days.

I did not let the Guinean Minister know just how happy I had been to see that one C-130 crew and learn that the airlift would go on. It was indeed an inspiring sight to see the plane take off soon after with its load of soldiers and supplies, and the arrival and departure of these planes at two- or three-hour intervals continued for the next two days. All plane traffic was stopped after 5:00 p.m. and the last crew to arrive in Conakry went in to enjoy a good meal at the Hotel de France.

During the afternoon of the first day of the arrival of the C-130's, President Toure and his Ministers arrived at the airport with General Diane Lansane, a member of the National Political Bureau, who had been promoted to the rank of general at the beginning of the Congo crisis. The General and his staff went aboard the waiting C-130 after a brief ceremony. The only problem in the whole situation was that one of the plane's engines had to be repaired and an engine had to be flown in from Morocco, so that the Guineans installed a round-the-clock watch of Guinean soldiers and everybody watched with interest when this new engine was brought in and placed in place, an operation that some had never seen before in their life.

Q: Were there any repercussions from your failing to cancel that first plane from the first part of the airlift?

MORROW: Well, in addition to the satisfaction of seeing this efficiently carried out operation, once it had gotten underway, was the satisfaction of receiving a letter from the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, Thomas D. White, congratulating me on what he called "the inspired split-second decision to continue the airlift when it had apparently but mistakenly been cancelled." (laughter). So that is what you call real luck! (laughter) Because as I said, I knew all of hell was going to break loose, that this black guy who was not a military person had withheld military orders. Cunningham ... he was frightened, you know, when he realized what was happening. And then the Major did that grinning because he just knew what he thought was going to happen. But this is the way it turned out.

So everybody was happy because we should have been told that, "Oh, this is only temporary," even before hours and hours of waiting. But the Guineans had felt that they had not been treated correctly by the UN in the first place because their soldiers had not been immediately accepted, and we'll see when they come back. May I at this point just cite what happened a little later on when it was necessary for the Guineans to be brought back from the Congo before their time was up?

Q: Oh, yes, do. Before you do that though, what was the real reason for wanting to cancel it? Or was it just supposed to be a postponement?

MORROW: It was to be postponed because the C-119's which were sent in, when they were heavily loaded, in that heat, could have crashed, because Guinea didn't have an airstrip which was sufficiently long enough for such a huge heavily-loaded plane. When they looked at the dimensions, everybody got scared and just said, "Send it back!" That's all it said. It was already

loaded with soldiers by then. So I felt I had no alternative. And it did take a heck of a chance, and, also, that plane really wavered. See, I didn't know what the problem was myself, as a lay person. But I was praying that it was going to get off because it went to the end of the strip, absolutely the end, before you could see it begin to go up. So it was a matter of communications, which is very important.

I had mentioned already that we had good-will visits by ships, so what I would like to indicate was what happened when the Guinean soldiers were brought back from the Congo.

In an American LSD, the troops were recalled by His Excellency Sekou Toure in December 1960. And they had been waiting in the Congo for transportation and could get no transportation back to Guinea. So Rear Admiral Alan Reed, an outstanding naval officer, had to cancel scheduled amity visits in order to bring the Guinean troops to Conakry. And the LSD's under Reed's command reached Conakry a day or so after the departure of Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union, and welcome signs and plastic Soviet flags were still on display in the main streets of Conakry. The official landing service ceremonies got underway after Admiral Reed and his aide and I called on President Toure and President Toure and his ministers returned the call.

Now in reality, President Toure came down to the port but only his ministers went aboard the flagship Hermitage to return the call. A shore cannon began firing, the first contingent of Guinean troops marched ashore, smiling at the plaudits and shouts of relatives and onlookers. It was several hours before the troops and gear could be unloaded and President Toure and his ministers left after the first contingents of the troops landed. On all sides could be heard stories of friendships struck up among the Guinean soldiers and so on.

Just before the start of a reception which we held at the Residence that night in honor of Admiral Reed and his officers, I was made an honorary member of the Hermitage crew and presented with the ship's emblem. At the conclusion of the reception, the Admiral insisted that we should be his guests at dinner at the Hotel de France. This was something that would be something of an outing for us and a change from the form of dinners at the Residence and elsewhere.

We reached Conakry at 9:15 p.m. and upon finishing a leisurely meal, Admiral Reed suggested that we take coffee aboard the ship Hermitage. His car led the way to the port. When it turned into the port area, its headlights revealed not only that the large iron doors were shut, but they were guarded by a squad of soldiers. I had never seen the gates closed before, day or night. I motioned to one of the guards, who stepped forward, came to attention and saluted. He seemed reluctant to answer my questions about the armed guards and the closed gate. He said finally that the locked gates and the guards had been ordered by the Defense Minister. I stepped out of the car to go over to speak to Admiral Reed and noticed a pile of plastic Soviet flags lying under the street light. This sight gave me some inkling of what might have happened.

At that moment several sailors and marines returning from shore leave came into sight. I outlined to Admiral Reed what probably had happened and instructed the guard to call the Defense Minister and let him know that I wished to enter the gates with my guests. I told the

Admiral that I thought it advisable to clear all American personnel out of the vicinity. The easiest way to do this was to carry everybody out to the Residence in Donka. Reed and his officers agreed to this idea. In a moment the necessary order was given. There were approximately twenty or twenty-five American sailors, marines and officers in the gathering by the time. The sailors and marines climbed into a Navy truck and jeep which had been brought ashore for errands and shore patrol. There were two cars for the officers and three rode with my wife. Before leaving the port I told the Guinean guard that we could be reached at the Residence.

Thereupon, I led through silent streets of Conakry probably one of the strangest midnight processions that ever graced that tropical city. And when we reached the gates of the Residence in Donka, the two soldiers, assigned as guards around the clock, guards, of course, supplied by the courtesy of the Guinean Government, opened the gates and stood at attention as the curious cortege rolled by. The most startled were the cook and his helpers, who were still cleaning up from the reception. The cook told me that a call had come from the Defense Minister with information that the Defense Minister would be happy to see us down at the port. I thought I would give the Minister, who lived not far up the street from the Residence in Donka, sufficient time to reach Conakry. We learned from the assembled naval personnel that Guinean police had stopped several enlisted men who were carrying plastic Soviet flags found on the streets of Conakry. As far as could be ascertained, nobody had been arrested, but the flags had been taken by the police.

When I heard this story, I suggested that only three of us should return to Conakry until the matter was cleared up. Admiral Reed, his aide and I went back to the port supposedly to meet the Defense Minister. Once in the area, I saw the Deputy Defense Minister standing under the light near one of the gates. He stepped forward briskly and told me that the naval personnel had committed a serious offense. I asked him about the nature of this offense. Pointing dramatically to the pile of plastic Soviet flags, he said it was a serious offense to desecrate the flag of a friendly country in Guinea. I said I knew no American would willfully desecrate the flag of another nation. Furthermore, I was told that some of the flags had been picked up from the streets for souvenirs. I myself had seen flags dangling from poles and lying in the street that very morning and heard the remarks of the Embassy chauffeur that the department of public works usually cleaned up the flags very quickly after the departure of dignitaries.

When I asked the official how many men had been apprehended, he admitted that no arrests had been made, but the flags were collected. He didn't give a satisfactory explanation about locking the gates or posting a guard. I asked for further proof that the flags had been taken by the Americans. He said the proof was in two jeeps locked inside the gate. I said, "I want to see this evidence." The Deputy Minister then ordered the gates opened. I hurried over to Admiral Reed and suggested that he go aboard the Hermitage and wait for his aide and for me.

The aide and the Deputy Minister and I walked to the pier and came upon the Guinean soldier guarding two Navy jeeps. The Defense Minister, without a flashlight, reached under the seat of one of the jeeps and pulled out one Soviet flag. He walked over to the other jeep and pulled out one plastic Soviet flag. I had expected to see the jeep piled high with flags and expressed my surprise at seeing only two. I told the Minister that this was very little to go on, but I would

like to have the flags for a few hours. This appeared to me to be a case of souvenir hunting which he was mistaking for something else. I reminded him that the Americans had been from one end of Conakry to the other buying souvenirs of their visit to Guinea. And I could easily understand why they might pick up these flags lying in the street.

The Deputy handed me the flags but said that he would have to have them in the morning. Before returning to the Hermitage, I walked over to the customs office, located near the main gate, to phone the all clear signal to the officers and men in Donka. Out of the darkness from the other side of the customs office came the familiar voice of an Embassy officer, Darrell Keane. Keane stepped out of an Embassy car, obviously very glad to see me, and said he knew I would come to his rescue. When I asked Keane what he was talking about, he said that he had been locked up in the court area since leaving one of the ships at 10:30 p.m. He had been told that the only way he could get out was to be released by the American Ambassador. I called the guard and told him to let Keane out of the gate. Keane made some kind of a record going through that exit. I telephoned my wife and returned to the Hermitage to await the arrival of the men from Donka. Very shortly everybody was aboard and accounted for. I told Admiral Reed that as far as I was concerned, the incident was closed.

This appeared to be an attempt to blow a minor incident into something bigger, but the whole thing had fizzled out. Reed expressed the hope that I would experience no problems because of the events of the evening. I assured him that there would be no repercussions and bade him goodbye.

The ships were to leave early that morning at high tide. I got back to Donka and found the employees still cleaning up but this time they were doing so as a result of the big midnight snack served to the Navy men. The staff had enjoyed the unusual events of the evening and went away contented when they realized they had been paid for overtime.

The only reference that ever was made to this flag incident came several weeks later when the police arrested some British seamen for gathering plastic flags. Defense Minister Keita met me at the Présidence and said laughingly that he could have had my Americans picked up for the same thing. I replied that I was surely glad he had not done so because it would have meant my walking all the way out to Camp Alpha Yaya with two marines to get them out. This would have delayed the ship's departure by a few minutes and Rear Admirals never like to be late leaving a port. The conversation ended in laughter.

I had been happy with the fact that there had been visits of the American ships -- as a matter of fact, both the Amity visits -- and there was nothing wrong with that feeling. It was a thrilling experience to be piped aboard those flagships in December 1960, and then again in February 1961; to hear the national anthem and to inspect the guards of honor. On each occasion I had experienced that tingling sensation up and down my spine as I stood at attention during the national anthem. Each time I had that taut feeling in my throat and had the hope that there were no telltale evidences of moisture in my eyes.

Let's not overlook the two visits made to Guinea by vessels from the U.S. South Atlantic Fleet on amity patrol. One I've already mentioned, the one that brought the Guinean troops back

from the Congo and also, you recall, that they were taken to the Congo by American planes commissioned by the UN. Well, the first visit was made by two destroyers under the command of Commander R.A. Foreman. The ship spent three days at the harbor in Conakry towards the end of December 1960 and afforded many Guineans their first glimpse of an American naval vessel. I accompanied Commander Foreman and two of his officers on protocol visits to the president of the National Assembly, Diallo, and Defense Minister Keita. Guinean ministers visited the commander's flagship and enlisted personnel and officers from the ship visited Conakry, played basketball with the Guineans, and purchased souvenirs. Commander Foreman invited Embassy officers and our wives aboard the USS Vogelgesang for dinner. I reciprocated by having a party the following night at the Residence, to which were invited the ship officers and staff members of the British and West German embassies. The three-days visit went off without incident and the spirits of the members of the Western embassies were lifted by the enthusiasm and the good nature of the visiting Americans.

The second visit I've already mentioned, is the one in which the Guinean soldiers were brought back from the Congo by the LSD's under the leadership of Rear Admiral Alan L. Reed.

Q: Yes...Could you tell us about Toure in America?

MORROW: All right. It had been decided even before I went to Guinea that at some point President Toure would make a State visit to the United States. And as the time drew near for President Toure's State visit, I had to devote an ever increasing amount of time to details that had to be supposedly settled before his arrival. The State Department readily assented to my suggestion and I arrived in Washington a week before the Guinean delegation to assist in last minute preparations. I didn't want anything to mar this visit, for I knew that all leaders in Africa were watching to see how Toure was going to be received. They hoped to detect whether or not any changes in United States policy towards Africa were in the making. There was no question in my mind that Negro as well as white Americans were also going to be watching the drama inherent in the reception by one of the world's most powerful nations of the young African who had persuaded his people to say no to de Gaulle.

Before leaving for Washington, I had tried without success to settle the question of transportation for the delegation from Conakry to New York. I was informed that President Toure wanted to be sure that the plane he boarded was not going to stop at any territories still under French jurisdiction. This ruled out using Air France. I could not get a satisfactory answer to the question about the regulations governing the use of military air transport service planes in the transportation of foreign heads of state outside the borders of the United States. No commercial airlines and Western powers other than France were interested at that time in establishing passenger service to Guinea.

When I left Conakry for the United States on October 19, 1959, the only thing I knew for certain regarding Toure's visit was that Toure was going to keep his word and begin his series of State visits by coming first to the United States. He was not going to Russia first, as had been reported in some quarters. It was not until after I had departed that the transportation dilemma was solved through the generosity of Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who placed at President Toure's disposal a Ghanaian Airlines plane to make connections with

a Pan American flight. Thanks to Nkrumah, the delegation was able to board the plane that touched down late Sunday afternoon, October 25th, at New York's International Airport.

I didn't have to be on hand in New York; it's just the official visit did not start until the following day in Washington. President and Mrs. Toure and party of six were met by Guinean Ambassador and Mrs. Telli Diallo, U.S. protocol chief Wiley Buchanan, and some New York officials. The following day, the military air transport plane bearing the Guinean delegation landed promptly at 12:00 noon at the terminal in Washington. President Toure was the first to descend from the plane. He saw, among others, waiting below to greet him, Vice President and Mrs. Nixon, Secretary of State and Mrs. Christian Herter, Chief of Staff of the United States Army and Mrs. Lemnitzer, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Mrs. Sevilla Sacasa, numerous Washington officials, and myself. Ambassador Diallo, Vice President Nixon, Protocol Chief Buchanan and I accompanied President Toure to the speaker's platform and stood with him during the airport ceremony. A twenty-one gun salute, the Guinean and American national anthems, and the inspection of the honor guard by President Toure were followed by brief speeches by the Vice President and Toure.

Nixon assured Toure America would receive him warmly because of personal interests Americans had in him and the future of his country. Toure expressed the hope that his visit would bring closer relations between the United States and Guinea as well as with other emerging African nations.

I was indeed moved by the occasion. It was only later that I learned that Vice President and Mrs. Nixon, who had been vacationing in Florida, had been summoned hastily back from their visit to Washington to meet the African delegation, and they had not been too happy at these events.

Our motorcade departure from the terminal en route to Blair House, the President's guest home on Pennsylvania Avenue, by way of this traditional Washington parade route, signaled the beginning of twelve of the fullest days I have ever spent. It was exhilarating to see the more than two hundred and fifty thousand people standing along the route to catch a glimpse of the man who had taken a dramatic and solitary stand against Charles de Gaulle. The Washington onlookers, I felt, were very generous with their applause and the visitors were pleased with the warm reception on that chilly October day.

The same was to be true in New York some ten days later, when an even larger crowd greeted the visitors during a ticker-tape parade from the Battery to City Hall. By mistake, New York had on display Ghanaian flags instead of Guinean flags. They looked quite similar.

The white-tie state dinner given that night by President and Mrs. Eisenhower in honor of President and Mrs. Toure marked my second visit to the White House. And as the car in which I was riding came to a stop under the portico, the real significance of the situation suddenly struck me and I thought that only in America could something like this happen. I, a slave's grandson, was entering the official residence of the President of the United States. I was to be escorted down the long corridor to the East Room by an army official in full dress uniform. And at the door of the East Room, my name and title would be announced. And between the

moment of leaving the car and mounting the White House steps, a feeling of deep regret swept over me; regret that my wife, daughter and son were far away in Guinea and not on hand to share this historic evening with me; regret that my parents were not living to see the fulfillment of their prophesy.

When President and Mrs. Eisenhower and their guests had descended from the upstairs living quarters, those of us assembled in the East Room walked slowly as couples to the state dining room at the opposite end of the White House, and where the tables, glistening with silverware, glassware and emblazoned dishes, decorated with beautiful flowers, awaited us.

I had the good fortune to be seated between the beautiful and charming Mrs. Gregor Piatigorsky, wife of the famous cellist, and Ambassador George B. Allen, then director of the USIA. The evening passed quickly and pleasantly. Light speeches of welcome and acknowledgment were made by Presidents Eisenhower and Toure and Gregor Piatigorsky was in excellent form that evening at the concert, which concluded the evening.

The real high point of the dinner, however, was the incredible performance of Colonel Walters, the interpreter, who presented us with the French version of Eisenhower's speech and the English version of Toure's reply. Without notes or props, Walters gave the complete Eisenhower speech. He translated Toure's reply paragraph by paragraph, and this was no small feat because Toure spoke in long sentences. Only a skillful interpreter could have done justice to Toure's eloquent French.

If Colonel Walters' virtuosity had impressed me at dinner, I was even more impressed during the meeting that took place between Presidents Eisenhower and Toure the next morning. A private meeting had been arranged for the two presidents. President Toure made it known that he wanted to be accompanied by the president of the Guinean National Assembly, Saifoulaye Diallo, the Economy Minister, Louis Beavogui, and the Interior Minister, Fodeba Keita. This change in plan caused me to accompany Secretary of State Herter and Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite to the Tuesday morning meeting at the White House. Guinean Ambassador Telli Diallo was also present.

We heard a very stimulating and exceedingly frank exchange in views between the two presidents, with Colonel Walters again serving as interpreter. An hour later, we left the White House to attend a meeting at the State Department, presided over by Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy. A joint working party was set up after this meeting to iron out the details of a cultural agreement which was signed on Wednesday morning by Secretary Herter, Minister Beavogui, who was appointed acting Foreign Minister on the spot by President Toure for the signing ceremony. Ambassador Diallo and I were asked to sign as witnesses. I later received an autographed photograph of the signing ceremony from Secretary Herter.

President Toure made a memorable appearance before the National Press Club at the luncheon which immediately followed the Tuesday morning meeting at the State Department. He spoke and accepted questions from the floor, which he parried with the skill acquired in debates at Paris, Dakar and Conakry, impressing veterans of the press with his stage presence. That same night we attended a dinner at the Anderson's house given by Secretary and Mrs. Herter. The

afternoon of our last day in Washington, President and Mrs. Toure gave a luncheon in honor of President and Mrs. Eisenhower in the State Room at the Mayflower Hotel.

Between the official obligation of the Washington visit, President Toure and the Guinean delegation and I journeyed by presidential helicopter to Mount Vernon; participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in The National Cemetery in Arlington; visited the AFL-CIO headquarters for a talk with president George Meany; attended a reception at Africa House by the African Students Association; visited Howard University and met the president and faculty; visited the mosque of the Washington Islamic Center. And President and Mrs. Toure attended a reception given in their honor by the Chiefs of Mission of Guinea, Liberia, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Ethiopia, the United Arab Republic and Ghana.

Contrary to the predictions of those who dubbed Toure a hardheaded Marxist theorist, but not Communist, and had insisted that he would straddle the fence between the East and the West to obtain aid from both sides, Toure made no requests for American aid during his visit, and his failure to do so surprised even some career diplomats.

Toure later explained to his people why he did not request any aid during his visit to America: “We found in the United States a real desire to come to our assistance, but we refused to present demands of this nature. Everybody knows perfectly well the different needs of different people reported to be poor. It is indeed radical nature which determines the quality of the needs but for economic ... It isn't radical nature which determines the quality of the needs, but the economic state. Consequently, nations that really wished to aid Guinea or any other developing people don't have to wait to be solicited. We are certainly not going to disguise ourselves as beggars to explain our indigence, which everybody knows, which everybody can appreciate, and to which each can loyally and in strict respect of our sovereignty, bring remedy. If we had placed African dignity so high, it is not to bargain it tomorrow against the few subsidies which, in the final analysis, could not radically suppress the effects of spoliation, exploitation, oppression, depersonalization in which colonialism caused us to submit.”

On the surface, the Washington phase of the visit had gone off with clocklike precision and been eminently successful. Our guests, however, were quite disappointed on two scores, and rather dissatisfied on the third. They knew that President Eisenhower had come to the airport to welcome the President of Mexico and Premier Khrushchev of Russia. They had expected him to come meet President Toure also. They were not impressed by the fact that Vice President Nixon had cut short a Miami vacation to greet Toure. Nor did they wish to accept the explanation that President Eisenhower's bronchitis kept him from attending the ceremony on the chilly autumn day. The Guineans were further dismayed when they learned that Protocol Chief Wiley Buchanan, who had accompanied Premier Khrushchev on his U.S. tour, had assigned his deputy to accompany President Toure. They assumed that their visit was being downgraded.

The third problem arose on the eve of Toure's departure from Washington and concerned the State Department interpreter assigned for Toure's speech. The Guineans had been most happy with Colonel Walters. They were very unhappy when they learned that the interpreter assigned

to cover Toure's speech at the Africa House would accompany the President throughout America. Their unhappiness was registered with the Department and with me in no uncertain terms. But it was not possible at that late date to supply a substitute. The situation became such before the tour was over that the Department of State had to provide another interpreter for the Toure speech during the New York phase of the visit.

We visited New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Ohio and also Durham. Now, Toure had wanted to go to Atlanta because years ago President Tubman had made a visit to Georgia. But it was decided this was inadvisable, so the problem to have visited the South was settled when Governor Luther Hodges of North Carolina issued an invitation for President Toure and his party to be the guests of his state.

And also, one other exception was that I was assigned to move with this group throughout the United States. As a rule, the Ambassador merely would be present in Washington, but this procedure was decided upon apparently to make the Guineans feel more at home. It worked out successfully, even though it's a little dangerous sometimes for people to have to be together for two weeks at a time, especially if there happen to be some prima donnas in the group.

Q: It's a good thing that they did have you with them considering the other things that didn't go so well between the government -- our government and that delegation.

Well, you haven't mentioned Los Angeles but there is a question I wondered about. Do you want to talk about Los Angeles? And then I'll raise the question I have about it. It has to do with his visit.

MORROW: Oh yes, all right. I think I should mention specifically about the visit to Los Angeles because an unusual incident took place. The most significant event in the Los Angeles visit was a little publicized meeting in Disneyland between President Toure and John F. Kennedy, who at that time was a Senator from the state of Massachusetts. This private meeting had been planned originally for Sunday evening at the Ambassador Hotel but had been changed to Sunday morning, November 1st, at Disneyland. This was indeed an historic meeting between the two young leaders: one who was destined to become president of this great land and one who had won independence for his nation.

Senator Kennedy was then chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He had expressed a point of view about Algerian independence that did not place him on the side of the French. After introductions, the two men exchanged pleasantries about each other's youthful appearance and implied that youth was probably an important attribute for a leader in today's world.

Senator Kennedy then expressed his keen interest in Guinean independence and in the struggle confronting Toure to maintain this independence. Turning to me, he said that, with all due respect to me and to the party which I represented, he would like to go on record as assuring President Toure that if the Democratic Party came into power in the 1960 election, he would certainly have a great interest in the progress of Guinea and other emerging nations of Africa. Senator Kennedy wished President Toure well in his efforts to improve conditions in Guinea

and quipped that at least the two had only one political party to deal with in Guinea even though its symbol was an elephant, syli.

In reply, President Toure expressed warmly his appreciation to the Senator for his willingness to confer with the delegation and for his expression of interest in the Guinean experience. Toure assured him that such a personal contact was most important in fostering better understanding and improved relations among nations. Toure made it clear that he and his colleagues had followed with great interest the Senator's stand on Algerian independence. He concluded by wishing Kennedy continuing success in his future endeavors.

The next time they met was at the White House in 1962 when Toure conferred with Kennedy as President of the United States. Something in the personality of this handsome, young, well-poised Senator struck a responsive cord in the Guineans. They were not more enthusiastic in their reactions to any other American than they were to Kennedy. They praised his youth, his courage, his astonishing knowledge of world affairs in general, and of the problems of developing countries in particular. They enjoyed the distinction drawn by Kennedy between the policies on Africa pursued by the two major American political parties. They believed what Kennedy had said concerning Guinea and Africa if the Democratic Party won the November 1960 election.

When the Guineans returned to Conakry, they were still talking about their meeting with Kennedy in Disneyland. There were no observers of the American political campaign of 1960 more interested than were the men who had visited America and had met Kennedy. Minister Fodeba Keita, after apologizing for appearing to interfere in the internal affairs of my country, told me that if he were an American, he would certainly vote for Kennedy because of the quality of his leadership. The Guineans were very happy when they learned in August 1960 that Kennedy, the Democratic presidential candidate, was sending Governor Averell Harriman to Africa on a fact-finding mission that included Guinea in the itinerary. They were more elated when Kennedy was elected president and they were shocked and genuinely grieved by the loss of the young president to an assassin's bullet.

Q: Dr. Morrow, why was Disneyland chosen as a site of that meeting for Kennedy and Toure? Any special reason?

MORROW: This question has often been raised because one would think that because it's such a public place the visit would be noticed. But it turned out to be the other way around. Because of its very location and the nature of it, very little was ever known about this visit. In fact, no publicity was given to it; some pictures were taken but they were taken by, I think, photographers of the USIS. So why it was changed, there was never any real explanation, but it was very odd to think of going to Disneyland. That's the first time I ever had an opportunity to visit there and, incidentally, to ride on that little train that goes around the lot and so on. The Guineans enjoyed it. But the significant thing is: Why did Kennedy take the time to come all the way out to the coast to visit with President Toure? Did he know something nobody else knew? Or was he that sure of winning the election? We don't know. But it was a very unique incident to have the U.S. Senator. Of course it was true that he was chairman of the Subcommittee on African Affairs and that gave a reason actually for visiting. But after all,

Toure had come to Washington, and, as I recall, Kennedy was not at that state dinner.

Q: Where in Disneyland did the actual meeting take place?

MORROW: In ... I forgot ... I should remember the name of the place ... it was ...

Q: It was such a huge place!

MORROW: Yes it's such a huge building. No, it wasn't in what you call a fun house -- I'm trying to remember. You walked in this place which had been reserved for the meeting. There's a picture in the book that will show the group emerging, and if you take a look you see that Kennedy can be seen along with Toure. You notice that there's an airline hostess in the group and quite a few people following, but they were members of the entourage. Just a few onlookers, visitors to Disneyland, but they were unaware ... they were by and large unaware. So I decided for this reason that if he, Kennedy, were to come up with an entourage and a crowd to the Ambassador Hotel, everybody would have had some knowledge of this thing; whereas by being in Disneyland, sort of unusual, people were taken by surprise.

Q: Yes. The other question I wanted to ask had to do with our relations with Guinea after that visit. How did that visit affect future relations between the United States and Guinea, considering a number of things happened while he was here that really weren't too complimentary. After all, the President didn't come to visit him as he arrived; a number of other things happened that tended to make them unhappy.

MORROW: Well, the real impact of and significance of this meeting came actually after Kennedy became the president. And a decision was made about the change of ambassador because of the change of party. And the fact that Kennedy had sent Governor Averell Harriman to visit not only Africa but specifically Guinea. And on the recommendations of Harriman -- Harriman was there three days; he had very frank talks about the situation -- Kennedy paid attention to the observations, I'm sure, made by Harriman, and he also paid attention to some of the reports which we had been sending back all along to Washington that had been ignored.

Q: What kind of reports?

MORROW: Reports on the fact that some effort really should be made to take Guinea seriously and to set up a type of aid program that would be beneficial to them. You see, my emphasis was always on health and education and Harriman agreed with it. Not military, military suppliers or big stadia or the showy things, but something that really would affect the people. And Kennedy had his man Attwood come in there and they were supposedly going to work in that direction. But then fate came into the picture with his assassination and, of course, after that there was obviously a change. But there was a great hope, I'm sure, among the Guineans, as soon as Kennedy came into office, and then the fact that he had Toure make a visit in 1962, and it was in contrast that he was there on the spot and Toure had the chance to feel, oh I'm meeting a friend. It was a different situation altogether. The tragedy is that Kennedy was removed from the scene ... but, then, that affected not only the Guinean situation but affected the American situation. Very unique happening, however, to see a Senator and an

African leader establish a type of rapport which was established from that meeting on.

The kind of welcome we received in Guinea was carefully noted and reported by diplomats of the West and of the East, for everything that was done by the United States and by any one of the representatives was observed closely with the view of detecting possible implications for the future -- future, that is, of U.S. and Guinean relations. The outside world was informed of what had happened during our arrival through a release that was filed possibly by a representative of the French press who was still covering Guinea. I was more interested, however, in an editorial appearing in the August 14th edition of the Washington Post, especially since it was the newspaper which had sharply challenged my appointment because of my color and lack of experience in diplomacy and in dealing with Communism.

The Washington Post observed: "Not long ago we had occasion to comment upon the selection of Dr. John Howard Morrow, a distinguished Negro educator, as American Ambassador to the new Republic of Guinea. We observed that there was an element of condescension in the appointment of a Negro to a Negro country and expressed the wish that a professional diplomat had been sent to this sensitive post. So far as a reception of Dr. Morrow is concerned, our misgivings appear to have been misplaced. His background of international experience will help him to represent the United States adequately in a newly independent nation subject to many pulls. Nevertheless, the principle of assignment by merit rather than by race still needs attention. For this reason, we are happy that a white diplomat, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State L. S. Mathews, has been confirmed as a new ambassador to Liberia. For years, the post in Monrovia has been regarded as a segregated position for Negro politicians, chosen not for their ability but for their color. Let us hope that the appointment of Mr. Mathews points to the evolution of a genuinely colorblind policy, meaning not merely incorporation of more qualified Negroes into the Foreign Service, but also assignment on the basis of qualification regardless of race."

It struck me as ironic that a mere outward manifestation, an airport ceremony, or a cheering populace, would cause a newspaper like the Washington Post to reassess my chance for success in Guinea, a crisis post. Surely, the basic situation had not changed in the least, for I had yet to confront the problems of this African assignment. Reading the editorial, I hoped that at the close of my tour of duty some criteria less fugitive than this might be used to assess the success or the failure of any mission, mine included.

Yet I did sense, on my first day in Guinea and afterwards, that the people of Guinea saw in me the symbol of all that the United States, even with its problems of racial discrimination and segregation, meant for freedom-loving people everywhere: liberty, justice, equality, self-determination, help for the mistreated and the downtrodden. This, I had to tell myself, is what that American flag meant flying on that old Cadillac. This is what the representative of the United States, Negro or white, meant to the people of Guinea. Perhaps this is what the Washington Post meant when it printed its second assessment.

Now three rooms had been reserved for us at the Hotel de France, which looked down on the ocean. Except for its louver boards -- a concession to life a few degrees above the Equator -- the Hotel de France appeared to be a grand Parisian hotel transferred to any tropical city. The

hotel was still under French management and the prices matched those of any large hotel on the right bank in Paris. The food and service would later begin to reflect the difficulties brought on by the severance of economic ties between France and Guinea. The chancery had inadequate facilities, but I accepted them because of the difficulty of securing adequate office space in Conakry.

The question about the chancery in Conakry was later raised in an article in the New Leader, June 27, 1960, entitled In Guinea We Have Faith. It was written by Dr. Norman Palmer, chairman of the International Relations Program at the University of Pennsylvania after a twenty-five nation tour of Asia and Africa. Dr. Palmer reported, "The American Embassy was located on a second floor of an eight-story building. When I asked why no American flag was displayed (I was acutely conscious of the hammer and sickle so prominent a few blocks away), I was given lame excuses: a proper supporting base for the flag had not been found; the Embassy was in temporary quarters; the only flag available had forty-eight stars, and so forth."

"No United States Information Service office had been opened, though I was told that an acting USIS officer had been assigned to Guinea. The International Cooperation Administration had done almost nothing except send several people to make surveys, and by the end of 1959, no further evidence of ICA interest had been manifested."

Now toward the end of an inspection tour of American property -- Embassy property, that is -- I was still in a hopeful mood. However, as we drove from Conakry to a suburb called Donka, to visit the official residence for the first time, after a drive of some twenty-five or thirty minutes, the driver swerved suddenly off the main road, drove on a winding, narrow road lined by trees and thickets that gave one the impression literally of entering the brush. After a few moments, I saw in the distance a structure built of cement, similar in appearance to a California ranch house. It had been white originally, but the rainy season had deprived it of any luster it once may have had. The grounds surrounding the villa, as it was called, were overgrown with weeds and thickets that seemed an excellent breeding ground for snakes. Subsequent clearing of the ground proved that the guess about the presence of snakes, large ones, had been only too correct.

A wizened Guinean with a machete in one hand opened the gate and the car proceeded up the drive, as yet unpaved, to the entrance. When I learned that the Guinean who had opened the gate was the gardener, as well as the guardian, I wondered how he spent his time when the only things growing were the weeds, vines, and thickets that cluttered the place. I wondered too what the American Embassy staff had been doing. For almost six months they had known that an ambassador was coming to Guinea. For more than two months the identity of the American chosen had been known and his expected date of arrival certainly had not been a secret!

The Residence was not ready for us, we were told, because there was a dearth of capable carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and painters in and around Conakry after the hasty departure of most of the French. But I succeeded in getting the administrative staff of the Embassy to locate the necessary workmen within a ten-day period, which led me to believe that the same thing could have been done before my arrival. The excuses of the officer who had been in charge of getting the Residence ready were not impressive. I'd already seen the houses and

grounds occupied by him and by the chargé d'affaires. They were in excellent condition, not to mention the outdoor swimming pool with fresh water that went with one of the houses.

My first look inside the villa, so it was called, was no more reassuring than my view of the grounds. The plaster was already showing through the paint in some of the places on the walls, the ceilings, even though this villa, constructed only a few months ago, had never been occupied. The floors of the dining room and the living room, or the salon, were done in an attractive charcoal gray tile with a white streak, ideally suited for heavy traffic in a country having six months of rain and six of dryness.

The salon, like the dining room, received ventilation through louver boards and the size could be increased by opening folding doors that led out to a good size veranda also covered with tile. The room designated on the floor plans back in Washington as a master bedroom turned out to be an ordinary-sized bedroom with an adjoining shower. At the end of the hall were two small bedrooms separated by a bathroom. Midway down the hall there was a very small water closet, opposite which were large clothes closets that could be entered through sliding door panels. Just off the entrance leading into the salon was the small room equipped with a commode and wash basin. To reach the salon when entering the villa through the doorway that looked out upon a circular driveway, it was necessary to walk down two steps. To enter the dining room from the salon it was necessary to walk up two steps.

On seeing the small kitchen that was set off from the salon, I found it difficult to visualize how we would handle the dinners and receptions we would have to give. That this kitchen did serve these very purposes once we moved in is a tribute to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of my devoted and tireless wife. There were no rooms in the Residence for visiting dignitaries, which meant that these guests would have to stay at the Hotel de France in Conakry. It was not always easy to obtain hotel reservations because many of the rooms were reserved for diplomatic representatives from the various embassies. The plans for enlarging the official Residence, discussed often during my stay in Guinea, were never acted upon, not until I had departed.

Not all the furniture earmarked for the Residence had arrived. Other pieces, designated originally to be kept in the warehouse until our arrival, had mysteriously found their way into the living rooms and kitchens of houses occupied by American personnel at the post. The furniture for the salon was piled in the middle of the floor; beds had not been put together; the oven in the kitchen stove which ran on butane gas, a very scarce commodity in Guinea, did not work. It was not until some weeks later when this stove burst into flames that we got a substitute stove from the warehouse. It had been set aside for non-existent ICA personnel. But no matter how meticulously equipment is assigned in Washington, it has a way of showing up in use in unexpected spots, and we had done our share. For that matter, many, many months were to pass before the Embassy silverware, tablecloths and napkins reached Conakry. The administrative section in Conakry had forgotten to put through the necessary requisitions before our arrival. Fortunately, my wife had had the foresight to bring along our silverware in the personal luggage along with other necessities. Only thus was it possible to begin, without embarrassing delay, the luncheons, dinners and receptions demanded by protocol.

As I surveyed the situation at the official Residence during this first inspection, I was very glad to have come without my wife. She might have found the appearance of the grounds and the villa, as well as the interior disarray, extremely frustrating. I was able to get that portion of the grounds closest to the main gate cleared off before I took her and our daughter and son to see their new home. The cleaning up of the entrance improved the villa's general appearance so much that when my wife did see the Residence and grounds for the first time, she immediately sensed the possibilities. From the moment of our occupancy, my wife toiled until she succeeded in bringing beauty to surroundings which had been drab and forlorn.

A redeeming feature of the location of the Residence was that the ocean lay just off the expanse of land extending from the house down to a small stretch of sandy beach. Often the lapping of the ocean waves and the voices of Guinean fishermen returning with the day's catch were the only noises that broke the all-enveloping silence of approaching nightfall.

The temperate ocean water, despite the alleged presence of sharks as reported by local inhabitants, was the chief source of recreation and physical fitness for my family and me. The small beach area was shared later with our neighbors, Ambassador and Mrs. Herbert Schroeder, when they arrived from the Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany. The beach was visited occasionally by the Bulgarian Ambassador and his family, who lived nearby, as well as by the Soviet Ambassador, who drove out from Conakry for a swim.

The Guineans who had worked as butlers, cooks, chauffeurs and house servants for the French, were now working for the Guinean ministers or other government officials. Many had left Guinea to seek employment in Dakar, Freetown, or Abidjan. I had to interview a great many applicants, none of whom actually had the qualifications for the job, before I selected three of the more suitable ones. I left to my wife the responsibility of training them. For a chef I selected a Foulah in his early forties, who had once served as a dishwasher and kitchen helper in Dakar. As his helper, I chose an alert, young Malinke, who knew nothing about working in a kitchen but did know how to iron shirts. For the third employee, responsible for keeping the Residence clean, I hired a young Foulah, who spoke and understood only his dialect. We retained the guardian/gardener, who spoke no French and only a smattering of Malinke and whose dialect was Kissi. We retained also the chauffeur who had driven for the Embassy before our arrival. He was an intelligent young Sousou, who spoke fairly good French.

It was inspiring and reassuring to see the manner in which my daughter and wife trained these employees and developed them into a smoothly working team with an unmistakable esprit de corps. They learned to handle effectively luncheons, dinners and receptions given for the members of the Guinean Government, the diplomatic corps and for visiting United States senators and other dignitaries. Little did our guests realize the hours spent in teaching a former dishwasher how to prepare a delicate hors d'oeuvre, or to cook French and American dishes, or in instructing two nervous young Guineans who had never before served meals, to set a table correctly and serve without spilling soup or wine on décolleté guests.

The guard's inability to speak French proved to be no obstacle to his learning to understand that my wife expected him to clear the ground of all undergrowth, keep the lawns neat, and plant beds of flowers. Before our stay in Guinea was over, the guard could understand some

French and had also developed some skill in gardening. He became our most faithful and trusted employee and saw to it that no harm ever came to our persons or to the Embassy property.

The fact that my wife was an excellent cook was an inestimable asset, particularly since it was impossible to obtain trained service in Guinea. At the outset, she had to do all of the cooking for the dinners and the preparation of hors d'oeuvres for receptions, in addition to being ready on time to act as hostess. At first she had to go into Conakry to do the marketing, usually done by one chef and his helper, if one had a real chef who knew what he was doing. The task of marketing became incredibly difficult as French ships stopped bringing fresh produce and meats to Guinea and the shelves in the stores were gradually depleted. Fortunately for us, my wife and daughter had made it a policy from the very start to shop at an African market as well as in the stores still run by the French. When the French disappeared from the stores and shops in Conakry and Guineans took over, my wife and daughter benefited from having patronized Guinean merchants.

At times I thought my wife possessed the skill of a magician when I tasted the dishes she miraculously created with eggs, fish, shrimp, chicken, mutton, rabbits, lobsters, couscous, manioc, spinach, mangoes, avocados, pineapples, tomatoes, rice, bananas, almonds, red and green peppers and a host of other mysterious ingredients. She could prepare a dinner for twelve or a reception for one hundred and fifty or more. The acclaim won by her cuisine in Conakry and Donka was well merited.

It was necessary to have luncheon or dinner guests at the Residence on an average of two or three times a week, not to speak of breakfasts or teas for the ladies, or to have receptions every two or three weeks. And I am keenly aware that my wife served above and beyond the call of duty. In the heat and humidity of the Guinean coastal region, she also had to accompany me on the remaining evenings to dinners, receptions and other affairs given by Guinean officials or members of the diplomatic corps. And through it all, including the six months of rainy weather and the six months of dryness each year, she retained her aplomb, patience and sunny disposition.

The considerate treatment and training received by the Guineans (laughter) employed at the Residence, news of which promptly reached the rank and file of the populace in Donka, the volunteer work of my daughter as a nurse's health aide in the hospital in Donka and later as teacher of English in the girls' lycée, and my son's coaching of his classmates in basketball and tennis at the boys' lycée, accounted to some degree for the warmth of our reception not only in Guinea but in other cities and villages of Guinea.

Q: Sir, before you move on there, the problem ... the things you faced when you looked at your residence the first time, is that experience customary?

MORROW: That is the very question that I had in my mind. Now I know we were thousands of miles away from the United States, but the fact that there was a warehouse -- in the beginning I didn't know this -- that was filled with different kinds of equipment, stoves, you just name whatever it is, available already in Guinea, raised a big question in my mind as to the

intent of the people who were already there on the scene and -- I haven't mentioned this -- maybe it might come up later, but before I ever got out to Guinea, the person who was the chargé d'affaires originally had asked to be returned to the Department of State. He was supposed to stay there at least until the new ambassador would show up. This angered the people in Washington because they felt that there was an implication perhaps, shall I say the word, of racism in this man's desire to be removed before the ambassador even got there. They wouldn't acquiesce to his request and of course he was on the scene when I got to Guinea. And we got along ... and I told him I could get along with the devil. Not too long after my arrival, however, he was sent back because he no longer had rapport with the Guinean Government.

There is something else, and I might take it up in a moment because I would like to deal specifically with the reaction, be a little bit more specific about the reaction of the Embassy staff to my presence. This might answer that, and then I'll be willing to elaborate if it's necessary.

Q: Fine.

MORROW: Yes, what about the reaction of the Foreign Service office and my presence in Guinea? Several thought the State Department lacked wisdom in sending to Guinea a man with no previous experience as a diplomat. It was ... not just that the assigning of a non-career person meant that this was one more top position closed to career officers who, understandably enough, considered an ambassadorial appointment a culmination of a successful career. It was perhaps the feeling of professionals that another professional should have been called upon to handle such a precarious situation. All these officers found themselves in the position, for the first time in their lives, of serving under a black. Several were bedeviled by the stereotypes so familiar on the home front concerning second-class citizenship and the possible lowering of standards. It did not take long to dispel their erroneous ideas. In the meantime, however, I did encounter from the staff some silent treatment, some slowness in complying with requests for vital information, some resistance to instructions that greater efforts be made to establish friendlier contacts with their Guinean counterparts. There was a decided complacency among some of the Americans who were interested merely in maintaining contacts with other Western members of the diplomatic corps, of whom all but a few were equally ignorant about the thoughts and the objectives of members of the Guinean Government. It is not possible to reveal here how I set about improving the morale and organizing an effective working organization at the American Embassy. I say it is not possible, and yet I think I change my mind.

Q: Please do.

MORROW: Because at a particular point in the history of relationships with members of the Embassy staff, I made a decision which shook up Washington. I requested that the chargé d'affaires who had replaced the chargé who wanted to go home, and his wife, be removed from the African scene. Now this is a very serious ... something to happen to a person who is a career Foreign Service officer. But the indications were that this individual had lost rapport with the Guinean Government and was ineffectual in his dealings with them. And there was also certain implication that since they had served in another section of Africa -- in South Africa -- where the treatment of blacks was much different from what the Guineans with their

independence wanted, that they were not able to make the transition. Washington was shocked by the request, but they acquiesced. So, by December of 1960, we had such a smoothly-working team, with such excellent morale, that I was called aside by the commander of destroyers from the U.S. South Atlantic Fleet, in port for an amity visit, and questioned as to how it had been possible to develop such esprit de corps in a hardship post.

Q: Could I ask you a couple more questions about that? I think it would be very helpful if you could talk a little more about how you coped with people who were terribly unhelpful. How were you able to turn them around? Because that experience could have made you very bitter and could have made it impossible for you to function. How did you turn them around?

MORROW: Well, maybe it might have been a number of small things. Take one instance. Nobody in the immediate Guinean Government set up at that time could speak any English. If you were going to deal with them, you had to speak French. I'm sorry to say the shock that I discovered that few of the people who had been sent to Guinea by the State Department could speak French. One chap who was a Princeton graduate and had a little French, thought that he was up to the situation and had to translate a document that had been sent in from Washington for a particular Guinea Government, and he brought it to ask my approval. And not trying to act like the professor and so on, there were so many mistakes, I had to correct these mistakes in French. This came as a terrific shock to that young man. I didn't get after him about the situation; I quietly made the corrections, had the secretary put it into the document and then presented it to him. Now that was very good therapy for a rather swollen youngster who had such a wonderful estimate that here was some black person out of the blue who was coming into the situation not only to be the ambassador, but also confronted with having to handle a foreign language.

Then the treatment, sometimes in an embassy there's a terrific difference made by the person who is the Chief of Mission and the Chief of Mission's wife with other folks in the situation. But we were thousands of miles away as this small group. So in these affairs, my wife would not necessarily observe the fact that you had to be such and such an officer, but she would invite all of the Embassy, including the clerks and the people who lived thousands of miles away from home. Now the good old career Foreign Service officers might not have particularly liked that, but it did develop a certain kind of a strain and it came out when we had visits from Senator Symington and Mr. Harriman. I might be a little more specific at that point in time. As a matter of fact, I'm getting ready to talk in terms of ... of some people who visited besides the fleet.

As for anger, at one point I did get very angry and then realized that that would not solve the situation. So I had to remain -- what is the present expression? -- cool. However, a relative, let's be specific, the mother of the gentleman who eventually got sent home had come for a visit, and she was on the beach with us one day and things got around talking about the problems that were there and so on, and wondered if the situation would better itself. And I told her hopefully I thought so. I said, "But you know, I think there are some people here who hope that maybe I might become so frustrated that I'm going to quit." I said, "I've never quit anything in my life, and if I go out of Guinea, I'm going out feet first. I'm going to have to be carried out unless I am recalled by the Department." That turned out also to be good therapy. Now I have used the polite term "therapy" to not dodge the issue and to be specific. When the

decision was made that the Deputy Chief of Mission was to be recalled, it put the fear of God in all of the career Foreign Service people serving in the Embassy at that time. After all, Washington had gone along with the request of the Ambassador, had paid attention to the reasons for the change. There were others who were wondering, "Is this going to happen to me?" In fact, one person came in on his own free will to almost plead his case, which was unnecessary, but it struck me that the individual must have had a guilty conscience and he must not have been doing his job and there's no telling what he might have been doing behind the scenes. But it wasn't necessary ever again during that tour of duty to have anybody else removed from the scene. Now it's a terrible aside to make the point that the gentleman's wife in this case was of no help to him, because she had a number of problems which we don't care to mention. But some of them were very obvious and became a source of embarrassment to her colleagues.

Visiting Americans, you raised the question about that.

Q: Yes.

MORROW: Senator Symington decided to include Guinea in his African itinerary, December 1959. I was not concerned whether the Senator's reported presidential aspirations motivated his African tour. The important thing was that he intended to come to Guinea and he was the first high-ranking American to visit this new African republic. He arrived fortuitously in December, shortly after President Toure's return from his highly successful visit to the United States. The Senator was accompanied by Attorney Fowler Hamilton, who became director of the Agency for International Development for a period during the Kennedy Administration. I was happy that the American Senator and his colleague were so well received by the people of Guinea. President Toure and his ministers were very pleased that an American senator and potential candidate for the Presidency had seen fit to visit their country.

Senator Symington and I called on President Toure, and with my help as interpreter, the two men had a lengthy and profitable conversation. The Senator met and talked with the leading members of the Government during his three-days stay. He asked very keen and penetrating questions during the Embassy briefings and he gave evidence of a remarkable grasp of the situation in Guinea.

Although the Senator was favorably impressed with the work being done by one English language teacher, he let me know that he was concerned that only one teacher had been sent in answer to a request from President Toure himself. Senator Symington was dismayed to discover that terms had yet to be worked out by the International Cooperation Administration which would enable some 150 Guineans to come to the United States to study under the terms of the October 1959 cultural agreement signed in Washington. Senator Symington was very impressed by the fact that wherever we went in the official car with the American Ambassadorial flags flying, Guineans, old and young, stopped to wave, called out friendly greetings, and stopped to applaud. The Senator told me that this was the first time he had ever seen this happen. I do believe that he must have concluded, after three days of this kind of treatment, that the showing of friendship was genuine and not something arranged for his visit.

I saw press reports of a news conference given by the Senator upon his return to the United States from his fifteen-day tour of African countries. His five suggestions for strengthening the U.S. position and counteracting Communist influence in Africa interested me greatly. He proposed one billion dollars in American aid each year; fewer restrictions on the use of our aid funds; increased exchange of American and African students, teachers and others to spur education in Africa; expansion of American diplomatic and assistance missions in Africa; increased training in African languages for Americans sent to Africa.

The Senator expressed the opinion that in most of the free countries of Africa, the Communist position was either equal or nearly as good as the American position, but admitted that in a few African countries, the Communist position was better. He called for better medical, better education and a higher standard of living for Africans. In his report to the U. S. Senate on his Africa trip, the Senator related the extremely favorable observations and the impressions he had heard President Toure express concerning his 1959 visit to the United States. He inserted in the Congressional Record, a message of thanks which Toure had asked him to deliver to the American people and then said the following: "Mr. President, during my recent trip to Africa, I had the great honor of meeting with leaders of some of the newly independent developing nations of that continent. None was more impressive than President Sekou Toure of the Republic of Guinea. President Toure knows and understands the problems which an emerging nation must face. He has the determination and foresight which I am sure meet the challenge of the future in a manner that will benefit his nation and the world. President Toure made a lasting impression on those who met him during his recent tour of this country. This trip was an example of what can be done between nations if there is a mutual exchange of ideas and plans. I hope that there will be many more such visits and exchanges between our peoples and those of African nations."

Fortunately for us, Senator Symington's interest in Guinea did not end with his return to America. It is my understanding that he began to question the government agencies about why so little assistance was being given to Guinea. He cited, for example, one English teacher sent to a country with a population of 2.5 million people. And when he discovered that the 150 cultural scholarships could not be granted unless the Guinean Government signed the standard ICA bilateral agreement, he questioned the validity of a stipulation which penalized innocent students.

I remain convinced that the unflagging interest and good services of Senator Symington had much to do with the securing of those thirteen American teachers who came to Guinea to conduct the English language program during the summer of 1960, and with enabling forty-two Guinean students to come to America for study in October 1960. What I have always regretted is that more Americans like Senator Symington did not come to Guinea between 1959 and 1961.

Fortunately for the United States, the presidential candidate, Senator John F. Kennedy, had arranged to send Governor Averell Harriman to Africa on a fact-finding mission in August 1960. Guinea officials did not conceal from me their pleasure at the fact that Harriman was including their country in his tour. Although the Governor came as a private citizen, he was greeted with the pomp and ceremony afforded official visitors. The Guinean Government wanted

Harriman to occupy one of President Toure's guest homes, but he decided to stay at the Hotel de France. As already indicated, the official Residence, which we were occupying, had no facilities for visiting dignitaries.

At the Governor's insistence, I was present at his meeting with the Guinean ministers as well as at his meetings with President Toure and his Cabinet. I made it a point, however, to see to it that Governor Harriman had the opportunity to speak privately with President Toure at the buffet dinner given in his honor at the Présidence. It was during this dinner, apparently, that Toure told his visitor that I was one of the most trusted and respected members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea.

The high point in the Harriman visit came during the meeting involving Toure, his Cabinet, Harriman and myself. We had assembled in the Cabinet Room, upstairs in the Présidence. The meeting started on a humorous note. The Governor had prefaced his remarks by telling the Guineans that he and I were good friends but we had one major difference in that we belonged to different political parties. Upon hearing these remarks, I half rose from my seat and with a perfectly straight face offered to leave the room so that the Governor would feel free to talk to Toure. President Toure and his Cabinet members, Governor Harriman and I joined the hearty laughter that met this gesture, which had been understood by all those present.

I was proud to be on the scene that day to witness Harriman in action. He was at all times direct and to the point and could be very blunt when the occasion warranted it. He made no apologies for those things for which America stood. He spoke the language easily understood and appreciated by Toure, who responded in kind, and also revealed what was on his mind. There was no room for misunderstanding during that meeting. We caught a glimpse of Harriman as he might have been during his ambassadorship to the Soviet Union. All of us were pleased with the meeting of minds. I had the opportunity to talk with Governor Harriman for a few hours, at least four hours, during a combination breakfast-lunch at the Présidence the day before he left Guinea. We explored the problems confronting the United States not only in Guinea but also in Africa in general. I stressed my belief that America could make a real contribution to Africa in the areas of health, education and social welfare.

Before leaving the Présidence, Governor Harriman graciously presented me with his book, Peace with Russia, on the flyleaf of which he had written, "For John Morrow with admiration for the fine job you are doing and many thanks for your warm hospitality. Averell Harriman, August 1960."

There was no question in my mind that the visit of this man as a private citizen, on a fact-finding mission for Kennedy, did much to improve the strength in American-Guinean understanding. No propaganda pamphlets or television broadcast could have done as much as Harriman had accomplished in his face-to-face confrontation with Toure. Harriman did not share the fear expressed in some quarters that Toure and his Government had gone over the brink. I received a distinct impression that he understood that Toure was an African nationalist, struggling to make his nation viable.

It is my firm belief that the report made to presidential candidate Kennedy by Harriman on his

findings in Africa had much to do with the new look for the better in African affairs at the State Department immediately after the Kennedy Administration came to power in January 1961. It may be recalled that the first important appointment made by Kennedy as President was that of G. Mennen Williams to the post of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. This appointment was important not because Williams knew anything about African affairs, but nobody knew better than the Africans that the new Assistant Secretary of State knew very little about their affairs. Williams' appointment was important because the President of the United States had seen fit to place a man of his stature in such a post. It implied that Williams had the ear of the President and once he could get his feet on the ground in the African arena, much-needed changes could be expected in U.S.-African policy. Unfortunately, subsequent events did not bear out completely these early hopes about the significance of Williams' appointment.

Returning to the question of the influence of the Harriman report, I do believe that his recommendations very specifically effected a change in U.S. policy toward Guinea after April 1961, when the Kennedy appointee to Guinea, Ambassador William Attwood, reported to the Republic of Guinea. I was very happy for my successor, Ambassador Attwood, that there was at the beginning this intelligent appraisal of the Guinean situation and a recognition of the need to cast aside outmoded procedures, techniques, and policies for dealing with the African nations.

I must admit this. The reception received by a group of distinguished Americans that came to Guinea in the latter part of December 1960 differed sharply from that received by either Senator Symington or Governor Harriman. The delegation was made up of Senator Frank Church, Democrat, Idaho; Senator Gale W. McGee, Democrat, Wyoming; Senator Frank E. Moss, Democrat, Utah; and Edward Kennedy, youngest brother of the President-elect. Young Kennedy had joined the Senators and their party for the last leg of their African fact-finding tour, much to the dismay of some of the Senators. I have often asked myself why it was that this last group of American dignitaries to visit Guinea during my tour of duty received such a cool reception. I think the answer is to be found in the events occurring just prior to their arrival.

If it had been within my power to suggest a date for the visit, I certainly would have put it off until a more propitious moment. I had been well aware that President Toure and his ministers were very much irked by the role of the United States delegation at the United Nations and the role it had played in seating in the U.N. General Assembly the Congolese delegation sponsored by President Kasavubu. The Guinean delegation at the United Nations had given all out support to the rival Congolese delegation sponsored by their friend, Patrice Lumumba, who had insisted that he and not Kasavubu was the legal head of the central government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was aware also that Toure was very unhappy about the treatment received by a message which he had sent directly to President Eisenhower, taking issue with Eisenhower over U.S. support for the U.N. policy in the strife-torn Congolese Republic. Toure's implied charges that the United States was allied with those nations opposing freedom for the Congo and for other African states, had drawn a strong reply from President Eisenhower, which was carried on the front pages of the American newspapers on November 26, 1960. In the reply, President Eisenhower declared emphatically that the United

States had been in the forefront of those nations favoring the emancipation of all peoples. Eisenhower asserted that the United States had warmly welcomed the creation of the independent Congo and had upheld the unity and territorial integrity of the Congolese Republic through the United Nations and not by means of unilateral intervention in Congolese affairs. Toure had sent a message to President-elect Kennedy also that he had received a rebuff on this score, when Kennedy let him know that he too was supporting the stand taken by President Eisenhower on the role played by the United Nations in the Congo.

It seems that Kennedy's reply surprised and nettled Toure, who had expected a difference of opinion between Eisenhower and Kennedy. Toure reacted by carrying out his December 1960 threat to recall Guinean troops in the Congo made during the formation of the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union and cabled the U.N. Security Council that he was withdrawing four hundred more troops, four hundred troops, that is, Guinean troops, stationed in the Congo because of the violation of the U.N. charter by the U.N. force in the Congo.

And when the American Senators and Edward Kennedy reached Guinea, President Toure had not returned from an official visit to Sierra Leone. I had arranged, however, for my visitors to see Toure on the following Monday morning prior to their departure from Guinea. In the meantime, the word reached Conakry that an attempt had been made in Sierra Leone to sabotage the helicopter, a gift from the Soviet Union, in which Toure was traveling. It was reported that dirt had been placed in the oil line of the helicopter and it had been necessary to fly a second plane to Sierra Leone to return the Presidential party to Conakry. I did not expect that this incident, if true, was going to put Sekou Toure in a congenial mood for meeting Monday morning guests.

It should not be difficult to imagine what happened when we arrived in the Présidence on that morning. First thing I noticed was that the guards did not come forward to greet me with their usual alacrity. I summoned the guard and asked him to notify the Cabinet Chief that my guests and I had arrived for our meeting with President Toure and his Cabinet. I presumed the guard delivered the message, for he went into the office of the Cabinet Chief. When he did not return with a reply and the Cabinet Chief did not appear, I thought this was somewhat strange. As the minutes ticked by and no one appeared, I told the delegation members that I had begun to suspect that the delay had some diplomatic implications. I had never waited to get into President Toure's office before, whether I came with visitors or alone. My remarks brought the observation from one of the more candid members of the American delegation that they had waited a very long while in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) before getting in to see Emperor Haile Selassie.

Prodded by the thoughts that we had not kept the Guinean delegation waiting at any of the appointments at the White House or at the State Department in the fall of 1959, and by my determination not to have the Addis Ababa visitor wait repeated in Conakry, I stepped into the hall and called the guard. I told him to inform the Cabinet Chief that I had found it impossible to wait any longer and was therefore returning to the Embassy with my guests. The guard turned in a flash and sprinted up the stairs to the Cabinet Chief's office. Before I could re-enter the waiting room to suggest to Senator Church, the delegation leader, that we should leave, the guard returned to say that the President wished to see us. As I climbed the stairs to the Cabinet

Room, I was not sanguine about our chances for a successful exchange of views.

Upon entering the Cabinet Room, in which the ministers had already taken seats around the long table, I noticed immediately that President Toure appeared tired and was not his usual cordial self. I was conscious also of the absence of banter usually exchanged among the young ministers. There was something unusually solemn about this pre-meeting atmosphere.

Scarcely had I finished introducing the Senators and young Kennedy before Toure launched into a lengthy discussion of Guinean history and geography. He skirted the vital problems which he and I knew from past experience American officials wanted to discuss. I suddenly realized that Toure knew that the delegation was supposed to go directly from the Présidence to the airport to depart for Dakar, their last stop. I decided that he was deliberately using up time to avoid an extended question period.

When the Senators and Kennedy did get the opportunity to ask questions, the answers given were not very relevant. It became obvious that Toure was not going out of his way to impress these visitors favorably. I could see the implication for the future if the American delegation had left with the feeling that it had been impossible to get first-hand information on troublesome problems which threatened American-Guinean relations.

On February 12, 1961, there appeared in the United States a document reporting on the African tour made by the U.S. Senators. The portion of this report devoted exclusively to Guinea clearly precluded any possible implementation of the bilateral agreement which the Minister of Plan, N’Famara Keita and I had signed on September 30, 1960 in Conakry. I cannot say that I was surprised by this report, but I was sorry that the conclusions had been reached after only one meeting with Toure held under none-too-favorable circumstances.

The report said in part: “There are indications that the performance of the bloc in Guinea has not measured up to its expansive promises. We see no reason for the United States to undertake to obscure this development or to assist any Communist effort to make Guinea an example of what bloc aid can accomplish. There are limits to our resources and too many African countries which need our help and which respect our motives.”

“Another issue causing us to advocate a wait-and-see approach is a recent dispatch of large quantities of military supplies from the bloc. The implausible explanation Guinea offers regarding its need for such arms, including aircraft guns, anti-aircraft guns, concerns the purported discovery of arms caches in connection with the plot against its borders. Pending clear evidence that Guinea indeed wants our friendship and wishes to and can preserve its independence for the bloc, we believe that the United States should maintain no more than a token aid program just to keep the door open.”

There, spelled out in black and white, for the first time, was the very policy which the United States had been following in Guinea since 1959. Nobody had been willing to admit this to me before even though I had sought through various means to discover what policy had been set for this country, where the American Embassy staff had tried unceasingly to establish mutual understanding. In my estimation, it would have been much fairer had I been told this very

frankly in Washington before departing for Guinea. If it had not been possible to determine the guidelines before my departure, at least I should have been told the day, the hour, the minute the United States decided its policy! It was a matter of record that we lived in hope; we never despaired; we never stopped fighting for what we thought should be done to assist this developing country in its struggle through a desperate and frustrating period.

The report made by the American delegation came as a result of its contact, treatment and observations in Guinea. I hold Toure himself responsible for some of the conclusions drawn. I think that he was most unpolitical and shortsighted not to have made an honest effort to answer the queries put to him by Church and his colleagues. He had everything to gain, nothing to lose. The press had already printed all kinds of unfavorable things about Guinea -- some true, some untrue. He didn't have to worry about the exposure of skeletons in the closet. He had only to slug it out as he had done with Averell Harriman and the Senators might have been impressed by his forthrightness whether or not they agreed with him. Instead, angry at the U.S. policy and the United Nations, provoked by Eisenhower's and Kennedy's replies to his allegations, morose over the alleged sabotage attempts in Sierra Leone, this young African leader stepped to the plate in the U.S. Senate's world series. He did not go down swinging; he was called out on strikes.

Senator Church saw fit to insert in the Congressional Record, the appendix, January 30, 1961, very complimentary remarks concerning my ability as a diplomat and representative of the United States abroad. But Senator Symington had done the same thing upon his return to America in the Congressional Record-Senate, February 1, 1960, page 1512. My real concern was the knowledge after reading the Church report, that tangible progress toward meeting the problems of human suffering abounding in Guinea was not going to be made during the time that I would be there.

Oh, by the way, Deputy Undersecretary of State Loy Henderson came to Guinea in the course of an October 1960 inspection tour of American embassies and consulates in Sub-Saharan Africa. And although Henderson's visit involved American business, strictly speaking, I saw to it that he got to converse with Minister Abdourahmane Diallo, Acting President, in the absence of Toure. My good friend, C. Vaughn Ferguson, served as the interpreter during Henderson's conversations with Diallo. It is to the everlasting credit of Loy Henderson that he did his best to secure for me the kind of administrative support which I requested, but not even Henderson could overcome overnight the dearth of trained, knowledgeable Foreign Service personnel in hardship posts in Africa or Asia.

We accompanied this twenty-one man party of American officials to the airport on October 26, 1960. The guards waved us through customs with a smile and a sharp salute. The passports had already been delivered to the departing visitors, so we walked out to the waiting MATS plane. I asked the young Embassy officer once again if he had checked to see that the passports were in order, and he answered me in the affirmative. I stayed aboard the plane a moment to wish the delegation a safe trip to Sierra Leone and a safe return to America. The plane took off and was soon out of sight.

An agitated and displeased commandant of the airport met me at the door of the waiting room. In

excited tones he explained that the Americans had left Guinea without filling out exit visas and declarations of foreign currency. I told him that this had been handled by the Guinean Foreign Ministry, and I had been assured that all was in order for a smooth departure. I asked him to check with the Ministry, but he insisted that the Ministry did not run the airfield. He said he intended to instruct the tower to recall the plane. I assured him that he was making a grave mistake, especially since his Government had welcomed these distinguished visitors and had given assurances that all was in order for their departure from Guinea. I suggested again that he would do well to phone the Ministry. The commandant turned and walked toward the tower. Our conversation lasted almost twenty minutes and I hoped that the plane was out of range of the tower signal by that time. Within five minutes, however, the commandant came strutting back to announce that the tower had radioed the plane and the pilot had agreed to return. I told the commandant that not a single American was going to get off that plane and set foot on Guinean soil and that if he had anything he wanted to sign, it would have to be taken to the plane. I told him that anybody who got on or off that plane would have to climb over me.

Twenty minutes later the plane landed. I went aboard and asked Loy Henderson why the plane had returned, particularly since the Guinean Foreign Ministry had handled the passports. He said the decision to return was made after a brief conference aboard. It was felt that future American-Guinean relations would be better off if the letters of the law were obeyed.

Meanwhile, two guards had brought the necessary visa and currency cards to the door of the plane; these cards were filled out, stamped and returned to the commandant's office. For the second time that day I bade the visitors farewell, only this time I asked them not to return (laughter) even if they heard that I was a prisoner at the airport. Everybody aboard laughed; the plane took off.

I returned to the Embassy to prepare one of the stiffest notes that would be sent during my tour in Guinea. This note brought back the quickest response ever exchanged in Guinea. The Guinean note graciously apologized for the unfortunate incident created only through misunderstanding on the part of certain functionaries in the Ministry and at the airport. They reiterated the pleasure on the part of the Guinean Government to have welcomed the distinguished American visitors. Several days later I received a personal letter from Loy Henderson with a dateline Monrovia, Liberia. He said in part: "Dear John, it was a pleasure to see you during my two visits to Conakry. Please don't feel concerned about our early return visit. It did us no harm and it may be that the government of Guinea will be conscious of our desire to respect its sovereignty." (Laughter).

I think perhaps I should say a word about a couple of U.S. delegations that made visits to independence celebrations.

Not long after the West German-Guinean misunderstanding, I received word from the State Department that I had been designated by President Eisenhower to be one of the representatives with the rank of special ambassador to attend the ceremonies at Léopoldville in connection with the independence celebration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo scheduled for the last three days of June 1960. I was pleased with the assignment and looked forward to visiting this Republic, which had been granted its independence so suddenly by the Belgian Government after

a somewhat confused round-table conference in Brussels. I was happy also at the prospect of renewing my acquaintance with former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Robert Murphy, who was to head the American delegation to the Congo. It will be recalled that Mr. Murphy had presided over the meeting held at the State Department in the fall of 1959 during the State visit of Sekou Toure. Mr. Murphy had been very helpful to me in ironing out certain troublesome last minute details.

My experience in Guinea made me wonder, however, how the Congolese experiment was going to work out. I was concerned of the possible implications of the policy of the Belgian Government in limiting the opportunities for higher education to only a very few Congolese. The Belgians had thought, in all probability, that their policy had prevented the awakening of false hopes in the minds of the great mass of Congolese, who then remained more easily manageable. Under the French regime, Guinea had been very far from the top of the list of territories from which students could go to France for advanced study. Yet I had reason to believe that even Guinea had had more students trained abroad than had the Congolese.

If the Guinean Government was experiencing so much difficulty in maintaining its sovereignty and its independence, how could the Congolese Government expect to be better off when the Belgians moved out? At this particular stage, the Belgians might have been lulled into thinking that their continued presence in the Congo was an absolute must, for they thought the Congolese would fail miserably without Belgian technical and administrative skills.

Mr. Murphy had reported correctly that there was a mood of hope in the Congo before and during the independence celebration. But I personally found it extremely difficult to accept this hope, especially after having lived in Guinea for eleven months. Furthermore, I was unwilling to discount the serious disturbances among the rival political and tribal groups in the Congo, which had the earmarks of an uprising. What was clear before independence, and became increasingly clear after independence, was that its leaders, Kasavubu and Lumumba, were pulling in opposite directions.

This had not been the case in Guinea on the eve of independence. Moreover, it was well known even outside the Congo that Kasavubu was more the Belgians' choice than Lumumba, who was a veritable thorn in the Belgians' side. It interested me that the Guineans were so intensely for Lumumba, and I went to the Congo with resolve to observe both these leaders closely with the hope of gaining some insight into the Congolese future.

Of course, I realized the impossibility of unraveling the complex Congolese situation during a three-day ceremonial visit. I did not have the foresight to anticipate, however, that little more than one month later the Congo would be torn with strife and slaughter and Belgian nationals would be fleeing for their lives.

I had to fly from Conakry to Dakar to meet the military air transport service plane bringing the rest of the American delegation to the Congo. We reached the airport in Léopoldville the following evening, not long after the arrival of the official party from Belgium, and there was a great deal of excitement and bustle.

Among the Congolese officials on hand to greet us at the airport was Antoine Gizenga whom I had seen in Guinea several months before when he visited Conakry on the way back to Léopoldville from the Brussels round-table conference. At the moment when Gizenga was shaking my hand, a photographer's flash bulb popped, and I remarked jokingly to C. Vaughn Ferguson, who later was appointed Ambassador to the Malagasy Republic, that I wondered what the State Department officials would have thought of my being in such a picture two or three months before.

There were no visible signs of the uneasy state of affairs that had preceded independence, and the Belgian Government had gone to great lengths to prepare an impressive series of inaugural events: receptions, dinners, luncheons, parades, culture events and fireworks. I was particularly well received by Congolese officials, which I attributed to my being accredited to the government of the Republic of Guinea and to the high regard Lumumba and the other Congolese had for President Toure. Some officials told me very frankly that they had never before seen a U.S. ambassador who was a black.

I noticed the name of Lumumba was conspicuously absent from the list of those participating in the solemn ceremony of granting and accepting Congolese independence. Indeed, the omission of his name made more of an impact than if it had been printed in bold letters. Nevertheless, as delegate William Paley, board chairman of CBS, and I sought seats in the crowded and impressively new Parliament chamber, we had no inkling of the real drama that would be played on that platform where we saw King Baudouin and the Belgian and Congolese ministers quietly awaiting the opening of the morning program on June 30.

King Baudouin, as was to be expected, made a brief, polite and tactful statement relinquishing his authority to rule the Congo and granting full independence to the former territory. President Kasavubu, with a grace that momentarily diverted attention from his somewhat short and plump figure, accepted the authority on behalf of his Republic in a tempered and well-delivered speech of acceptance.

Thinking the ceremony about over, William Paley had just turned to say something to me when we both saw a tall, thin, ebony-hued young man get up from his seat on the platform and rush toward the microphone. When I saw the goatee, I knew that this was Lumumba. The Congolese Prime Minister who had been left out at the morning ceremonies, launched into a vitriolic attack on the Belgians, citing the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon the hapless Congolese during Belgian occupation. Lumumba had seized the initiative in this solemn moment and was announcing to the world that he could not be silenced through the subterfuge of omitting his name from the program.

To say that Lumumba's precipitous action caught everybody by surprise -- Congolese, Belgians, visiting African dignitaries, Americans -- would be an understatement. All of us looked to see whether the King and his ministers were going to leave the platform in protest. All of the King's feelings were clearly visible and his ministers made no effort to conceal their anger and shock. No Belgian moved. The hush which at first descended over the audience was broken by hearty applause by Lumumba's followers. Lumumba, the wily, ruthless, fiery politician was playing to the grandstand, but he was also making his bid for power. And it was evident that he was not

wanting for followers, if the number of Congolese applauding had any significance.

Lumumba's action that morning revealed his lack of common sense, propriety, timing and judgment. Many Congolese and Belgians felt that their family squabbles should be settled behind closed doors, not aired in public before invited guests. The Prime Minister's act brought to the surface the instability and rashness which would eventually be his undoing. It warned all those within hearing that he was a man who was going to be dangerous in the in-fighting and who would not hesitate to go for the jugular. Yet, Lumumba lashing out in some of the most bitter French I have ever heard, expressed the hidden sentiments not only of some of the Congolese listeners, but also of some of the visiting African dignitaries as he castigated the Belgians for their exploitation of the defenseless Congolese and for their avariciousness.

As Lumumba turned to the microphone, the session broke up amid the loud buzzing of excited voices. Outside the Parliament chamber I saw a crowd collecting around Lumumba and soon heard the angry agitated voices of Congolese ministers all trying to speak at once. This noise did not subside until a Belgian, accompanied by a Congolese official, approached the group and spoke a few words. The crowd dispersed and order reigned once again.

At the crowded luncheon following the tension-packed morning session, a hush once again swept the guests when Patrice Lumumba got up to speak. I looked at him and wondered what else could he possibly have to say. I had underestimated Lumumba's versatility and his ability to change position. Speaking in tones no longer strident, wearing a somewhat subdued air, Lumumba proceeded to sing the praises of those whom he had condemned one hour ago. He cited the constructive things done by the Belgians during their regime in the Congo and concluded his startling remarks with the hope that cooperation and understanding between the Congolese and the Belgians would continue after independence. I left the table and immediately went in search of a Congolese official whom I had met in Conakry several months before. I asked him to explain Mr. Lumumba's conduct. The official was reluctant to talk. He hastily explained, however, that the Belgian ministers had told Lumumba and the Congolese ministers that the King would leave Léopoldville that day if Lumumba did not retract his harsh accusations of the morning. Lumumba seemingly had found it difficult to understand what all this fuss was about, for he had merely repeated what he had been saying all the time across the length and breadth of the Congo. Lumumba overlooked the fact that formally he had not been talking in the presence of the King, a captive listener on the occasion on the surrendering of the territory. Sekou Toure had likewise spoken out one day in the presence of a distinguished visitor, General de Gaulle. But on that August day of 1958, Toure had taken the calculated risk and had spoken from a well-prepared text submitted in advance, so it is said, to the French Governor-General of Guinea.

I did not react to Lumumba at all in the same fashion in which I had reacted to Sekou Toure. Lumumba puzzled me, it is true, but he did not impress me. I respected Toure, but I could not bring myself to respect Lumumba. I might have had more respect for him if, despite his blatant show of poor manners and his lack of diplomacy, he had refused to recant and had stood by his bristling statement of the morning. Toure would not have recanted; he would have gone to perdition first. Naturally, I could understand how a politician under pressure from the angry Belgian ministers and his conciliatory Congolese colleagues, fearful that the King's departure

would mar the celebration, might opt to compromise.

But to recant publicly, in such a humiliating fashion, after exhibiting such defiance a short time before, did not, in my opinion, engender respect. Lumumba's exercise in poor taste and political expediency caused me to think back over the events of the two preceding days. I was faintly aware that whenever King Baudouin appeared in public, President Kasavubu had always been at his side, engaging him in conversation. In each instance, Lumumba had been seated or standing off to one side. And every time a cameraman approached to photograph the King and Kasavubu, Lumumba had edged his chair over to get into the picture or had jumped out of his seat, rushed up to Kasavubu and engaged his attention.

This was not a matter of my imagination because these maneuvers had been repeated too many times within 48 hours. I did begin to question how long a man with the drive, ambition and amour-propre of Lumumba was going to allow himself publicly to be relegated to a secondary position. After all, Lumumba probably had a sense of history as well as an image of himself as a great leader.

Oh, there's little point in conjecturing about what might have happened if the Belgians and Congolese responsible for planning the celebration ceremonies had given a more prominent role to Lumumba in the hope of dissipating the intense rivalry smoldering between him and Kasavubu. This would have brought simply a temporary truce. The roots of the problems went much deeper, and the Belgians themselves must be held responsible for subsequent events in the Congo. It is not necessary to hark back to the time when Leopold II, whose reign between 1865 and 1909 was characterized by industrial and colonial expansion, and whose ruthless greed and condonation of very harsh treatment of Congolese in the Congo free states then under his personal rule provoked international protests, which led to this area's being ceded to Belgium in 1908. Nor is it necessary to discuss the Belgian controlled Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, operating in the Katanga Province that had once produced most of the world's supply of cobalt as well as quantities of uranium, radium, copper, tin and diamonds. It's small wonder that Moise Tshombe could not resist the temptation to secede with the Katanga Province as his base of operations.

The Belgians had not prepared the Congolese for self-rule. They had been satisfied to keep the situation under control by playing one tribal group against another, and many of the improvements in sanitation, roads, buildings and so forth came about as a result of creating a more favorable condition by the thousands of Belgian civil servants and business people living and working in the Congo. The French had done somewhat the same thing in Guinea, for the same reason, and when the freedom avalanche began to gain momentum in the Congo, the Belgians gave in to the pressure, stepped out, not in anger as de Gaulle in Guinea, but in panic. The United Nations could not find a satisfactory solution to the mess which resulted from the poorly managed Belgium pullout.

One footnote about the trip to the Congo. President Toure's half brother, Minister Toure, and the Guinean Consul asked us for a ride back to Accra in Ghana. And it had been previously decided that the military transport plane was to land in Conakry instead of going to Dakar to let me off, and I had persuaded the American delegation to come to the Residence for light

refreshments, to be followed by a quick tour of Conakry. When we landed in Accra and Minister Toure and the Consul departed with their baggage, I learned from the American Ambassador, who met the plane, that President Toure's plane had already left Accra that morning. Within moments, Minister Toure reappeared -- this is Toure's brother, half brother, expressing apologies and asking if he might accompany us to Conakry. I immediately wired ahead to let the Guinean Government know that Minister Ishmael Toure was returning with us. I also suggested that he invite all available Guinean ministers and Western diplomats to the impromptu gathering at the Residence.

As we circled the Conakry airport preparatory to making what was to be the first landing of an American plane on Guinean soil, I could see a large crowd assembled in the waiting room. With Minister Toure leading the way, we filed out of the plane to find all the Guinean ministers and Western diplomats who were in and around Conakry that Saturday, waiting to greet the minister and the visiting American dignitaries. At the entrance to the airport we found a long line of cars with a police escort. The American delegation was assigned seats in the cars with various Guinean ministers and the procession made its way from the airport to the Residence in Donka. After the brief reception we re-entered the cars, drove through the streets of Conakry, and returned to the airport.

It should not be difficult to imagine the bewilderment not only of my Western colleagues but also of the Communist bloc diplomats at the unaccustomed sight of Guinean ministers and American visitors riding together through the streets of Donka and Conakry. With the slow pace and the open cars, there was no difficulty seeing who was talking to whom. As somebody remarked, the United States got as much benefit in good will for bringing Minister Ishmael Toure back from the Congo as it did in opening a cultural center in Conakry.

In November 1960 I was again designated by President Eisenhower to be a representative with the rank of Special Ambassador to an independence celebration. This time it was a celebration of the independence of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to be held in Nouakchott beginning November 27. On this occasion the President sent just two of us, the other being Henry S. Villard, the American Ambassador at Dakar. Ambassador Villard was sent as the President's personal representative, which meant that he was the ranking member authorized to convey to the Mauritanian President the congratulatory statement from the United States and the personal gift of President Eisenhower.

The colorful ceremony that took place in Nouakchott, a city that had been constructed literally in a portion of the desert, went off with smoothness and precision that were admirable. A speech turning over authority delivered by French Minister Debré and acceptance speech by President Mokhtar Ould Daddah were well received by the Mauritians and visitors. Feeding the more than a thousand visitors was a veritable tour de force made possible by supplies flown in from Dakar and France. The parade featuring Mauritanian paratroopers in camouflaged uniforms and soldiers in desert garb, mounted on camels, added to the exotic setting. The friendly and hospitable Mauritians had the knack of making visitors feel welcomed. I regretted very much when their first effort to enter the United Nations was thwarted. The Mauritanian Republic was finally admitted to the United Nations in 1961 despite the opposition of Morocco, which laid claim to a portion of the territory.

Q: Before we get to the lessons that you learned from Guinea and from Africa in general, when we talked about the initial problems you had with your Embassy staff and how those were resolved, you made the statement that after all there were a number of crises that we faced, and the Guinean Government leaders weren't really interested in speaking to anybody but the Chief -- the Chief of Mission, the Ambassador -- and not anybody underneath him, so to speak. Could you talk a little about some of those crises that stand out in your mind?

MORROW: I mentioned the plot, the "complot". When Toure was making these speeches in public, we could call them harangues, which literally were speeches condemning to death Ibrahima Diallo and El-Hadj Mohammed Lamine Kaba as well as some other people, some in absentia. He was also asking for countries who respected Guinean sovereignty to come forth to aid Guinea or to stand by in case there were an attack. Now, why this tactic was employed is questionable, but it was perfectly obvious that the United States was not going to step up and say, "All right, in a time of trouble, we shall come to your aid," which of course was a gesture which had already been made by Czechoslovakia and Russia.

And it was my duty to convey this information that we were working through the United Nations and were not engaged in any unilateral dealings with the Guinean Government. Ah, this is a real crisis point and I had to convey this message. However, let me say this, that despite this concept of always wanting to deal with the Chief, it was also a matter of an education process because in some of the situations I would deliberately send the economic officer or the political officer to one of the ministries wherever there was a problem, whether it was the Ministry of Plan or Foreign Affairs, with messages to be conveyed to the Government instead of always being present on the scene as if nothing could happen unless I were present. Because you have to be able to delegate authority and this is what I was trying to also convey to the young Guinean ministers, who would sometimes call and say, "Well, we thought that you were going to ..." and I would say "Look, I can't be everywhere at one time and run our shop in that same fashion."

The complot, I think, was one of the most serious situations that I could think of and the incident about when the gates were closed. I didn't want to dwell upon that too much, but actually the Admiral and his ship had been told not to leave the port. There was an implication that the Guinean Government wanted to investigate the question of the flags further, the plastic flags, but as you well know, ships have to leave according to the tide and the tide was coming in at a particular time that morning -- during the early morning hours -- the Admiral felt in the middle. I told him to go ahead and make his departure and I would be behind to face whatever music there might be.

Now I didn't state this when I first talked about the question of what happened when the LSD's brought the Guineans back to the Congo, but that was a serious situation and it was felt that there would be repercussions. But somehow or another it was turned off when I told the Minister Fodeba Keita that I wouldn't want to have had to walk way out to the Camp Alpha Yaya with just two marines to free our sailors and soldiers. The implication was that with just two American marines, it would have been possible to free our sailors or soldiers had they been arrested by the Guinean Government. Said in a joke but it carried its full meaning ... Just

off-hand, well some things which might be considered not too important at that point seemed to threaten some members of our Embassy ... as well as the Guinean Government, who were sort of on edge; everything seemed to have been a crisis. In other words, I sometimes felt that the situation was being overplayed by all concerned. It is true though that the Guinean ministers sometimes were haunted by the fact that they couldn't say that something or that something would not be done until it had been checked with Toure. If Toure were out in the brush someplace, then that meant everything stopped. There's an implication that something like this happened during President Carter's presidency, where he was the type of person who wanted to oversee everything. And it is impossible for a person in an administrative position with a huge set-up like, for example, the United States Government or even a small situation like the Guinean Government, for one person always to be able to handle every situation. I would strongly suspect now that for some of the people who have survived, who've lived, that there has been much more of this delegation and decentralization than in the beginning, but the chieftain concept ...

I just want to give a little summary to some extent that could be listed in the way of what did I learn in the Guinean situation? I learned not only from the people of Guinea but also of other African nations of their great hope for immediate change. They wanted all the evidence of modern civilization, including hydroelectric dams. They did not find it easy to forget the effects of colonialism that had promoted race and class discrimination. And I found out too that Africans still looked to America for support because of their intrinsic belief that America was the land of the original anti-colonial people -- this notwithstanding America's own racial problem. I'm not being immodest when I confess that one of the most stimulating experiences in my life was that opportunity to have served under President Eisenhower as the first American Ambassador to the first French West African nation to achieve independence from France. And my tour of duty was from July 1959 to March 1961. It was indeed a challenge to have served at the United Nations under the Kennedy Administration where I had the unique chance to work with the late elder statesman and diplomat, Ambassador Adlai Stevenson. If time permits, I might have a footnote to add about the U.N. experience.

I shall not soon forget having been sent to Paris by President Kennedy as head of the American delegation at UNESCO entrusted with the difficult responsibility of implementing the United States policy in that international organization with a membership in 1961 of some 113 nations. And, in spite of the blot of the recent thunderings of Watergate and serious questions being raised today about U.S. foreign policy; in spite of the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan, for example, to turn back the pages of history for blacks and other minorities in America.

In spite of these problems, I still make bold to say these words once uttered by the late John F. Kennedy: "Let the public service be a proud and lively career and that every man and woman in any area of our national government be able to say with pride and honor in future years, I served the United States Government in that hour of our nation's need."

On the surface it appeared that Guinean-American relations had been improving since 1962. And suddenly on October 30, 1966, President Toure ordered the arrest of the newly arrived American Ambassador, Robinson McIlvaine, and one week later announced the expulsion of 62 Peace Corps volunteers and their dependents. A strong protest in the United States State Department brought about the release of Ambassador McIlvaine in less than 24 hours. An

unruly mob broke furniture and windows at the Ambassador's residence shortly after his release.

McIlvaine was called back to Washington for consultation but there was not an outright break between the U. S. and Guinea. Fortunately, later reports out of Guinea indicated the relations between this Republic and the United States did improve markedly in 1968. Mutual trust appeared to have replaced suspicion, and there seemed to be more mutual confidence and a willingness to let each to go his own way. It is true also that the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development agreed on September 18, 1968 to lend Guinea 64.5 million dollars over a period of twenty-four years to help construct an 85-mile railroad from the mines of Fria to a port that would be constructed along the Atlantic coast. The United States made a loan of 21 million dollars in Guinean francs to be used for defraying local currency cost of constructing this railroad. The Peace Corps, expelled in October 1966, was invited back to Guinea and anticipated sending some twenty or thirty volunteers in June of 1969. Two middle-aged Americans ... American blacks from Detroit, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Sharp moved to Guinea in October 1968 to teach in the National Arts Trade School in Conakry. Mr. Sharp taught welding, and his wife taught English. Mr. Sharp also set up the first-class garage so sorely needed in Conakry.

It would appear that Sekou Toure and the last of the original African revolutionaries, are still paying lip service to revolution, deeming it advisable to forego new economic links -- to forge, not forego, forge new economic links with the World Bank as well as the United States and the rest of the world. Maybe he thought he would thus be able to put off a while longer at least the fate of his most immediate revolutionary neighbor, Modibo Keita, who was deposed in a military coup in November 19 of 1968.

Then I received a disquieting letter from one whom I trusted and respected. Starting out the expression "Plus ça change has always been the rule here in dreamland," he was talking about Guinea. "But this time I have a feeling ce ne plus exactement la meme chose." For six months we'd averaged about three mass meetings a week. Almost daily section meetings plus numerous marches and manifestations of loyalty for the President and, of course, national conferences of Jeunesse, Femme, CNR, and the CNT. At all these meetings the patron, which means, of course, the President, was eulogized with constant repetition of his new titles, "Responsable Supreme de la Révolution" and "Serviteur Fidèle du Peuple". You must admit that they are modest and more modest terms than the "Redeemer." Furthermore, he also spoke at length at each meeting. Of course, during this period almost no productive work was performed anywhere in Guinea except at Fria, which probably didn't matter too much since the economy ceased to exist some time ago. The strategy was obvious: He was going to keep everybody so damn busy and distracted, no one would have the time to plot a coup. And one of the distractions was a gem of fantasy. Border guards were doubled; all security forces were alerted to be on the lookout for French paratroops disguised as Americans looking for jobs with Fria.

Well, it worked, if, as I assume is possible, Colonel Diaby and others decided it was time to stop all that nonsense. If that's what they decided, they sure botched it. The tragedy is that the thirteen condemned to death, plus the twenty to thirty put in prison, were among the most

competent people we all knew in the former group in addition to Diaby and six other militaires, Fodeba Keita, Diawadou Barry, Karim Fofana Jilus, in absentia, Naby Youlah, and Mamadou Bah. This was bringing it pretty close to home. I don't think any of them had been as yet executed.

Then too, the Patron has used the alleged "complot" to get rid of anyone who might be a threat or isn't one hundred percent militant. This includes people like Balla Camara, Doctor Marega, Baidi Goeye and Diop. "The second ranking Guinean at Fria, Karim Bangoura, was scared to death but was still functioning as Minister of Transport. The case of Achkar Marof is still a complete mystery. As you know, he was snatched off the aircraft on returning from New York City and put in prison. There was talk of his absconding with proceeds of the sale of the Embassy at 73rd Street, but his wife, who was housed by Fodeba Keita, swears she has all the deposit slips countersigned by Beavogui. I suspect Marof ran into the same trouble as Telli Diallo. Because of the U.N. forum, he acquired an international reputation and there is only room for one Guinean on the international scene. Then too, he made the great mistake of not showing much enthusiasm for returning home."

"So here we are again, Russians, Czechs, Yugoslavs, French, Americans, everyone except the Chinese, pariahs once more."

Now, if that letter sounds like an exaggeration, I would like to just call attention to a letter I received from the Secretary of State who at that time was William Rogers, with the date of February 23, 1971. The letter might be self-explanatory. "Dear Dr. Morrow, President Nixon has asked that I reply to your telegram of January 25, 1971 urging him to request President Sekou Toure to grant clemency to those condemned to death by the Guinean revolutionary tribunal and to ensure the right of appeal to condemned as well as those sentenced to hard labor."

"We have followed the recent events in Guinea closely, sharing the concern that has been expressed around the world. We have felt, however, that to the extent outside world appeals might be effective in the present circumstances, they would more properly come from African nations and from other countries whose nationals might be involved. Appeals were directed to President Sekou Toure by Pope Paul, the President of Germany and several African leaders. As one of the few Western nations still having effective relations with Guinea, we gave help and advice where we could. We appreciate your concerning interests in matters of this kind and that you conveyed your views to the President."

A letter dated April 25, 1977. "On the assumptions that all of you are willing to try something to get our many friends out of jail, I submit the following very hurriedly drafted telegram to be sent. Since the ROA anniversary comes early in March and May, time is of the essence, so please call me with any suggested revisions. Once we agree on the English version, I hope that it can be put into proper French. I assume that you all recognize my reference to a long struggle for justice and so forth to be rhetorical. S. E. Ahmed, Sekou Toure, Conakry, Guinea. We the undersigned, former U.S. ambassadors to Guinea and Assistant Secretary of State to Africa, long-time friends of your country and the people of Guinea recalling your long struggle for justice and the rights of man, do urge you to consider an amnesty for those still in prison

that they may return to their families. We suggest that such an action would be a welcome gesture in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the ROA. John Morrow, William Attwood, James Loeb, Robinson McIlvaine, Joseph Palmer.”

The sequel was a document presented to the United Nations by the International Day for Human Rights, a 300-page document -- still I believe the date 1977. The document concerned widespread illegal arrests, torture, starvation, murder of political prisoners under President Sekou Toure’s regime. The report was signed by four former United States ambassadors to Guinea, including William Attwood, publisher of Newsday.

Not wishing to close on this tragic note, just a few observations about Africa. Let’s not forget that the United States national policy has been to promote the self-determination of people. We are reminded often that America may be considered the original anti-colonial people, and this country has been in the vanguard for at least a half century in helping people achieve their national independence. It is very easy to forget that Africa and colonialism, with its race and class discrimination, made Africans keenly aware that they were objects of inferiority. Many of today’s African leaders are considered hypersensitive and appear to be quick to point out slights due to discrimination. Some of these leaders have been very suspicious of the West and the motives of Western powers. Catapulted from second-class status to new positions of power, not always certain of their new role, some leaders have reacted aggressively. In fact, Westerners have gone so far as to accuse the Africans of being overly arrogant because they seem to wear their newly won mantle of freedom in such a highly assertive fashion. These people don’t understand the African’s position. They explain much of the loud noises and boasting heard in Africa or in the halls of the United Nations have been merely a symptom of the uncertainty and inexperience in the ways of high-level, high-pressured, high-powered diplomacy on the part of certain officials. With this in mind, they might say that one might better understand the shouting of Tshombe -- of a Tshombe who never had a real chance of succeeding in his secession effort. This might help to account for the actions of Jaja Wachuku of Nigeria, one-time self-styled spokesman of the African bloc, who would attack U.S. representative Adlai Stevenson one day and demand from the West the very next day unquestioning support for a seat for Africa on the Security Council, and Economic and Social Councils, two of the most important organs of the United Nations.

Never think for a moment that these leaders were not fully conscious of their power, power derived not only from the fact that they were in control at last of their destiny and had the strong backing of their constituency, but also because of the strategic position vis-a-vis the East and the West. This sense of power or the desire for power helped to promote a feeling of rivalry among some African leaders, not only within the continent itself, but also within the United Nations.

President Toure of Guinea and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana may have talked about the Pan-Africanism and they may have discussed with President Modibo Keita of Mali a Ghana-Guinea-Mali union, but I’ll wager that in the mind of each one was the question, who ultimately was going to be recognized as a real leader of any such formation? Anyone who has lived in Africa has had the opportunity to witness how violently upon the emotions of his faithful followers a leader can play, with the intent of accentuating hero worship. A leader

expects the shouts and adulation of the crowd even though he may make a show of dismissing such plaudits with a mere glance or languid wave of the hand. President Toure, like our present-day opera star, Pavarotti, used to keep a white handkerchief available to acknowledge supporters.

A certain American anthropologist advanced the view that African leadership views the non-literate millions as children, who should be led in a political movement directed and controlled much as one would look after growing children. This is indeed a questionable theory. Whatever the case may be, some of these leaders do consider themselves as the emancipators of their people from colonialism. They feel that they are the guides to a better life. They are looked upon as the fathers and protectors of their people; they act as spokesmen to the rest of the world. The Sekou Toures, the Nkrumahs should not cause us to overlook a Leopold Senghor, recently retired president of Senegal, an intellectual, former professor, poet, philosopher, who expressed his concept of nationalism with noble calm. He should not make us forget the Houphouet-Boigny, able president of the Ivory Coast and former Cabinet member of President de Gaulle's Government, and Hamani Diori, former president of Niger and former important official in the Assembly Nationale, who was put out of office by a coup.

President Tubman of Liberia was looked upon by some of the young African leaders as an elder statesman of Africa. In latter years, President Tubman attempted to place his best representatives in the United Nations, in Washington, and in other strategic and difficult posts. In 1961, for example, one of his most able men was a Liberian Ambassador to America, the Honorable S. Edward Peal, with whom it was my privilege to work in Guinea. Ambassador Peal was greatly respected by all members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea for his ability and sincerity. It is my understanding that he occupied a similar position of esteem in Washington in the diplomatic corps.

President Toure never hesitated to play upon the emotions of the crowd. He made certain, however, to maintain rigid order and strict party discipline. Nkrumah made no effort to dissipate the God myth spread by his followers throughout Ghana. However, the repeated assassination bomb attempts and Nkrumah's reluctance to make public appearances later brought into question that so-called god-like power of this leader, who was removed from office in 1966 during his absence on a trip to China.

Whatever you think and whatever you may want to think about the current crop of African leaders in Africa or in the United Nations, it cannot be denied that these men have introduced a new era. Some of them are going to develop into eminent statesmen. There may be in their ranks at different moments some fools, some demagogues, some fanatics. But let us admit it: similar individuals have appeared already elsewhere on the pages of history. By and large, these men today are helping Africa find its place in the new horizon.

It is my sincere hope, from this time on, it will be possible to find in the ranks of the United States Foreign Service dedicated black men and women who are devoting their lives to the diplomatic service of the United States. This is not to overlook the need for trained personnel in our government, our Peace Corps, in the United Nations, as well as in other international agencies. The problems and issues on the international front reach into the very roots of our

national life and constitute a sweeping challenge for us all. I still firmly believe that it is possible for America to contribute to the image of willingness to try to understand and to be of genuine assistance to all people who are striving to help themselves in the difficult struggle against poverty, disease, inertia, illiteracy, and despair. Some while back, I said if there were time, I would give a footnote on the United Nations. Now, do you think that would be...?

Q: Today is May 12, 1981. Dr. Morrow, last night when we were talking about President Toure's visit to America, you discussed that at great length. I understand there are some things you'd like to add.

MORROW: Thank you very much. I already indicated that I had to get to Washington before the trip started.

Q: Why?

MORROW: Well, I'd been scheduled to arrive in Washington several days ahead of the Guinean delegation to make sure that there were no loose ends to mar President Toure's official visit. And in the midst of last-minute preparations for the trip, I received word from Washington that an official from the International Cooperation Administration was to arrive in Conakry the next day to begin negotiations with Guinean authorities on the Standard Bilateral Agreement. For more than three and one-half months, despite repeated queries, we had remained in the dark concerning aid for Guinea. Now, four days before my departure date of October 18th, word had come of the imminent arrival of an aid official.

I knew the Guineans well enough to realize that they were going to be extremely suspicious about any effort to negotiate an agreement so close to their visit to America. They could easily believe that I had deliberately ... been deliberately deceptive in not letting them know in advance that my country contemplated approaching their government concerning an aid agreement. I was aware, too, that the officials with whom we had to deal were making their own preparations for the seven-nation tour with President Toure. I thought that the timing of the arrival of the Washington official was extremely bad.

The official arrived the next day and we spent the morning going over details of the agreement which I was to present to President Toure that afternoon. I stated very emphatically my objections to the timing and the purpose to his visit. After reading through the statement, which I was seeing for the first time, I warned that the Guineans were not going to be willing to sign it.

The official felt that I was unduly pessimistic and said that the favorable atmosphere surrounding the Toure visit to America ensured the success of these negotiations. I replied that President Toure was willing to be more interested in learning whether the United States was supplying a plane to transport the Guinean delegation to Washington than in discussing the details of an agreement at this time. I assured the official that nobody wanted to have an effective working agreement with the Guinean Government more than I did and I pledged to do my utmost to achieve one, despite my misgivings.

The ICA official, my acting deputy, and I met with President Toure at the Présidence that afternoon. After presenting my colleagues, I thanked the President for receiving us at such a short notice. I outlined the nature of the proposed bilateral agreement and succeeded in getting Toure to agree to appoint a working party to explore details. I requested a meeting the next day, Saturday, since my departure was scheduled for Sunday. Toure indicated that the ministers participating in the meeting would not be available until Monday. He concluded the interview in his usual fashion by saying, “d’accord en principe,” which meant simply that he had heard our propositions and the interview had come to an end.

The ICA official seemed very elated as we left the President’s office and when we reached the chancery, he wanted to send word to Washington that Toure had agreed in principle to the terms of the agreement. I told him that I could not sign such a message because it would give Washington the wrong impression. He reminded me that Toure had said “d’accord en principe.” I said that the Guinean President used this expression frequently in his conversations with his ministers and with members of the diplomatic corps and that it was merely a polite acknowledgment that the President had been listening. Toure would not state any opinion on an agreement until it had been examined carefully by his advisors. I also ventured to say that the moment Toure’s advisors read the clause pertaining to certain privileges for technicians, they would reject the whole agreement.

It was fortunate that the original message which the ICA official wanted to send to his agency never left the chancery. Negotiations started on Monday, October 19, 1959, came abruptly to a halt the following day when Guinean officials made it clear that their Government would accept no agreement which encroached upon their national sovereignty. They declared that they had granted no special privilege to the Russians, Czechoslovakians, or Polish technicians and they had no intention of extending special privileges to American technicians. The American official was very much upset over the Guinean Government.

When the word came through in Washington about the breakdown in negotiations in Conakry I was not the least bit surprised. I was called into a hastily arranged meeting with State Department and ICA officials. An ICA man told me that I would have to return to Guinea and educate the Guineans on the ways of doing business with the United States. I asked him to suggest specifically how one educated the officials of a foreign country who charged that the insistence upon special privileges for non-diplomatic personnel encroached on their national sovereignty and felt that any pressure tactics constituted an insult to African dignity. The official in question, who up to this point had been quite vociferous and somewhat arrogant in tone and bearing, became silent.

I left that meeting and I left Washington with a feeling of deep frustration and bewilderment at the attitude of some of the officials in the International Cooperation Administration toward Guinea in particular and Africa in general. Among other things, I had detected an attitude that seemed to be: “Guinea will either sign this agreement or else!” I got the impression that these officials did not particularly care whether Guinea received aid or not. There seemed to be a complete unawareness of the ferment on the African scene and of the fact that all Asia, as well as Africa, was scrutinizing the United States-Guinean relationship to discover whether the United States had placed a new priority on Africa and at last was formulating policies that

were responsive to African realities.

To be perfectly frank about it, during my entire tour of duty in Guinea, I encountered only five ICA men who showed the understanding, technical expertise and empathy absolutely essential for dealing with the oftentimes sensitive officials of developing nations. I can remember the names of four of these men: Jack Hood Vaughn, Marc Gordon, Bill Freeman, and John Canning. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the name of the fifth, but I do remember that he spoke with a foreign accent and was quite perceptive.

Jack Vaughn, who later left ICA -- the best thing he could ever have done -- to go back to the Peace Corps, and later became Ambassador to Panama, Assistant Secretary of State for Indian-American Affairs, and Director of the Peace Corps, was particularly effective during his visit to Guinea, even though the Guineans did not sign the agreement at that time. It was always my regret that the ICA was unwilling to give Vaughn the rank or authority to exercise his good judgment in negotiations with the Guineans. With the necessary authorization from Washington, which we could not get, and with Vaughn and myself working as a team, I believe we could have broken that particular aid impasse many months earlier.

I do not wish to convey the impression that I felt bitter toward the ICA. I was well aware that there were others within its ranks during the period in question who realized how important it was to prove to emerging African nations the validity of the often-expressed U.S. commitment to help them develop economically and politically while maintaining their sovereignty. Unfortunately, these knowledgeable individuals lacked the authority to put their ideas into action. Certainly the attempt to secure American technicians for countries like Guinea was a very ticklish and difficult matter. Those who had the desired skill and a speaking knowledge of French were usually reluctant to leave the United States to serve overseas for a twelve- or twenty-four month period. Furthermore, the conditions under which they might have to work and live in some areas raised questions about health hazards as well as creature comforts.

I can well understand why the ICA felt obliged to seek the very best possible conditions, including diplomatic immunities, for all its personnel. It is a fact, however, that other Americans not under ICA jurisdiction were recruited to work directly for the Guinean Government by the African-American Institute. The vast differences in pay and perquisites created an unfortunate atmosphere among those Americans and others living under better conditions. Those who experienced difficulties in getting promised compensation or housing, or who ran afoul of customs because of an unwillingness to pay unexpected duties, were not in the best frame of mind to perform their assigned task.

A Guinean official at the Education Ministry summed up the situation by saying that the only people who complained constantly about their working conditions were the Americans. He contrasted their attitude with that of the Russians, Czechoslovakians and East Germans, who supposedly accepted, without question, the conditions in struggling Guinea. What this official ignored or did not wish to acknowledge was that the Soviet, Czechoslovakian and East German technicians had to carry out orders that came from above. American technicians were free to stay or leave, and several did leave without giving notice.

Fortunately for our standing abroad, the Peace Corps later proved conclusively that Americans could go into any country in the world without deep freezers, rugs, and other outward signs of modern civilization and perform as effectively as people from any other country. Peace Corps members did much to remove the idea that Americans always clamor for special privileges and complain about the disgracefully low level of foreign culture and civilization. In fact, the excellent volunteer group of students known as Operation Crossroads, sponsored by Rev. James Robinson of New York and chaperoned in Guinea in the summer of 1960 by the Rev. William Coffin, Yale University chaplain, really paved the way for the Peace Corps in Africa.

I did wonder at times, however, what agency actually exerted the most influence on the foreign policy of the United States. It often appeared to me that the ICA, responsible for the outlay of huge sums throughout the world, was making the State Department play second fiddle in decision making. This might not have been true of American dealings elsewhere in the world, but it seemed to be the case, at least as long as I was in Guinea.

And to digress for just a moment, I mentioned Rev. Robinson's group and the fact that Rev. William Coffin was the chaperone or the guidance counselor, if you will, during that period in Guinea. I must say that Bill Coffin did a most effective job in gaining rapport between the Guineans and his group. And not only Coffin; there was a young lady, Marie Gadsden, who came to teach English, who also did an excellent job in establishing rapport as well as teaching English to the Guineans and others who were interested in trying to learn that language. And the pity is that we couldn't have had more Bill Coffins, and more Marie Gadsdens coming into a situation as difficult as the Guinean situation was.

Q: How long did they stay there?

MORROW: The Peace Corps was there for the summer and Dr. Gadsden had a somewhat extended stay in Guinea. And the interesting thing about it is at first there was great suspicion about this group that had come there to work, not to study, but to work. And the Guineans probably placed their most astute, shall we say, individuals among this group and discovered that some of those youngsters didn't even seem to know too much about even United States politics and the American Government. And when they discovered that they felt more at ease because they decided, well, these folks are here on the level; they are not here to spy and there was excellent rapport between the Guinean youth and the American youth.

It was a mixed group, but predominantly a white group. There were some American blacks in the group and they certainly did an excellent job in proving to the Guineans that there were some genuine Americans who really were concerned and really wanted to help. Thank God they showed up at that time in history.

Q: What kind of work did they do?

MORROW: The work consisted of trying to help construct schools. As a matter of fact, it was all sort of laboring work, the same type of thing that I did when I went to France in the summer of 1947 and went down to a place called Chambon to help dig ditches for a foundation for what was to be a schoolhouse and also for surrounding buildings. These people were actually doing

laboring work, manual labor, anything which was necessary for the cause. It was most interesting to see them. By and large college students, and some, I'm sure, who had never done any strenuous kind of work before nevertheless threw themselves into this activity.

Q: Did they live with the people of the country?

MORROW: ...Yes.

Q: ...in the private homes?

MORROW: ... in the areas, that's correct as I understand it.

Q: In the private homes.

MORROW: That's what I understand. Not like always in a little group or cluster, which is the good old American way.

Q: ...uhum...

MORROW: Shocked the Guineans completely, completely ... and they ate the food and whatever.

Q: And that was the forerunner of the Peace Corps?

MORROW: In my estimation, the success that Coffin and Rev. Robinson had in this venture in Guinea, sold the bill of goods to the people of the United States who felt it never would work. When I heard about it, I got very excited and because I had such great respect for Rev. Robinson, having known him before I ever went to Africa, I definitely wanted to give this group a chance. But there were some people back in Washington who had great misgivings about what might happen to the group, with its dire consequences.

Q: What were the speculations about it?

MORROW: Well, first their speculation was that they would only be there two or three days and be thrown out ... But that didn't happen to them (laughs). But I should mention at this point it did happen several years later in connection with a Peace Corps group, but by then, as I've indicated previously, the conditions had changed, altered greatly.

And then they felt some might suffer injury; some people have very odd ideas about Africa. I had mentioned it before, but I can recall a man in one of the banks in New Jersey, I won't mention the name of the bank or the man, who vehemently suggested to me that under no circumstances should I take my family with me to Guinea. And yet by having taken my family, that was the thing that gave the Guineans confidence that, gee, these people must be on the level; they're all here in a group. I'm not saying, you know, the myth about wild animals, I never saw any stalking around in (laughs) ... in throughout the terrain of Guinea.

Q: That group of Peace Corps workers that were thrown out...

MORROW: That's, that's after my ... after I was there. And the circumstances, of course, were extremely difficult at that point, because it seems that a plane bearing some Guinean officials had been stopped in Ghana and they had been taken off, literally seized, and the accusation was that the United States was behind this and that's the reason why McIlvaine was arrested. I just mentioned merely at one point that he had been arrested -- I forgot the date I gave you -- and was released about twenty-four hours later after strenuous negotiations with Washington.

The truth is that the Guineans felt that the Americans had something to do with a plot which embarrassed their officials, and, actually, nobody knew anything about it. McIlvaine was a new person arriving on the scene and he was the victim of circumstances.

The situation at the house -- I didn't go into detail -- was quite a scary one for his wife and children, however, because they were out there alone in Guinea, since McIlvaine was under arrest, when this mob descended on the Residence where we had once lived. But one difference is that after we had departed they had put a second floor on, so it was a much larger Residence. And, fortunately, some militia people and the cook and several other folks were able to keep the mob from doing injury to Mrs. McIlvaine and her children; otherwise, that would have been a very tragic situation.

When we were there, there was never any indication of that. Several of the residences were broken in and pilfered; nobody ever touched our residence. It wasn't because we could say we had wonderful guardians, because the guards on duty had no bullets for their rifles and they asked me would I please go and ask the President or go over to the camp to get them some bullets. I actually made the trip but I wasn't successful in getting them.

I will say that our guardian had a machete, a very trusty weapon, and I discovered that when I had to make this trip from Africa to the United States, and left my wife and children there, this guardian put a cot at the gate and slept there every night with his machete. This is what I was told by the soldiers when I came back. Two soldiers were on guard but the guardian decided that his presence was very necessary, and I thought that was extremely loyal ... loyal service on the part of an individual.

Q: I agree. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

MORROW: Maybe a point or so about the agreements, as I have brought it up that the negotiations had broken down. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the Guinean Government remained unwilling to sign the standard ICA agreement, in the form originally presented in the fall of 1959.

Q: What form was it in? Was that the one presented originally...?

MORROW: Originally, yes, asking for all of the special treatment -- technicians. The document signed finally by the Minister of Plan, Keita, and myself in Conakry on September 30, 1960, was the outgrowth of prolonged and frustrating negotiations in Washington as well as in

Conakry. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Guinean reporters and one French reporter and photographer. A release concerning the agreement appeared in the Agence Guinéenne de Presse but no publicity was given it in America until an enterprising reporter of the New York Times, Dana Adam Schmidt, got word of it a month or so later. And as a result of his prodding, a spokesman for the State Department ICA admitted that a bilateral agreement had been signed.

Q: Why do you think this?

MORROW: I never did understand this reluctance to admit that the agreement had finally been concluded, and the reluctance probably lay in the fact that they had to water down the section on special privileges for technicians and come across with an agreement which much more resembled a very sensible agreement that the British had always had in operation in Guinea and had thus been successful without all of this frustration. I think that there was anger and pique and embarrassment on the part of ICA that they had lost the battle, and a feeling that the blacks, and when I say the blacks I'm talking about the Ambassador from America as well as the Guineans, had won the battle.

The bilateral agreement was considered very significant by members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea, who had come to believe that the United States and Guinea would never reach a meeting of minds. It was considered so significant by the Soviet Union that it called Ambassador Solod home two days later. When the Soviet Ambassador returned to Guinea, it was announced that Soviet engineers were to arrive soon to begin work on the railroad connecting Conakry and Kankan. The Soviet authorities did not know, but I had reason to believe that the agreement between Guinea and the United States would not be implemented during my remaining months of tour of duty in Guinea, and it wasn't. I had hoped that the United States was going to assist in the construction of the Konkouré Dam, not because I wanted Toure to have a prestige project, but because I felt that such a dam was necessary for the further development of industry in Guinea. I felt that Toure was as good a risk as Kwame Nkrumah any day and he was much more forthright. Nkrumah had received American aid for his Volta Dam project and any hope that Toure might have had to strengthen the possibility of American support for the construction of a dam on the Konkouré River to provide electric power, a project already seriously considered by the French, was not realized.

I was frequently asked by visitors in Guinea, official or non-official, what was wrong with relations between the United States and Guinea. I could have answered this question merely by stating that it was invariably a long drawn out process to establish good relations between two such different nations. This would have been dodging the issue. It was closer to the truth when I replied that Africa had not been on the U.S. priority list until fairly recently. I felt that the awareness in U.S. governmental circles of the situation developing in Africa had come as much from development in the United Nations as from reports from African capitals, reports which all too frequently were ignored or were acted upon too late.

In the United Nations there had been a marked increase during 1960-1961 in the number of African nations that had become member states. The articulate delegates from Africa insisted that powerful nations belonging to the United Nations support rather than thwart the role of the U.N. in aiding ... Africa's revolution to achieve success, in as peaceful and just a manner as

possible. The United States was finding it increasingly difficult to secure the support of African and Asian nations for U.N. measures in which it was particularly interested. But nobody seemed to be connecting development at the United Nations with United Nations policy.

I just mentioned in passing having gone from Guinea to the United Nations; what I did not say was that just shortly prior to my arriving there, there had been an uprising in the Security Council on the part of the Black Panthers of New York that had quite frightened the Security Council. When I arrived there and assessed the situation, at one time I let Stevenson and some of his colleagues know that I had been sent there probably to keep the peace. I assured them that there'd be no further uprisings during the time that I was at the U.N. They looked at me quizzically and I said, "You forget that when President Toure came to America he visited New York and made a talk to the people of New York, and that meeting was disturbed because of the fact that a member of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) got up to try to make a speech and was booed down, and the Guinean delegates at first thought that this was some kind of show against their President. And I reassured them, no, this was an American way of showing displeasure of something.

The point I want to make is, though, that Toure and his group were predominantly Muslims and they decided that anybody who had association with Toure must be all right. And since I had spent almost two years (laugh) in Guinea and then had been immediately brought by Kennedy, of another political party, to the U.N., it was to save Stevenson and his group. So this was, of course, said in a joking fashion. But then nobody ever bothered us the whole time that I was out there. There were no disturbances on the part of the people from Harlem in trying to break up proceedings in the United Nations. So there might have been more truth in this than met the eye.

Q: Dr. Morrow, you've given us a very, very interesting picture of your background from a youngster in Hackensack right up to Rutgers and I think it helps. It will help future scholars better understand your work as Ambassador. I'd like to back up to your period of service in the diplomatic service and ask a couple of questions. If you had to go, if you had the offer to go back to Guinea today, how would you feel?

MORROW: In the first place, if I had an offer to go to Guinea or anywhere else, the first demand I would make would be that of selecting my embassy staff. I would not want somebody else to have the prerogative of deciding with whom I would have to work in the particular post, especially if it is known that this is going to be a difficult post. Now how do I go about choosing people? I can't exactly say that at this point, and yet I would have an idea of the kind of person with whom it would be possible to work successfully in a Guinean, let's say, climate and situation. A chap, for example, like young David Korn, who was in the Embassy in Paris in 1958 when I had to spend the summer in Paris because of the fact that I wasn't able to go on to Algeria and to Africa. Korn happened to be a chap with a Ph.D. from a respectable university. But he had a desire and a real intent to become knowledgeable about Africa and Africans. It was not a do-gooder concept, but a desire on the part of a person who realized, if I'm going to be successful in this area or in any other area, I must know the culture, the people, and find out everything that is possible about them and not have preconceived attitudes and ideas as many Americans might have.

Another thing. I would certainly try to discover, in some fashion, if the person involved, or the people involved, were troubled with stereotypes. Do they have a particular concept as to what a black should be doing? Can a black carry out a position of leadership and responsibility? It would be things of that nature that I would be interested in. As far as color was concerned, I don't care what the person's color might be. It would be advisable to have a mixed staff, not to have all either one color or the other color, if we're going to be representative of America.

Secondly, I would need an assurance from, let's say, the Department of State that the people in Washington were going to pay attention to the information which was sent back to Washington, to pay attention to the requests, to the suggestions; that they would become knowledgeable about the country by coming out as did Senator Symington and Governor Harriman and Senators Church and McGee, who took the trouble, back in the early days, to come out to the Guinean scene to discover firsthand about the complexities and the problems. In their instance, it was no longer necessary for them to conjecture about what a Guinean was or what the situation was. They had met Guineans and they had seen.

This is what I would ask in Washington. If they decided that this was asking too much and we can get somebody who won't be so much trouble to us and be insisting on this thing or that thing, then I would say to the offer, go to hell! I would not accept. It's as simple as that. Ahm. (Mrs. Morrow speaking).

Now, there is another side to this coin. I'd probably find it extremely difficult to go to Africa at this point, because there're some places in Africa ... because of being disillusioned by the folks who have been in positions of leadership. They have talked to the world about independence, freedom, democracy, the rights of the individual, the inherent right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. All these high-sounding terms, when it has come down to the realities, seemingly, it has been a situation in which power has done something to the individual who is in the place of leadership. I'm not going to get specific in naming names, but all one has to do is to look over what has happened in Africa for the last ten years, five years, three years, if you please, two years, to see what kind of treatment the people have received from the people in places of leadership.

Take a look at the coups which have been effected in the various countries. Take a look at the individuals who have been behind these attempts, successful in many instances, to overthrow the government. Make an assessment to find out whether the folks who had taken over power are treating their fellow countrymen any better than the individual who has been put out of office, and you will discover that, in most instances, the people don't seem to be any better off.

So it raises a question as far as diplomacy is concerned. How are you going to deal with the realities which exist in many of the ... not just the African countries, but Latin American countries, for example, at this point in history? It's a real big question. It's a riddle, as a matter of fact. Now, I haven't even taken up the question of terrorism, which is a new factor, which apparently hangs over the head of all people, not just chiefs of mission, but anybody, a secretary, or whatever the situation might be in the Embassy, or even in industry. The new look, of course, is the question of terrorism. There's no point in my trying to go into that now. Nobody has found an answer to that at this time.

One thing I must say would not be fear that would be a deterrent, because if I had listened to the horror stories which I heard, for example, in 1959, when it was known that I was going to Africa, and when I was being warned, do not under any circumstances take my children and wife with me, if I had been motivated by fear, I would never have put foot on the African continent.

Q: Dr. Morrow, you talked a good deal about some of the unpleasant things, and I think it's pretty clear that the complot was one of the things that was most unpleasant about your stay in Guinea. What were your fondest memories? What are they?

MORROW: Fondest memories? For example, coming down out of the air in a plane, circling for the first time a strange airfield; descending and being met with music, with an army detachment standing at attention; having the privilege, for the first time in one's life, to review a group of black soldiers standing very erect, all correct, spit-and-polish, and realizing, here we are in Africa about to go on a new venture; riding in a car, all along the way people shouting words of welcome. I've already mentioned this, but when you say fond memories, it will always stick with me. And you can hear some of the things that were being said and you hoped that this greeting meant you should be successful in this effort here in this tour of duty. Riding up to a political convention in somewhat antiquated railroad cars along with members of the Guinea Government; riding along as an invited guest to the political convention; participating in the banter and exchanges on an equal level, and then of course, getting finally to Kankan and hearing the President give a five-hour speech during which, of course, one did not leave the arena (laughs) and (laughs some more)...

On being invited to go up to a place called Fria. This was a consortium that involved European companies and Olin Mathieson, an American company. The American company owned about, I think, 45% of the venture. However, the members of the Guinean Government decided to make an inspection tour of this Fria plant, and when I got to the Présidence that morning for the departure, we were assigned to various cars. I looked around and didn't see any other members of the diplomatic corps. I became very, very puzzled. How could this be a trip with the President and all the Ministers going to Fria with just me along? Where are all the other people? I decided that they would come later on in their own cars, but this was a mistake. I had found out that I was the only outside guest.

One of the highlights of this trip was not just visiting this huge consortium of Fria where bauxite or mined bauxite was changed into aluminum -- this was one of the great resources of Guinea, besides the fact that there were some diamonds and other assets.

But getting back to this trip to Fria. As we moved around in the crowd, which, of course, was there and everywhere to greet and applaud every little incident, a little time later the President made it a point to relate in my presence what was going on. He indicated that he had been asked by a number of the young women in the area of Fria, who was this new young member of the Guinea Government? And when he asked which one do you mean, they had pointed to the American Ambassador. "And they decided," said President Toure, "that you are one of us. And they also decided that you were a Foulah." Well, now I admit that the Foulahs were very well educated people. But there was a little problem. A number of the Foulahs had resisted getting rid

of their chiefs and also had resisted the ascension of President Toure. There would have been a time in Guinea when I would not have wished to have been mistaken for a Foulah. However, at this point it was a big joke.

On the other side of this is the fact that there was a chap named Achkar Marof, who was a Guinean representative to the United Nations. When he came back to Guinea some time later and went into the interior with his name and appearance, although he was somewhat shorter than I, he was mistaken for the American Ambassador. So President Toure used to say that we were the exchange: that I was the American who had become the Guinean and Marof was the Guinean who had become the American (laughs).

Among the memories would be, for example, some of the visits to the Présidence as, for example, on one occasion when we were downstairs waiting for President Toure to come down and there were present the Soviet Ambassador, Czechoslovakian, the United Arab Republic and from the Israeli Republic and others, and I made the statement, in French, that we are always standing around waiting like the people who open the doors: ushers, hoissiers. I'm sure this was later reported to the President by someone in the Soviet delegation. But at that point in time I was disgusted, impatient. Everybody agreed that that's exactly what we were. We were waiting around like the people who waited at the door for Toure and his group to make up their minds when they will get ready to go.

Another instance would be, for example, when we were getting ready to take a trip once again to the political convention in Kankan, and this time a bus was being provided by the Guinean Government. The problem is that this was the bus that had been constructed in Czechoslovakia, and it had no provisions for air conditioning. So therefore it was an extremely uncomfortable, stuffy situation. Here we are, the members of the diplomatic corps in this bus, waiting to go off, and the Soviet Ambassador Solod had yet to arrive. I saw him getting into his car, with a chauffeur, and called out to him and said, "Come on over here and join the rest of the proletarians." There was silence and then a roar, with the Guineans and the other members of the diplomatic corps all laughing and the Russian Ambassador shamefacedly walking over and getting in the car. It became obvious that he had not intended to ride in that hot stuffy -- I mean Czechoslovakian bus -- with the rest of the proletarians.

Some things at this point might escape me. For example, one occasion was the opportunity of going to visit the Ivory Coast. That's the only time, the little time off that my wife and I had during the whole period of time in Guinea, when the Chiefs of Mission, for example, in Africa met in Tangier. This was sponsored by the Department of State, so it was possible to get together to compare notes. And I can recall, for example, after being called upon to make remarks, everybody, of course, was interested in the Guinean situation. I came up with the expression that hell hath no fury like a Frenchman scorned. Now some of the Francophiles, I believe, from the Department of State did not particularly appreciate that appraisal. But I had made it because of the fact that the French apparently were getting back the report, back in Paris, that I was holding the French at arm's length. That's very easily explained. When we first went into Guinea, we were invited to a dinner by the French chargé d'affaires, Siraud. All the people in the Embassy staff felt that I should accept the invitation. I declined it. I wrote and explained to Siraud that I had not yet had a chance to meet with the Guinean Minister. I know that the Guineans already

felt that we were taking instructions from him, the French.

Little did I know that actually this was an accusation that was going to be leveled by Ambassador Telli Diallo, who found out that we had stopped in Paris on the way to Guinea. But that had only been a matter of transportation, and I had not met any French, because a luncheon that was going to be planned by Ambassador Amory Houghton, which would involve some people from Quai d'Orsay, was cancelled under the feeling that I should have no meeting with any French before arriving in Guinea. This turned out to be in vain since the Guineans eventually decided, well, we were taking dictates from the French.

But the reason why I used the expression of the Frenchman's scorn is merely because of the fact that this was an erroneous report being sent back saying, "France is being held at arm's length." It paid off by having refused that invitation, because later on we had other invitations that could be exchanged. And at that point, the Guineans decided, well, I guess maybe the American is on the level and he is following his own route in this country and not somebody else's.

What else could I say? During the trip to America, when we would go to various cities and there would be receptions, there were these two other Guineans (even though most Muslims do not) who would drink alcohol. There were at least these two Ministers who would always be around near me when the cocktails were served; and I discovered that they would be taking cocktails along with me. Of course, President Toure finally named us the three musketeers (laughter), yet nobody raised any religious questions. But it just seemed a bit of a coincidence that every time I would have a drink, these two also seemed to have one (laughs) ... And I got after them and said: "That's a long ways away from orange juice or fruit juice." And they would merely laugh but continued to take their cocktails.

It's a few memories, you know, like that, which makes one feel well disposed toward a situation.

I remember, for example, the old man who carved from ivory the face that they call "The Old Man's Face." To see the workmanship of this individual was something to behold. And incidentally, although one is not supposed to accept any gifts, I got permission from the Department of State to accept the gift that was given to me by President Toure, which was one of these ivory casts of what was known as "The Old Man's Face."

Well, I think at this point, that just about covers it.

Q: Looking at your diplomatic service in total, what did you like most about the total experience? That's going beyond Guinea itself; the total picture. What did you like most about this experience?

MORROW: The thing I liked most about the experience was the feeling of being involved in something that was really vital and something that really counted, and being one of the people who might be making a little dent towards having better relations between my country, America, and other nations of the world. This is the thing that gave motivation; this is the thing that was the challenge; and this is what would keep one going on sometimes even though there was a great deal of frustration and things did not always seem to turn out the way one wanted. And if I

had to do it all over again, I would like very much to have had the experience of serving in such a capacity for the Department of State.

Now one footnote: In the case of my son, and this I never said to him directly, or said, well, I never said to him directly, "I hope you don't go into the Department of State." I made that statement to my wife about the fact that, with his youth, with his intelligence and the fact that he would always be asking questions and so on, he would probably end up in some post in Siberia. But actually, I said to my son, "If you're thinking about going into the Department of State, my suggestion to you is, do like your old man; start at the top (laughs) and work your way down."

Yes, I think it's a wonderful thing to have had the opportunity to serve in the capacities in which I did serve.

Q: Now forgive me if I turn the coin and say, of that total diplomatic service, of the full thing, what other things did you like least about it?

MORROW: The things I liked least about it were the phoniness, hypocrisy, the lying, and backstabbing, the selfishness, the desire for self-advancement, even if it's at the expense of one's so-called colleague; the lack of willingness to answer questions in a straightforward and forthright manner for fear it might somehow or another affect one's personal personnel report, and this might keep somebody from going up in the ranks. I think it's a pity if you have a service which gets to the point where people feel they cannot be honest; where people might even feel they must sometimes withhold important necessary information or withhold information that they ... the importance of which they are unaware, but would be very important somewhere else, as if piecing together pieces of a puzzle. It's too bad if a system will promote this kind of attitude, because it's very detrimental. And particularly if people are in crises posts, you have to have some kind of esprit de corps. You have to feel that you can trust the person with whom you must deal, and that when you are told or given information, they are trying to tell you as much as they actually know how.

I think that the concept of the elite element in the Department of State should be eliminated, if possible. The old school tie which makes it ... which means that only unless one comes from a certain educational institution or from a certain background should one become a Chief of Mission or a Chargé de Affaires, or Ambassador, or, you name it. So on that side of the coin, these, I think, are some of the things that at this point strike me as being most unfavorable in the ambience of the Department of State experience.

Q: If you were addressing a group of young people interested in entering the Foreign Service, what advice would you give?

MORROW: First of all, I would say, be sure that you are applying yourself to your studies in college right now. Whatever you are majoring in, try to do your very best, put your very best foot forward.

Secondly, I would say, and do not accuse me of having a vested interest, learn at least one foreign language, preferably two, maybe even three. Even if at this moment you cannot see any

possible use that there might be for this, it will become invaluable for your advancement, if you want to talk in those terms, in the Foreign Service. In fact, it has become so valuable that at the Foreign Service Institute, at this point, there are many languages which are being taught, and this becomes part of the assessment on a person's personnel record.

In the third place, check yourself and see whether you are the kind of individual who can feel comfortable around people and also around people who may not be of the same country, nationality, or race. If you have any problems there, my advice to you, do not go into the Foreign Service. Do you have any problems, for example, about the concept of having to be far, far away from home without the possibility of, say, getting back too frequently? Do you have any qualms in that direction? You don't want to be in the Department of State.

And, finally, because of what's happening throughout the world today, consider seriously, will your temperament take being held as a hostage confronted with the possibility of dying? Thirty-five years ago nobody talked about that when they were thinking about the Department of State. Today, one has to be aware of it, and if you can take this in as all part and parcel of the situation, then it seems to me that you've got a good foot in on the way to the Department of State.

And, finally, how do you fare when you have to confront a group or panel who will be asking you questions and trying to find out from you why you think you could make a contribution to the Department of State?

Be aware that if you pass all the examinations, you have to go before a panel before you're finally taken in. Now, if you can take all these things in stride, you're in.

WILLIAM ATTWOOD
Ambassador
Guinea (1961-1963)

Ambassador William Attwood was born in 1919. He was a political appointee ambassador to Guinea and Kenya. He was interviewed by Leonard Saccio in 1988.

ATTWOOD: Well, I think the President should rely more on the State Department than he does. The trouble with it--at least when I was there, and from what I've observed since--is it's still infatuated with words.

I'll give you an example. When the President of Guinea, came to Washington on a State visit, Kennedy wanted a briefing paper about it. So the State Department produced, literally, a foot and a half of material, all about Guinea and its economy, the president of Guinea's biography. There's no way the President could ever wade through this, or would.

So, I could sense this--since I was an old magazine writer, and knew how to write tight prose--I put it all on one page. I said, here's who he is; what motivates him; these are his problems; this is

probably what he's going to ask you; this is our line right now--about seven or eight points that he had to keep in mind as he talked to him. He's a proud man. He got treated badly by the French. He's turning to us, but he's a little shy about it. That sort of thing.

ATTWOOD: Again, I think the ambassador has a role to play, because a lot of them will react according to how you feel yourself. I'll give you an example. When I got to Guinea, the established policy--back in the Bureau of African Affairs, or the Bureau of European Affairs--was that Guinea was a French problem. The French had dealt with it. The French had pulled out--ostracized it--and the Soviet block had moved in. Those were the days of the cold war. We were all cold warriors in those days--it was the enemy, and we were there to fight it.

Well, the attitude of the State Department was to not do a thing--they are beyond the pale; the French don't want us to anything; therefore we take our cue from the French. Deputy Secretary Summers said, "Well, why let this place turn into an African Cuba?" That was our attitude, though it actually wouldn't have because they were so inefficient that it would have been a disaster. It would have cost the Russians as much as Castro was costing them.

Anyway, our idea was to see what we could do, and find out if these people are neutralists, and bring them around, give them a little aid, and show them that what we do is more practical than what the Russians do. Never mind what the French think.

Well, that created a problem. The embassy was divided. We had one officer who felt we should just let them go down the spout; but the others gradually got to feel that it was more fun to make an effort, and went along with my views. Then I got the President's backing on it. And of course, if you've got the President's backing, then you find that the Assistant Secretaries of State go along, too!

But that's the only time I used my access to the White House, in order to try to change a policy. He was in favor of making an effort there; and not just kissing it off. All ambassadors have that privilege--of going to the President. It's not one that you should abuse, but now and then, when everything comes to a dead stop--and you remember what it was like in AID. If the bureaucrats didn't want something to happen, it didn't happen. Months went by--ships weren't loaded, ships weren't available. Well, one call from the White House and all of a sudden everything got moving. So sometimes you really had to do something like that.

But there's where it's an advantage to be a non-career appointee.

STEPHEN LOW
Guinea and Mali Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1963-1965)

Ambassador Stephen Low was born in Ohio in 1927. He received his bachelor's degree from Yale, and his master's and doctorate from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In addition to Nigeria, Ambassador Low served in Uganda,

Senegal, and Zambia. He was interviewed by Professor I.W. Zartman in 1988.

LOW: Yes. We returned to an assignment in Washington as desk officer for Guinea and Mali affairs. I had already been to Bamako, Mali and was somewhat familiar with it. Before leaving Dakar, I went down to Conakry and spent a week or so down there with the ambassador and the team just looking around. Guinea was the only West African country not included in my responsibilities when I was a labor officer because another labor officer was assigned there.

Q: Why?

LOW: Because of Sekou Toure. The idea was that Toure who had been a trade union leader would be particularly interested in having contact with some one who knew the field well, and, it was felt, wouldn't want him to have responsibilities outside the country. So, the poor guy, who was a very bright, interesting man, was the labor officer for Guinea, period. I was the labor officer for all of French-speaking West Africa except for Guinea. To add insult to injury it was I who was going back to Washington to be the Guinea-Mali desk officer.

Q: You say you spent how long there?

LOW: I think I was there for a week.

Q: What was your impression? We're talking about 1963.

LOW: Guinea was the case of a country that had steadily deteriorated since independence. It showed how far a country which is tightly controlled can sink without there being any significant political reaction. I guess it's somewhat stabilized now, but it continued down for a long time from the point in 1950 when it was the jewel in the French West African crown. Sekou Toure blew hot and cold towards the U.S. and continued to beguile new assistant secretaries of State for African Affairs. He's a very earnest and intelligent man. They would come back convinced that they could work with him. There would be a few months honeymoon and then it would go sour. This pattern repeated itself a number of times. Relations were improving at the time I visited.

Relations were not good with Mali and they got much worse during the time I was on the desk. It was an interesting time. Bob Pelletreau, my deputy on the desk, and I had a fascinating two years working together. But in those days, the sixth floor didn't really want to be bothered that much by these small countries, particularly the unfriendly ones, as both Guinea and Mali were. The initiatives often came from desk officers like us on the fourth floor. The question really was, how unfriendly could a country be and still continue to receive U.S. economic assistance? Our basic philosophy was that this was economic assistance and it was in our interest that the economies of these countries grow, whatever kind of government was in power. Our interests would best be served if we could establish a long-term trusting relationship or at least a long-term helpful relationship. But there was obviously a limit to that. To what degree could a government consciously lead opposition to American policies around the world and continue to receive aid? Bob and I reached the point where we decided that we just couldn't recommend continuation of the significant level of aid the U.S. was giving. We went up with recommendations, accepted at our office director's level and then by the assistant secretary, that we should be a little less

forthcoming in the level of aid and only approve small projects which were obviously in everybody's interest. We cut back significantly on assistance level. Modibo Keita was president of Mali in that period; it was a difficult time.

Q: You must have had screams and yells from our embassies? Had they reached their limit, too?

LOW: It's interesting that we have always had extraordinarily able representation in Bamako, Mali. I've never quite understood why that should be. Number one, morale was always enormously high. The Malians may have had difficult leadership at that point, but as a people, they are hard-working, straightforward, attractive, and interesting. The embassy people and the diplomatic corps, in the early years, were living in one hotel. The dining room would have people from the Bloc seated on one side and from the western countries on the other side. They would pass in line. It was really quite an extraordinary thing. But our embassy people were able and tough-minded. They were not clientists pleading the cause of their country of assignment. Bill Handley had just become ambassador. They recognized and agreed that there was a limit to what we should be doing in the face of leadership that appeared to go out of its way to oppose U.S. positions all over the world.

Q: You were there from 1963 until 1965. Was Soapy Williams there?

LOW: He was the assistant secretary. Wayne Fredericks, an experienced and committed friend of Africa, was his deputy. Soapy was always a lively person to be dealing with. Bill Trimble was first the West Africa office director and then deputy assistant secretary. Trimble was an extraordinary man if a little old fashioned. I remember my first meeting with him. He warned me about two things - never put classified documents in the drawers of your desk, and never use the word "feel" to mean think or believe. But he knew how to make decisions and take responsibility. He kept the Bureau going when he moved up to be deputy assistant secretary. While the others talked he moved things along. Leon Dorros, one of the ablest people I worked with in the Foreign Service, served as Trimble's deputy office director and then took over when Trimble moved upstairs. So at the working levels there were good people. Leon went to Greece where he was Henry Tasca's DCM.

Q: He was basically a Europeanist.

LOW: Well, he had been an ambassador in Cambodia. He certainly wasn't an Africanist. But he had been around a long time. He was a clean desk man. You went in and laid a case out. He said "Yes" or "No." If you sent him a paper, it was through and up or back within a day. He facilitated movement rather than obstructing it. He would often just say yes to things that would amaze us. We would wonder what Soapy would think but he would say, "Don't worry about Soapy. I'll take care of that." And away we would go. He got more work done than the other two combined.

Q: What about Soapy Williams?

LOW: Ah, fun. The thing I guess most of us remember are the square dances. He would say, "We're going to invite the diplomatic corps for square dancing and all the desk officers are to be present." He would be the caller. Here were all these berobed, dignified ambassadors being

directed by the Assistant Secretary to "Allemande left in the corners all; swing your partner right..." Soapy was barking it out and they were doing their best to follow. I had a good time, but I always wondered whether they really enjoyed this kind of thing. It would have been fine if Soapy hadn't been the caller. Soapy featured himself as a French speaker which often horrified us because his French was atrocious and he insisted on speaking it, not just for pleasantries, but during important and sometimes delicate conversations with a foreign diplomats. We knew that all kinds of misunderstandings were being built up, but in the end I suppose no great damage was done. He didn't concern himself much with our part of West Africa. He focused primarily on Rhodesia and a few other questions. We didn't have a great deal of contact with him.

Q: What was the problem with Sekou Toure? How was he unfriendly at this particular time?

LOW: During the time I was involved our relations were comparatively easy. Sekou had just done us a great favor when he denied the Russians the right to resupply Cuba from Guinean air bases. Soapy was one of those assistant secretaries who was convinced that Sekou meant well, so our relations with Guinea were really improving. They had been pretty low. There was some hope that Sekou would turn around. He didn't do it, but at this point, he was much more cooperative. It was the Malians who were being more difficult.

Q: What were the Malians doing?

LOW: At the UN, they would not only vote against us, but they would organize opposition to us on issues like Puerto Rico which the Malians didn't really know much about. It looked very much like deliberate provocation. At the Non-Aligned meetings, they took very aggressive leadership roles condemning and attacking United States positions around the world.

Q: What did we see as American interests in those two places at that time?

LOW: I think it was a generalized interest. Since they were both prominent leaders in the Non-Aligned movement, they were countries of some influence around the world. It's a derivative interest in the sense that they could help make our relations better or worse with countries that did matter. Some years later, Chet Crocker, then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, put it well by saying that the policies we follow towards Rhodesia and South Africa are not only important in themselves, but they affect our relations with everybody else. Guinea and Mali were leaders in Africa. Other African heads of state were more friendly, but less aggressive, less outspoken, less influential, and followed their lead. They set a tone not just in Africa, but worldwide that was hostile to American policies. That's something you try to avoid. So, it was the leadership role they played in Third World councils that was the most important so far as the United States was concerned.

Q: What about Sekou Toure dealing internally in his country?

LOW: It was an authoritarian country in which the standard for human rights and treatment of the individual was not very high. A good example was what happened to the Guinean ambassador to the United States, Bangoura, an extraordinarily competent diplomat who served his country loyally and well. He didn't speak much English, but he was a large, forceful, hard-working man

who communicated well and got all over the city. He knew people on the Hill, in the Pentagon, and throughout the bureaucracy, and was constantly moving to advance Guinea's interests, particularly in the field of bauxite. Guinea was considered to have the free world's largest reserves of bauxite which were being mined by the giant producer Aluminium Limited of Canada which was probably beneficially owned by U.S. citizens. The Guineans seized the operation and turned it over to a very small American producer, Harvey Aluminum. Everyone in Washington seemed involved on one side or the other. I would get calls from all kinds of people asking me what was going on and threatening dire action if the Department didn't do something one way or the other. Members of Congress were being pressed from both sides. We were in the delicate position of needing to insure that the nationalization of Aluminium Limited in Guinea was done with adequate compensation but it was an American firm that was taking it over. And our AID program was very much involved. Bangoura would come into the Department and talk to the associate director of AID for Africa, Robertson, a wonderful, able man. We would spend hours with him. I would go back to my office and within an hour, I would get a call from the office of one member of Congress or another saying, "I understand you told Bangoura said you said such and such this morning. Please explain how you can take that position." Though he gave us fits, you had to admire and enjoy him. He represented his country skillfully, way above the level one would expect from a small recently independent nation. My wife and I had gotten to know him and his wife and many children somewhat. He was recalled by Toure and, I believe, played a role in Guinean politics briefly and then disappeared. I later learned that he had been killed.

Q: Was this Sekou Toure's way of operating?

LOW: I don't know the details of what happened to him, but whatever happened, it was a great tragedy for Guinea. We managed to find our way through the aluminum problem. We spent many, many hours on it.

Q: As you were dealing, in a way, it sounds like as a dual desk or country officer, you were given quite a bit of leeway.

LOW: Absolutely. As long as I kept Leon Dorros apprised of where we were and what we were doing, he essentially let me deal with the problem. That's what made it fun. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Q: Did you find International Organizations (IO) intruding on your bailiwick to get these people to shape up as far as the UN votes were concerned?

LOW: No, I don't know why they didn't press us much. I spent more of my time with AID than anyone else. Our relations with AID were very close and quite good. The AID desk was ably led. We would be in contact three or four times a day. It was a good team.

Q: With AID, you were there during a period when you were trying to bring down our involvement there in Mali. Was there general agreement with AID to be able to do this?

LOW: I don't have a clear recollection, but I certainly don't recall significant foot dragging on their part. I think they were willing to accept it. There were no dramatic statements; it was just a

quiet, general reduction. I think they were willing to go along with it, and I believe the Malians got the point.

Q: Just to get a feel for how diplomacy works, you're having Mali, you want to cut down because you're unhappy with their cooperation. Does somebody from Mali come in and say "What the hell are you doing" and you tell them why?

LOW: No. You're working on a case by case basis with AID programs. It's like so many other things. If you keep people apprised of what you're doing and you check with them constantly and you get a team working like this, it goes very smoothly. I knew that both the leadership in State was sympathetic and we kept the leadership of AID apprised. They agreed and so everything went along. It's a matter of getting cooperation over a broad area. When you do that, you get a lot done inside the United States government. We never had a problem on this, that I recall. Later on in my career, I did the same thing with regard to Brazil. Again, there was not a problem.

Q: Did you see in 1963-1965, still early on in African years, an impression of a core of Africanists developing there in the State Department?

LOW: Yes. I think I mentioned the training program. By that time, many of us knew each other. Some years earlier, while we were in Uganda (57 to 59) the State Department had organized two African training programs for people new to the area. Both spent time at Makerere College in Kampala where I got to know most of them. The academic community was very active and we knew many of them fairly well. It was an interesting period. There were some romantic ideas about Africa. In incoming FSO classes a majority would request African assignments. It was a time when that was the place to which people wanted to go. Even President Kennedy was interested. There was less interest in the Johnson period, but still we got a fair amount of attention. Where we ran into problems was with NATO affairs and the European Bureau. When we came up against EUR or East Asia, which was then Far East (FE), we generally lost those battles. The entrenched State Department bureaucracy was prepared to let us have our own way in areas that didn't conflict with their interest, but once that was being impinged on, they challenged us and were almost always supported by the 7th floor (the secretaries of State, his deputies and the White House (National Security Council) staff. If you were dealing with Portuguese Guinea or one of the others and you wanted to complain about the use of NATO equipment against Africans, you didn't get very far. I remember going into Marshall Green's office in Far Eastern affairs on one occasion. I can't remember what the issue was, but I do remember coming out with my tail between my legs because I lost that battle. We didn't have any problems with NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs] until later on, but the established bureaus generally got their way if there was a conflict.

Q: This was 1963-1965, a time of heightened civil rights action in the United States, the African-Americans looking for more social justice. Did this have any reflection from your point of view dealing with Africa in those days?

LOW: Not a great deal. We were pleased at the attention African-Americans were beginning to give to African affairs, but in general they were much more concerned with events in English-speaking Africa than the francophone areas. When it came to putting real pressure in support of

our diplomacy or assistance in Africa the community showed it was primarily interested in domestic issues. Congressman Diggs, the forceful Chairman of the Africa subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee, was perhaps an exception. An African-American congresswoman who was next in line preferred chairmanship of a subcommittee dealing with domestic affairs. You couldn't blame her. She was reflecting the interests of her constituents. It wasn't until Randal Robinson showed how to organize the community to press for South African sanctions during the Reagan years that effective influence was brought to bear.

Q: Was there any cooperation or problems with the French in the areas you were dealing with?

LOW: It was always a prickly relationship. The French in Senegal when I was there didn't really know how to take us and were very suspicious. They pressed the Senegalese to limit our activities. Cooperation between the French and the Senegalese was very close. There were French all through the Senegalese administration. They knew exactly where we were going, what we were doing. Phil Kaiser, our ambassador, had a good relationship with the French ambassador, who was a top-notch man in Senegal. He was a university professor, but I am not sure he represented the real power in France which came from the presidency. Though it was not a period of intense difficulty, most French believed we were trying to replace them in Africa rather than simply have access to African leadership and economies. We believed the French position would be strengthened by loosening their domination. There was certainly no intention to assume responsibility in those countries from the French, but they couldn't believe that, and I think still don't.

Q: What about in Washington? Did France have any effect on our relationship with Guinea and Mali?

LOW: These weren't the countries they were concerned with. They had been kicked out of Guinea completely and the worse our relations were with Guinea, the happier they were, but they really weren't involved. Similarly in Mali, they weren't as concerned as they would have been with Senegal, Ivory Coast, or Gabon, where their interest was greater. As far as I was concerned, we didn't have difficult relations with the French.

Q: Algeria was still going through its time of difficulty. It has a border with Mali.

LOW: Yes, but there is absolutely no convergence on policy matters. The issues were entirely separate. The Africans themselves weren't concerned with the Mediterranean littoral. They were separated by the Sahara and there really was no overlap other than the fact that they would support the Algerian independence movement and so forth.

JAMES MOCERI
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Conakry (1965-1967)

James Mocerri was born and raised in Washington, DC. He entered into the USIA

in 1951. His career included positions in Bari, China (Taiwan), Sudan, and France. Mr. Moceri was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.

MOCERI: Before my departure from Sudan, Dan Oleksiw had informed me that my next assignment would be Conakry. [Laughter] Well, at that point, I had to be told where Conakry was. As a political officer, who eventually was transferred to Conakry from Moscow, said, "This has got to be the end of the world."

I cannot imagine any reasonably seasoned officer, even if only a Class 2, being delighted at the prospect of a tour in Guinea. If ever a listing of countries in terms of priority ranking had been or were ever made up in the Agency, Guinea would certainly have been very close to the bottom of the list. Ruefully I reminded myself of what a personnel officer had said to me when she learned that I had in fact ended up in Florence as my first assignment in the foreign service, "Now that you have Florence, the crown jewel of the foreign service, you'll spend the rest of your career paying for it." I could not help thinking that Fate or Destiny or whatever we mean by such words was exacting a rather heavy price for a tour of duty that had been quite other than a ball. (In five years of service I saw less of Florence as a city to enjoy than I did in a week's sojourn as a Fulbrighter.) I did wonder whether the Conakry assignment might be the last chapter in my exile.

Once again I returned to Washington--this time for nearly six months thanks to mandatory participation in a counter-insurgency seminar and French language training. The seminar, which grew out of Walter Rostow's half-baked legalistic theories on the role of counter-insurgency in global strategy and Robert Kennedy's juvenile propensity for action at any cost, was in my opinion a great waste of time. Nothing in the six-week duration of the seminar persuaded me of its relevance to the mission of USIA. I could not help noticing that Frank Carlucci, a member of my group in the seminar, an officer returning as a hero from the Congo and destined for the highest positions in our government, attended the opening day of the seminar and was not seen again until the last day.

I soon discovered that nobody in Washington seemed to think that a thorough briefing on Guinea in the context of US policy interests or of the commitment of USIA resources was important. Trying to find out anything about Conakry, from anyone in Washington, was really a hopeless task. Reflecting later on my Khartoum and Conakry experiences, I have found myself wondering with some amazement how Washington could send anyone out to a post with so little--if any--briefing on problems and the political significance of the country in terms of the general context of US foreign policy and interests.

Concerning the Sudan, I had been told essentially, "No problems. We're perfectly happy." Yet there were a host of problems, about which we needed to be quite candid with the Sudanese and, perhaps more importantly, ourselves. All our feeble efforts to strengthen Sudanese orientation to the West over the past thirty years and at a cost of millions upon millions have proven, beyond any possible doubt, totally ineffectual. The Sudanese Arabs, as I often pointed out, had constantly to prove to themselves and the Arab world that they were Arabic to the core, 110%, Arabs ne plus ultra. And all this fed by a relentless undercurrent of Islamic fundamentalism.

In the case of Guinea, all I could ascertain was that Guinea was important to our strategic interests because of its immensely rich, high-grade bauxite deposits, which had to be denied to the Soviets. My years in Conakry taught me the absurdity of this contention. Suffice it to say that, when the Guinean government was figuratively hammering the American Embassy and actually placing the American ambassador under house arrest, it was engaging in strenuous and successful negotiations with representatives of an American capitalist consortium for contractual arrangements for the exploitation of its bauxite deposits.

Finally, I arrived in Conakry (July 1965) and, to my astonishment, was met at plane side by Ambassador Loeb. Such was my curious introduction to a strange and occasionally extraordinary "Alice in Wonderland" tour. Loeb, publisher of a newspaper in upstate New York, good friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, prominent member of ADA, had first been appointed ambassador to Peru by the Kennedy Administration. When a military coup took place in Lima and he publicly criticized its leaders, he had to be removed. His loyalty to one aspect of the new posture the Kennedy Administration wanted to promote in its relations with Latin America was rewarded with an appointment as ambassador to Guinea. There had been every expectation that, given his considerable liberal reputation, he would get along famously with Sekou Touré, the President of Guinea.

My very first experience in Guinea was another case of presumption or, more charitably, miscalculation on the part of American officialdom. A private Ohio outfit had wanted to sell, or get rid of, two old DC-3s. They'd been trying to peddle them everywhere in sub-Saharan Africa without success. The company finally enlisted the support of the Kennedy Administration. With that official helping hand they'd finally found an African country which would buckle under...

Q: Who wanted to start an Air Force. [Laughter]

MOCERI: Not quite. The Guinean government really wanted a civil aviation capability. So it purchased these two DC-3s with the blessing and backing of the USG. The planes had been fixed up and cleared by the FAA. The ambassador was just delighted. These planes had just arrived only a few days before I did. The Ambassador was invited--with some of his staff--to take the first ride in one of these planes.

Q: Who was piloting?

MOCERI: I don't remember his name, but I think it was an American piloting the plane. I'll never forget the experience. He asked me to go along. I was new and would get a view of the countryside, and all that. I was reminded that we weren't going to see anything of the countryside after that flight because Americans, except for the Peace Corps, were restricted to the city limits of Conakry. The morning after the flight, the ambassador called me on the phone and said, in high humor, "I want you to feel lucky you're alive." A strong thing, coming from the ambassador. "Well, the crew checked over the plane after we landed back at Conakry. And they found huge cracks in the landing gear." That became my introduction to the never-never world of Conakry.

Another side of that particular equation was that the ambassador seriously had entertained illusions of being a de facto financial advisor to President Touré, indeed was hopeful that an official announcement to that effect would soon be made. Loeb certainly did not know or understand his man. Touré had come up through the labor unions and the French Confederation of Labor. He had mastered all the communist techniques, had organized his party, had come up on top. He had stood up to Charles de Gaulle and been the only West African leader to say, "no" to de Gaulle's proposal for the union of the West African states and continued association with France. In retaliation, he had been left without any technicians to run the country; and all equipment had been rendered, at least temporarily, inoperable.

Well, on the fact of it, it was absurd to think that our ambassador could become the financial advisor to Touré. Touré had begun a correspondence with Kennedy. You know, "Dear John," and "Dear Sekou," and back and forth. [Laughter] And so, Touré thought that, to use a strictly American expression, he was a "soul brother" to John Kennedy. But that didn't mean he was going to take any instruction from a lowly foreign ambassador.

Well, he left.

Q: The ambassador left?

MOCERI: The ambassador left, about two months after my own arrival. And there was no replacement for more than a year. The DCM, Pierre Graham, became the chargé d'affaires. Some weeks later he turned to me and said, "You know, you have a real feel for these people. You get along. And you understand the situation." This on the basis of many conversations we had had. I was still trying to find out what the devil our US interest was in Guinea. Pierre Graham had fallen into the practice, or habit, of taking me along to his weekly meetings with Sekou Touré, initially as his note-taker. He evidently was impressed by the rapport that was developing between Touré and me. So he asked me to be his, sort of, de facto head of the political section. From that moment until the arrival of Charles Whitehouse as DCM a year later, I functioned as our unnamed DCM in all matters except administration. I initiated and drafted all political reporting. I prepared a lengthy account and analysis of Governor Williams' extensive meeting with Touré and the Embassy's annual assessment report.

In October of '63, Governor Williams, who was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, came out.

So a large scale meeting was arranged with Touré. To eliminate any distractions, Touré arranged to have this full-scale exercise of Guinean-American relations at an isolated resort in the hilly hinterland of Guinea. Pierre Graham, the chargé d'affaires, asked me to be the note-taker for these sessions. And we spent all day at this resort in round-table discussion with Sekou Touré, his staff and key members of the party Politburo.

And I found myself wondering why Governor Williams was pressing so hard for freedom of education above all the freedom for private schools, and so on. This, I could only guess, was to liberalize a regime that wasn't about to be liberalized. [Laughter] It was really a waste of time.

Sekou Touré was masterful in delineating his own situation and his view of African politics. He went into the subject of colonialism in great depth. Publicly, he always talked about the imperialists: but privately, in talking to people like myself, he spoke most perceptively about the Africans and their problems. It was their tribal weaknesses that had opened the doors to the Europeans. They were responsible for their own downfall, is what he was saying.

But now that African leaders had taken over these colonies and their administrative structures, they were going to defend them.

When Governor Williams lectured him at some length about the extraordinary achievements in economic progress that the Nigerians had brought about through private initiatives, Sekou Touré warned him that Nigeria was on the verge of a terrible explosion and might well be torn apart by tribal rivalries and hatreds. I had to surmise that Governor Williams was not impressed by Touré's forecast. Quite evidently, the Biafran crisis and ensuing civil war did not take Touré by surprise.

Sekou Touré's argument was "We have a state and we have to build a nation of people," which made a great deal of sense. I thought that, in many respects, he was eminently reasonable and clear sighted. And I got along quite well with him. Pierre Graham and I used to call, regularly, once a week on him. Or he'd drop by Pierre Graham's residence and we'd sit at the pool and talk. We had, I thought, an excellent relationship that could yield us some advantage if we kept our sights on reality rather than ideology.

At one point, the situation got pretty tense, though, because the negotiations with the American companies were going fairly well, but negotiations with the United States were not going particularly well, for a variety of reasons, because we were promoting a very aggressive AID program, and insisting on a broad panoply of tight controls and reporting requirements. AID was inundating this country, which had really no bureaucracy worth the name, with demands for all kinds of reports and accounting procedures they were clearly incapable of handling.

And then we pressed for proposals that Touré didn't like at all, such as creating a special category of rice growers, who would have certain privileges because we would help them directly to increase their rice production. He saw this proposal as a means of promoting the growth of a new capitalist class, which he wasn't about to have; under no circumstances would he have it.

Well, I took what people in the State Department called a romantic view of Touré. I didn't think it was. I thought it was far more objective and realistic than the conventional wisdom in the Department or the media. I felt that he could be reasoned with, if you looked at his particular kinds of problems and at things going on in the country.

Now you must remember, in Conakry, we were all confined to the city of Conakry; we could not go out into the country. He wouldn't permit that except for the Peace Corps people. And he had a lot of problems with the Peace Corps. Eventually, he insisted on their being removed.

In terms of USIS activities, there was really not very much that could be done. I had a three-man staff: a cultural affairs officer, information officer, and a public affairs trainee. We had a little library. I tried to promote the Horizons book program. And we got some placement, but I had no illusions because I knew that it was difficult to control. We talked to people about titles for the program, and got the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information to go along with several of our suggestions.

But, you know, the Chinese--this is one area where the Chinese were very active and, I thought, were very good in their approach to people. They could offer Guinean officials and party cadres a lot more than I could ever offer. I had, at best, three exchange grants or something like that. The Chinese played to a fair-thee-well the parallelism with their own country and exploited the Vietnam angle to the hilt. They concentrated on the Ministry of Information people. That meant all the film people and the staff of the one newspaper, the party newspaper.

I thought they were better than the Russians at this game. They put up the capital for the stadium and they actually built the stadium with their own hand labor. They were very good at that.

U.S. activities were very limited. There was no possibility of going up country or going anywhere, outside of Conakry. Everything required government permission. They were all suspicious, except for Touré himself, who was confident in his own power. But the underlings were hostile; at best, agreeable in some respects and, in a few instances, we could get few things done.

But my task at this point was really doing the political reporting for the embassy. And all through that period, every political airgram, cable or communication that went to the State Department was something that I drafted and worked on.

By the spring of 1966, our relationships had seriously deteriorated. The rapport between our people in charge of our economic assistance programs and their counterparts had reached almost a breaking point. The already bad internal economy was getting worse. Touré's rivals and enemies in West Africa were mounting a drumbeat of attacks on Touré in their controlled press. Guinean paranoia was clearly reaching a point only just short of explosion. At this juncture Pierre Graham was called back to Washington for consultation in the Department. Prior to his departure, there had been in a country team meeting unanimous agreement that I should assume in Pierre's absence the position and authority of an acting chargé d'affaires (I no longer remember whether or not a message to that effect was sent to the State Department, but sending such a message would have been standard procedure).

Within a few days of Graham's departure the Guinean situation had visibly deteriorated to a very disturbing degree. The air seemed electric with nervous tension. Touré decided to hold an enormous rally and delivered his famous--many Westerners said, his infamous--speech summed up in the phrase "égorger les imperialistes". If he or members of the Bureau Politique were attacked and assassinated at any time, now or in the future, he instructed all Guineans to take upon themselves the initiative to hunt down and cut the throats of all the imperialists residing in Guinea. He added that it was not necessary for him to tell his Guinean brothers who were the imperialists: they already knew who they were. Shock waves of alarm swept through the small

community of westerners. European expatriates spent hours conjuring up images of bloody massacres that had taken place in the Congo. I refused to be misled by Touré's violent rhetoric and insisted on maintaining complete calm and communication, directly and indirectly, to all the American community my absolute certainty that disaster was not around the corner. In the next two days the Western ambassadors and senior diplomats came individually to see me, expressing their alarm and asking for my personal assessment and assurances about the US Government's position. I explained to each the reasons for my calm and confidence and reassured them that Washington shared my assessment. In offering that last reassurance, I was using a certain liberty and had to employ every device to hold the sense of panic in check.

Even the Soviet mission arranged to convey its concerns to me and sought my estimate of the situation. Our shared skin color gave them real worries.

The confidence I honestly held was warranted by the facts and my sense of Guinean realities but with one caveat. I had no knowledge or even intimations of what French intelligence and West African regimes hostile to Touré might be planning. Knowing full well the grudge in certain French quarters against Touré, I had no doubt that French intelligence was quite capable of organizing through other channels a neat and swift little surgical strike against Touré. Lacking any intelligence sources, I could not know or even guess whether the will to strike was there. I drafted a lengthy cable to Washington, detailing the reasons for my assessment and my confidence that American lives were not in danger. I also conveyed my concern about the hypothetical possibility of a foreign undercover strike operation, in which case I could not guarantee the safety of Americans in Guinea. Therefore I requested the Department to inform me whether the American intelligence community had any information to indicate that the possibility was more than hypothetical. After discussing my draft with my three most senior associates, I sent off the cable.

On his return an agitated Pierre Graham told me that the phrase "danger to American lives" set off alarms all over the State Department. At his morning staff meeting an irritated Secretary Rusk asked who was this person who had sent in the cable. I was chagrined to realize that nobody had carefully read my cable or understood what I was requesting. So ended a brief, inglorious tenure as an acting chargé.

Not long after this episode one Assistant Director for the African area, Mark Lewis, came out and told me that Frank Shakespeare was furious because I hadn't submitted my monthly activity reports. I became very indignant about this, furious to be honest, because I had been working interminable days and generally late into the night, analyzing, rewriting, reporting and doing all the essential functions of a mission that nobody else was prepared or willing to do. And I was doing what I could in USIA, which was not very much.

I went to the chargé, Pierre Graham, and to the AID director. And I said, "Look, I've been raked over the coals by my area director. I'm charged with neglecting my USIS program. I feel that I have been doing all the serious work of political reporting. I've been doing what I have been asked by both of you and the so-called country team to do. Now I am being reprimanded and insulted. Either you straighten our Mark Lewis or I'm quitting the Agency. Because I just can't work under these conditions. If I don't have the confidence of people back in Washington in what

I'm doing, that I'm making sensible use of my time; and if they don't see all the political reporting, copies of which are on their desks, and they have no idea that I'm doing it, then something is seriously wrong."

Well, they called Mark in and talked to him, made the point that I was an invaluable member of the country team and I'd been doing this important work. Mark withdrew his charge and said he'd go back and straighten it out, but I don't know that it did me any good, anyhow. [Laughter]

Q: I suspect he probably said, "That isn't what you're supposed to do.

MOCERI: You know, this was a case where USIA ought to have recognized that, at best, we had a minuscule USIS operation that, in itself, could not mean very much in this kind of context.

By early fall of 1966, an American Ambassador was in place. The Department had finally appointed Robert McIlvaine. I wrote his statement for his presentation ceremony to Touré. And everything seemed to go very well for the first couple weeks.

Sekou Touré felt that because of the remarks Ambassador McIlvaine had made, he had found a kindred spirit in McIlvaine, and everything would go well. Here was an ambassador who really understood him, etc.

Unfortunately, shortly thereafter, the Guinean foreign minister had to go to an all-Africa conference in Addis Ababa, and decided to fly the most convenient way--a Pan Am flight stopping over in Conakry, and going on to Addis. Apparently the Guineans hadn't checked as to what stops the plane made in between. The plane put down in the Ivory Coast at Abidjan. And he [the foreign minister] was taken off the plane...

Q: He was taken off?

MOCERI: ...by the Ivoirian military, and put under house arrest in a military camp. Well, the next morning, our ambassador in Conakry is placed under house arrest. And Sekou Touré, and everyone else around him is in a rage. During the night, VOA had carried the story about the forcible removal of the Guinean ambassador from the plane in Abidjan, and his detention in a military camp. That's how Sekou Touré learned about it, from VOA. In his mind, you see, the VOA knew everything that was going on in Africa.

We hadn't gotten the message. And, obviously, I hadn't stayed up all night just to try to listen to a VOA broadcast, nor had Washington sent any word to us. Well, I got this call from our administrative officer: "Look, our ambassador's under house arrest. You better get down to the foreign ministry and see what can be done about this." So I raced down--not being under house arrest--saw the people I knew, and they told me what the situation was. In response to my protestations, they assured me they would go to Touré on the matter.

Well, we later learned that there had been some kind of communication foul-up from the State Department, and the message had never gotten to our embassy. So we were not alerted as to what happened. Well, the Guineans found this pretty hard to believe.

At any rate, the order placing McIlvaine under house arrest was lifted. I think it was the next day. But by that time, Sekou Touré had decided that the only way he could get his foreign minister released was by bringing pressure on the United States and adducing, as the reason, that Pan Am was U.S. property, property of the U.S. Government, and therefore, the U.S. Government, which knows everything that goes on in Africa, could work this deal.

Well, apart from misconceptions about what is government ownership and what isn't, Sekou Touré was right. There was no way he was going to get his foreign minister back unless the United States brought pressure on Abidjan to release him, which is what happened. And, eventually, he was released.

Q: What was he picked up for in the first place?

MOCERI: The two countries, Guinea and the Ivory Coast, had not gotten along in...

Q: I know they didn't get along, but any particular...

MOCERI: No, no particular reason. Apparently Houphouet-Boigny decided he'd get hold of one of these guys and put pressure on Sekou Touré and so on.

Well, then there were waves of anti-imperialism--anti-Western imperialism protests whipped up and so on. So, it was a very, very disagreeable period. This was the time when I first learned about facing popular militia in many parts of the world--kids with guns and trigger happy. The potential for disaster was all over the place.

At any rate, finally, the foreign minister, Beavogui, is released. And our ambassador returns. And there's a great celebration organized to welcome back the foreign minister in the stadium. And all the troops, all the members of the party, are called. And the place is jam-packed. It was originally intended as a soccer stadium, you see. So it had quite a capacity, perhaps as many as 25,000 people.

We had discussed in our country team meeting how we were going to handle this. Obviously, you know, we had to appear. It was a formal occasion, and there simply had to be an American presence.

Q: The American ambassador was there too?

MOCERI: Yes. Everybody was there. Charles Whitehouse had replaced Graham in the late summer. So I argued that the ambassador, who had been humiliated by house arrest, should not appear. I felt that Whitehouse should not appear, in part because he was at that point hardly known to Touré, in part because he was the DCM. I felt that money bags, the AID administrator, should not be there.

I said, "I think I'm the only one who should go. I'm not the personal representative of the President of the United States. I don't represent the money. They know me. Sekou Touré has

dealt with me. He knows me. He knows what my place is. Beavogui, the foreign minister, knows who I am." The Guinean Ambassador to Washington, who had come back, knew me, and apparently had told his superiors that I was one of the best friends Guinea had in the American Embassy. On an earlier occasion I suspected he had read or been told about one or another of my reports to the Department.

Q: The Guinean Ambassador to Washington had returned?

MOCERI: The Guinean ambassador. So I said, "This is the only sensible way. For me to go. We've got to be represented." So I took the very junior political officer with me, a fellow named Robert Houdek, who today is chargé at our embassy in Ethiopia. I like to feel that he did learn a few political lessons from me. We had a very good relationship. Because I felt there should be at least two people there. And I told him, "The first time anybody uses the term 'American imperialism' or 'American imperialists,' I have to walk out. If I get up, you get up immediately with me and walk just behind me."

We arrived at the stadium in the Ambassador's car and flying the American flag. Both troops and the malice populaire were all over the place, at the entrances to the grounds, lining the drives and at the entrances to the stadium itself. Crowds were milling around on the grounds and the surrounding streets, because the stadium itself was filled to capacity. We had no problem entering the stadium area and getting to our seats in the section reserved for diplomats directly under the President's tribune.

For a while it all seemed a blur of speech-making, chanting and prolonged bursts of applause. This was an audience of certainly more than 20,000 who were there because they knew they were expected to provide the proceedings the atmospherics of sustained din.

Beavogui rose to his feet to deliver his speech. As he approached the rostrum and microphones, he was given a thunderous welcome of shouts accompanied by waves of applause.

Then he launched into an impassioned denunciation of the American imperialists. And the moment he said "The imperialists from the United States of America" I stood up.

I turned to Bob Houdek and said, "We're leaving." Just as I started to walk out, the foreign minister paused, pointed directly to me, and shouted into the microphone, "The American imperialists." Instantly the whole place broke into a scream of rage; a great roar welled up from all the assembled host, echoed by the crowds that had not been able to get into the stadium. I didn't care about inside. I did, for one moment, feel concern about the throng outside. But I thought to myself, "Well, somehow we'll get to the car and we'll get away."

The moment I started down the steps to the stair well, Sekou Touré, I was told later by the Italian Ambassador, leaned over and talked to his aide. His aide scurried out. I was told he went down to alert the president's personal bodyguards to make sure that I got out and got out safely. By then the whole place was lined with these milice populaire. The president's bodyguards had to drive them out of the way; literally ordered them to get out of the way and let the car by. For a

brief moment it appeared that the milice populaire would not give ground. Well, they finally got out of the way. But Bob Houdek said, "it was a scary experience." But that passed, too.

Q: You might have been the first martyr in Guinea.

MOCERI: Could well have been. [Laughter] It was possible. But you know how it is in these situations. You do what you feel you have to do. And I thought if something had to happen, it was better to happen with me involved than with the ambassador, or with, say, the AID director.

The tantrum that lay at the center of this event was not without serious consequences that left nerves jangled and an unrelieved state of tension that crackled like electricity. The Ambassador's premises were invaded by a small crowd. The Peace Corps was expelled. (I believe I am correct in saying that this was the first time the Peace Corps was expelled from any country.) More than twenty people in the mission complex were declared personae non grata. The team of Pan Am people who had been assisting Guinea in the development of plans for a civil aviation capability was ordered to leave the country. As soon as these obviously retaliatory measures were ordered and completed, Guinean-American relations entered a period of uneasy, ever wary peace.

In the meantime our Ambassador had been recalled to Washington for consultation, as a signal to the Guinean government of our dissatisfaction with its actions. For the benefit of Charles Whitehouse, our DCM and now chargé, I prepared a lengthy memorandum to explain the breakdown in Guinean-American relationships, my thesis concerning the political factors at work within Touré's party that had probably forced his hand, and the role that I suspected the Chinese to have played in the entire affair. But I also felt this was not enough; I was convinced we had to develop a response that would forcefully drive home the point that Guinea could not abuse the American interest and American representative with impunity.

I said to Whitehouse, "Look, we've got to work out a plan. Because we can't let the Guineans get away with this. We've been humiliated and we have to show that, as a great power, we do not accept humiliations. And the way to do this is, step-by-step, to scale down the entire mission."

"The Peace Corps director is gone. But we must also remove all the high-ranking people and heads of agencies around the ambassador. Abolish my position and send me out. Then the next person to go should be the AID director, then the head of the political section, and on down until we leave the ambassador with a staff of five people, simply to represent the United States; pure representation. We're here if you want to talk to us. You can talk to us. We're willing to talk to you. But that's all. no aid, no programs, nothing."

Well, he thought it was a good idea. I was convinced this was the only way of responding to those in Touré's party who had been influenced by the Chinese, and to Touré personally. Touré would get the message that we were highly displeased and that the initiative, then, for repairing the relations, rested with him and his party. This was what I was after. Because I felt no USIS program made sense anymore in this situation, I eliminated my position--no doubt much to the surprise of our African area office. And I left Conakry.

No one else left because the ambassador, who had at this point returned, would not agree to the implementation of my entire plan. You know, "You cut down this far then why have an ambassador?" was his reasoning.

So I went back to Washington and was sent out interviewing candidates for USIA.

Q: Suggesting that their first post might be a trainee in Guinea? [Laughter]

MOCERI: Well, then Guinean Ambassador to Washington talked to people in the State Department, asked that I be sent back to negotiate a new cultural agreement with the foreign minister. Mark Lewis came to me, informed me of this proposal and seemed to have assumed that I would be agreeable.

I said, "No, you can't do this. This is absolutely wrong. It's not right. Because then it weakens the case that I've been trying to make, you know, on behalf of the United States. We're not seeking to make amends. Come on. Send someone else. If you really believe that they will, in all earnestness, negotiate a new cultural agreement with us, send somebody else. Don't send me. Precisely because they've asked for me." So that ended my connections with Conakry.

PETER O. SELLAR
Program Officer, USAID
Conakry (1966-1968)

Peter O. Sellar was raised in Connecticut and New Jersey and was educated at Harvard. He served USAID in Guinea. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1999.

SELLAR: I was slated to go to Tunisia as Assistant Program Officer, which I was greatly looking forward to, but then, as I mentioned earlier, the Program Officer in Guinea had to be evacuated very quickly because his daughter fell out of a window and broke her back. So they needed somebody in Guinea just as I was about to go to Tunisia, and I was offered that job despite my youth and inexperience. Guinea at the time was still a big program. It was the third largest program in Africa when I got there. By the time I left it was virtually gone. It was a phase down situation, and I'm sure they never would have sent me there if the decision hadn't already been made that they were going to downgrade the program.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea?

SELLAR: We were dealing with a turbulent situation in terms of the Government and Sekou Touré, the president.

Q: This was 1966.

SELLAR: Yes. The Chief of State was anti-American, leaning much more toward the communist

side, but he was like a pendulum that swung back and forth. They would occasionally get fed up with the way the Russians were doing things and throw them out and let us back in, and then get fed up with what we were doing and throw the Peace Corps out and throw us out and let the Russians back. While I was there, we had our program and the Russians and the Chinese were also there and official relations were very frosty. Shortly after I got there, there was a staged demonstration against the U.S. because of some paranoid thought in Sekou Touré's mind that we had had something to do with his Foreign Minister having been taken off a plane in Ghana. He whipped up a mob that stormed the Ambassador's residence and terrorized his wife and small child, although they didn't hurt anybody. The people themselves, in fact, were not really hostile, they were quite friendly. This event resulted in the Ambassador being recalled to Washington on consultations for quite a while. I was moved into the residence as a resident bodyguard, because I was the only available male bachelor. We were a joint State/AID operation and all worked in the same building; the staffs of both organizations were fairly small.

Q: To guard the residence?

SELLAR: Really just somebody to make the Ambassador's wife feel a little more comfortable. Just to have a man in the house. That led to some great stories. There were other instances where the Peace Corps was thrown out at one point because they were suspected of something. The government just didn't want American people up country. So we were under house arrest for a few days. A few of us, however, were allowed to circulate and let the Peace Corps volunteers know — many of them lived in isolation — that there wasn't anything to worry about, that nobody was being hurt. Things like this kept happening and they were disruptive to the program. The Guinea government would abruptly decide that Pan Am was doing something wrong and they would kick out Pan Am and invite Aeroflot back in to basically run the Guinean airline. That happened while we were there. All these things were making it difficult to run an AID program and were reflective of tense and antagonistic political relations.

Q: What kind of program did we have; what were we doing?

SELLAR: Well, when I got there we were doing quite a bit. We had a large industrial-vocational training project that was run by the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT) so we could provide French-speaking personnel. ORT was technically a U.S. organization but in reality got its staff from Northern Africa and Europe. This was a very important project because it was about the only thing in the country that managed to fix things. Electrical, air conditioning, welding, technical level skills. All the useful things, maintenance of heating units, etc.

Q: What did you do in agriculture?

SELLAR: We had research stations upcountry staffed by Peace Corps volunteers. When the Peace Corps was thrown out, we terminated that project. I can't remember anything else in agriculture.

Q: What kind of training did you have?

SELLAR: We had a large training program - 400 to 500 people. We were under pressure to

finish it. I spent a lot of time working to phase it down and out so that the people who were training in the U.S. to replace expatriate instructors would come back. We would schedule a year's overlap and then the expatriate would leave. Then we had to bring in technical assistance again.

Q: How did you find the Guinean people to work with?

SELLAR: They were nice to work with. They are very nice people. The problem was that because of the poor political relations between the governments, it was risky for them to become too friendly. So there was virtually no social contact with them.

There was one exception. We had a USIA-sponsored jazz band come through. A big Guinean crowd turned out for that, despite any risks. There was a resident USIA person, but one of my Assistant Program officers had a large house, a perfect spot for entertaining, and we invited a lot of people to a reception after the concert. About a hundred Guineans came. But other than for something like that we didn't see them.

Q: And the living conditions there?

SELLAR: They were okay. The most important thing was just to make sure you had air conditioning. It was so humid all the time. I had a good experience there. There were highs and there were lows. A lot of it depended on the status of my love life, and on which weather cycle we were in. When it wasn't raining all the time, you could get outside and play tennis and sail and take boat trips for weekend swimming and picnics to a nearby island with a lovely beach. It was harder when these activities were shut down during the rainy season.

Q: Any particular crisis or issues?

SELLAR: There was continuous crisis.

Q: Describe some of the crisis that occurred. Were you under instructions to phase down the program?

SELLAR: We knew we weren't going to get money for any new projects. We'd only get money for continuing projects as long as those projects were able to function. The policy context was clear. One time I went to some lengths to get approval for one individual to go for training back in the States, and sent in strong justification for that. It was approved and then we got a note back from the Office Director in Washington saying "Don't ever do that again."

Q: Were there any kinds of linkups with economic policy changes at all?

SELLAR: If so that had happened long before I got there. Nobody was attempting to do it during my tenure, though I did have an economist on my staff when I first arrived. But she wasn't really policy-oriented, and the position was eliminated when she left.

Q: PL 480, were you programming that as well?

SELLAR: We were, and we didn't do that in any enormously coherent strategic way. There just wasn't that much interest, given the fact that we were phasing down the program.

Q: What happened after Guinea?

SELLAR: I left in 1968. I wasn't there for a full two years because things had dried up to the point where there wasn't that much left to do. So they sent me down to Liberia for three months. They had a vacancy in the program office. I found it similar to Guinea, but also quite different. They were so obviously influenced by the United States as opposed to the French cultural influence in Guinea. I didn't like Liberia. They were corrupt. Though I shouldn't say that because I didn't have any firsthand knowledge of it. I did get to make a long trip through the interior of Liberia, staying with Peace Corps volunteers since there were no other accommodations. We had to walk part of the way through the jungle since there was no road. I formed a great admiration for the Peace Corps volunteers, living in isolation from their peers in rural villages and only seeing someone from headquarters once a week with mail. That trip is my most vivid memory of Liberia. Otherwise, it was just office paperwork.

Q: Where did you go after that?

SELLAR: Then I went back to Washington, on home leave, with an onward assignment as the AID Operations Officer for Niger. But when I was back here I met the woman who is now my wife. I wasn't quite ready to ask her to marry me, but also wasn't ready to go back to Africa without her, so I got myself assigned here in Washington to a temporary position on the Nigeria desk. Then I got myself assigned to the Africa Bureau Office of Capital Development (CDF).

ROBINSON MCILVAINE
Ambassador
Guinea (1966-1969)

Ambassador Robinson McIlvaine entered the State Department in the early 1950s. Before his career in the Foreign Service, he graduated from Harvard, served in the Navy and worked in both journalism and advertising. His overseas posts included Lisbon, Dahomey, Guinea, and Kenya. Ambassador McIlvaine was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1988.

Q: Then you were assigned in 1966 to Guinea.

MCILVAINE: Right.

Q: How did this appointment come about?

MCILVAINE: You're never sure. By this time, I was working for Averell Harriman.

Q: He was doing what?

MCILVAINE: He was ambassador-at-large, so he was not very busy; he wasn't doing anything. I wasn't terribly busy except when he was busy. What had happened was that my name, I discovered later, had been sent over to the White House to be ambassador to Senegal. LBJ, who was noted for his sort of testiness, looked at it and said, "I won't have another goddamned Harvard guy in this thing," and threw my name out. So I didn't get that job. So that's when Averell Harriman took me on. I had gotten to know him pretty well while running the Congolese Task Group. So I was just lodged there 'til we could try another ploy.

So six or eight months later, a vacancy came up in Guinea, and my name was sent over, and sure as hell, nobody wanted to go there, so I didn't have any competition. I got through. I guess the President wasn't looking at what he was signing.

Q: You were going to Africa at a time when there was no political competition for these posts.

MCILVAINE: Yes.

Q: That came, really, as a rather recent matter.

MCILVAINE: Kennedy named some very good guys who were non-career, but after that, there were none 'til just recently. This administration has done it in spades.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea when you went there?

MCILVAINE: It was a Marxist country. Sekou Toure was president, a leader along with Kwame Nkrumah, of the whole leftish African scene. Nkrumah had been thrown out of Ghana while he'd been on a trip to China, and he had been given asylum in Guinea by his friend Sekou Toure, even though they couldn't talk to each other. One spoke French and the other English. Indeed, Sekou Toure had made Nkrumah co-president of Guinea. Well, that had the State Department in a total snit, and for a long time they wouldn't send an ambassador, because it might be considered recognizing Nkrumah. So when they finally decided to send me, they said, "How are you going to handle this if Nkrumah's there when you present your credentials?"

I said, "Well, I know the difference between Nkrumah and Sekou Toure. I'll give them to Sekou Toure."

"Oh," they said. [Laughter]

So our relationships were tense, but Guinea had--and has-- the greatest bauxite resources in the world. A number of people felt it was very important that we, the West, got those bauxite resources, and not the East. The long and short of it was that we did, but that's rather a long story, and that's the main thing I was involved with the three years I was there.

As you may recall, we were the first diplomatic hostages. That was before Tehran. The entire American community, everybody in the embassy, all the Peace Corps, (we had several hundred

Peace Corps volunteers), were all put under house arrest, and there was a big brouhaha about that.

Q: This happened shortly after you arrived?

MCILVAINE: It happened within days of our arrival. Well, the day after I had a very warm meeting with Sekou Toure presenting my letters of credence. [Laughter]

Q: Could you give some of the background? This is October of 1966. What was the background of being taken hostage?

MCILVAINE: There was a meeting coming up of the Organization of African Unity, OAU. The foreign minister of Guinea, Mr. Beavogui, was going to that meeting. As is custom in those countries and in some others, the diplomatic corps always goes to the airport to see the foreign minister in and out. So I, the brand-new ambassador, one day after presenting my letters of credence, go to the airport to see Mr. Beavogui off. I saw him off on a KLM plane. I didn't know where that flight was going. All I knew was he was going to Addis Ababa. Well, of course, it turns out that he took the KLM from Conakry to Monrovia, where he got on a Pan Am plane. In those days, the only way you could cross Africa was via Pan Am, the only airline that went from west to east. In other words, anybody going to Addis Ababa from the west coast had to go on Pan Am. So all the other foreign ministers were getting on as the plane went down the coast. It came to Accra, Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah had been overthrown, and the new "revolutionary government" wanted his hide. They saw that the Guinean foreign minister was on the plane; and they went on and roughly hauled him off and arrested him, along with about six Guinean students who were on their way to Lagos. So the Ghanaians, in effect, kidnaped the Guinean foreign minister and then told Sekou Toure, "All right, you want your foreign minister back? Give us Kwame Nkrumah."

Well, needless to say, I knew nothing about this. What happened was that our embassy in Ghana had apparently sent me a rocket on what had happened, but it got garbled, and we never got it until three days later. Anyhow, the first thing we knew of it was on a Sunday morning. We were going to go out for the first time on a boat to see the little islands off the coast, and DCM Charlie Whitehouse's was coming around to pick us up. I went to the gate, and there was a soldier there on guard. Charles came to the gate, and couldn't get in, and I couldn't get out. So we wanted to know what it was. The soldier didn't know. [Laughter] We finally reached the top civil servant in the foreign ministry, and he said, "Oh, well, there's been some problem. It's very serious. You have captured our foreign minister."

I said, "I have?" The long and the short of it was, you see, they put two and three together. Because it was a Pan Am plane, that made it an official plane; it must be a CIA plot. We were the tools of that regime in Accra, Ghana. So by God, they were going to sit on me and all the other Americans until the Ghanaians gave up the Guinean foreign minister. Well, this went back and forth and back and forth for a while.

Meanwhile, the OAU meeting in Addis couldn't take place, and a special mission with the foreign minister of Kenya, the foreign minister of Sierra Leone, the foreign minister of the

Congo, (that's Leopoldville, now Zaire), whom I knew very well from my days there, came to try to negotiate our release. Then after about a week, we were finally released.

Q: Were you under any threat, really?

MCILVAINE: Yes. A mob had been organized. I was allowed to go to the chancery, along with Charlie Whitehouse and a couple of others, so we could send messages back and forth. The mob appeared there, brandishing signs about "A bas l'imperialism americain," so on and so forth. There were about 3,000 people all milling around the chancery, and then I heard on the radio from my wife that a similar group was doing the same thing at the residence. Well, that one got out of hand, broke all the windows, and it was pretty scary for my wife and two kids, who were then three and two. They were all holed up in the second floor, and these characters came through the windows on the second floor. The long and the short of it was that in the end, nothing much was done except breaking all the windows.

I should add here that Africans aren't like some other nationalities. I've always felt that if I'd had the experiences I've had in Africa in an Arab milieu, I wouldn't be here now talking to you. The Africans are not all that vicious. I'll never forget, after the mob went away and, my wife came down. I hadn't gotten home yet, but she went down and she started with a broom to sweep up all the broken glass, and a little guy appeared out of the bushes and said, "Oh, no, madame, we did it. Let me sweep it up." [Laughter] And he took the broom from her and swept it up.

Another family who had been under house arrest for about a week said to their guard, "You know, we're running out of food. I wonder if you could get permission for us to go to the marche."

"Oh," he said, "no, I have strict orders you're not to go anywhere." And he said, "Ah! I will go to the marche for you." So he handed them his gun, he took their shopping basket and the list, and he went on foot about two and a half miles to the market, bought everything, carefully noted how much each thing cost, and brought it back and handed it to them. Pretty sweet, both those instances. Otherwise, rather frightening experiences, because you're never sure when mobs get out of control.

Q: How was this problem resolved?

MCILVAINE: The Ghanaians finally released the Guinean delegation. But first of all, I got to see Sekou Toure at 0300 in the morning after we discovered we were hostages. This bizarre early morning appointment was made on the extra-ordinarily able Guinean ambassador to the U.S., Karim Baugoura, who flew out from Washington. We "palavered" for two hours with Pres. Toure and, I believe, convinced him that we had nothing to do with the kidnapping of his foreign minister. However, the Americans were Toure's only leverage on Ghana. So he did not release us until his foreign minister was returned about 10 days later.

Subsequently, I was called back "for consultation" in Washington to assess the situation--should we break diplomatic relations, cancel the AID program or what? Meanwhile, Sekou Toure took all that in his own hands and threw out the Peace Corps, canceled the AID program, and expelled

a lot of the embassy staff. This had its positive side as now we had a small embassy of about 10 people, including clerical and everything else. Our relations with Guinea improved enormously. We got the bauxite and we got all our aims, and I was there for three years, which was something of a record for that place.

Q: Why was it such a blessing to get rid of the Peace Corps and AID?

MCILVAINE: Not the Peace Corps and AID per se. But, we were trying to do too much. They weren't ready for any of the kind of projects we were trying to do. I have a feeling we have too many people in all our missions abroad to this day.

Q: Had the French been pretty well expelled?

MCILVAINE: Yes. There were no official French there at all. The British had been expelled. I was also representing the British. The only Western diplomats in Guinea were the Italians, the Swiss, and the Germans. The rest were all Third World, and all of the Eastern bloc, including Outer Mongolia. He was a marvelous character who chain-smoked and couldn't speak any language that anybody knew. I don't think he even spoke Russian. [Laughter] Poor guy.

Q: How did the Eastern bloc operate within Guinea?

MCILVAINE: It was very interesting. When this happened to us, they were all very concerned, because they knew quite well that once you get a mob excited, the Guineans couldn't tell the difference between Americans, Romanians or Bulgarians or Russians. So I remember when I got released, I went to a diplomatic event, and they all came up to me and were very concerned and solicitous.

Then another interesting angle was when we finally signed the bauxite agreement, the Soviet ambassador came up to me and said, "I don't understand this! I don't understand this!" He said, "Here we have given this country \$350 million. I say dollars, not rubles! Dollars! And what happens?"

I say, "What happens?"

He said, "You get the bauxite. And what do we get?"

And I said, "What do you get?"

"Bananas, bananas, bananas." [Laughter] That was a great day in my life.

Q: Then from a practical point of view, the Soviet influence there was not major.

MCILVAINE: Yes. This is something that we as a country haven't learned. Sekou Toure was a Marxist, but he was also a Guinean and a nationalist. The Russians, in their usual heavy-handed way, started trying to run him around. Well, hell, he threw one ambassador out. He wasn't going to be run around. Basically, he was more sympathetic to their point of view than he was to ours,

but in the end, you know, what he wanted was dollars for his bauxite and not rubles. In other words, self-interest overcomes ideology every time, I think, or most times.

Q: Let me stop here for a minute.

Mr. Ambassador, could you describe your impressions of Sekou Toure, please?

MCILVAINE: Yes. He was a fascinating man in many ways. He had a lot of charm. He had a lot of hang-ups. He was not terribly well educated; he had not been to a university, in any case. His upbringing in the colonial period had been as a labor leader, which inevitably, I think, put him into Marxist circles, because I think much of labor in France was, at the time. He was certainly involved in the French labor movement, which was fairly Communist, in any case. He had an extraordinary self-confidence. As I said, a lot of charm, was a fantastic speaker. He could orate and wind up the crowd in an amazing fashion. Indeed, that was one of the secrets of his longevity. He outlasted all of the African presidents, except for Houphouet-Boigny who is still alive and still in place.

Of course, he had no idea how anything really worked, had no concept of economics or anything. As a result, he totally ruined the economy of Guinea, which the French, prior to the independence, considered the pearl of their West African holdings. Everything was ideologic, everything was done by slogans, and, of course, he had a total police state, which would manifest itself in pogroms and arrests and fabricated coup attempts, just to keep any possible opposition off balance.

Most of the people we ever knew there were either killed, imprisoned, or in exile, within ten years after we left there.

Q: This was an example of the weeding out of opposition.

MCILVAINE: Exactly. They say that over 1,500,000 Guineans lived in exile in neighboring Senegal, Ivory Coast, or Liberia. I don't know how you'd ever prove it, but I believe that that's probably right, due to this man.

A good example is the case of Alpha Addoulaye Diallo who was Chef de Cabinet in Foreign Ministry, a charming man, a licensee en droit from the Sorbonne in Paris, spoke impeccable French, a very, very civilized gentleman. Needless to say, I felt when I left that he was not long for this world, because he obviously didn't approve of what was going on. But what could he do? He couldn't get out. Sure enough, he finally was arrested. He's one of the few who survived. He had ten years in a windowless cell, was beaten daily. He got out eventually, and he came to this country last year and visited us, a very remarkable human being. He also wrote a book, which I read, and it's indescribable what these people were put through, African against African, not colonialists treating their subject people. It was Africans against Africans--just incredible.

Eventually, Sekou Toure became ill a couple of years ago and died. His successor lasted in office only a few weeks, and then there was a coup d'etat, and they got rid of the whole bunch of them.

Q: Did we have any other interests other than bauxite then?

MCILVAINE: None, other than the one I cited in Dahomey, that as the world's largest country, we felt we had to maintain a diplomatic presence everywhere. You try to be helpful within certain limits and do what's feasible. You got big arguments about what those were, but I don't think there were any other interests.

Q: Did Toure ever turn to you for advice informally or in any way?

MCILVAINE: Conversation with him was very difficult. He generally turned it into a speech in no time at all. Of course, in three years, I managed to hear all his speeches several times. You know, after the first incident, where we all got blamed for the kidnapping of his foreign minister, the foreign minister was Louis Lansana Beavogui. We called him "Lucky Louis." Sure enough, about six months after this happened, he got kidnapped again, this time off a KLM plane somewhere else and put in by the Ivory Coast.

Q: Why were they doing this to the foreign minister?

MCILVAINE: I don't know. So that time, the poor KLM man got put inside for months. But the point of my anecdote is that I heard about this from our embassy in the Ivory Coast, and I called Sekou Toure up and said, "I've got to see you quick. Urgent." So I went around, and I said, "I've just heard this. I can't make sure if it's true or not, but I want you to know we are not hiding anything, and we did not do it!" Well, he laughed, you know. Every time anything came up, I would go to him first. I'd say, "Now I hear this, that, and the other thing, but we are not involved." Their internal security was run by the East Germans. They're great at feeding all kinds of false information particularly about Americans, to try to get us in trouble. You can not believe all of this, you know. I finally convinced him by the time I left that he shouldn't believe these guys.

The East Germans were past masters at disinformation. In effect, they ran the Guinean security service so it was easy for them to flood rumors, false information, etc. While we were there they sold the Guineans on a totally fabricated document that purported to be written by Charles Whitehouse, the DCM. To Tom Mboya in Kenya suggesting that he overthrow Jomo Kenyatta. Charlie did not even know Tom Mboya and of course this "fake" was designed to get us in trouble both in Guinea and in Kenya. The language of the letter was totally "un-American" and the stationery did not fit anything in the U.S. Government . It was a patent fake.

Q: Again, I ask this with all our interviewees and stressing that it's unclassified, it doesn't sound like a very productive place for the CIA to try to do anything.

MCILVAINE: Oh, Lord, no. Absolutely not.

Q: Did you have to go through the routine requests to see the head of state, to get them to vote right on the UN and all this sort of thing?

MCILVAINE: Oh, yes, sure. But I didn't see the chief of state; I saw the foreign minister.

Q: How did this exercise go in a place like Guinea?

MCILVAINE: Oh, they'd listen to you. It was a ritual. You knew perfectly well they weren't going to vote with us. They never voted with us. They may have once or twice, but it was probably just a coincidence..

Q: But we had no power of persuasion?

MCILVAINE: They were basically in the Communist bloc as far as voting at the UN was concerned.

Q: Was the People's Republic of China there?

MCILVAINE: Yes.

Q: Did they have much of a role?

MCILVAINE: Yes, they had a big role in getting our residence stoned and windows broken. Somebody told me later that some Chinese came along and started throwing rocks, which encouraged the Guineans to do the same.

Q: You had no contact with them?

MCILVAINE: No, they weren't allowed to talk to us, and we weren't allowed to talk to them. Actually, it's interesting about the Chinese Communists there and in other places. They are very unobtrusive. They had a big group there, because they were doing major projects. They were building a big cultural center, had built a tobacco plant, and hydroelectric project up-country. They had a compound right near our residence, but you never saw them. The compound had great high walls around it. They were trucked to work in big stake trucks with canvas over the top and sides. You didn't know what was inside. One time I was driving along, and the wind blew the flap open, and I saw there were about 80 Chinamen in there, all hanging like this, being trucked from their job back to their compound. You never saw them on the streets. They were no problem. And Sekou Toure talked about that. He said, "These Chinese are very discreet. They don't come around and rape our women and get drunk on the streets and so on." Very discreet. And it's true. You hardly ever saw these Chinese. You had to marvel at them from that point of view.

Q: Did you have much contact with embassies of other countries, particularly African countries there? Were they people you cultivated?

MCILVAINE: Yes, it was a pretty small diplomatic corps, we were fairly close. It was really dangerous for Guineans to get to know us so, you couldn't do too much with them, except for the officials.

Q: Did you travel much?

MCILVAINE: All foreigners were supposedly restricted to a 20 mile limit around the capital. But I managed to get all over the country. It was one of my fetishes. After the incident of our house arrest, when I came back from consultation in D.C., the Guineans were supposed to make an official apology and pay for the broken glass at the Residence. Well, getting Sekou Toure to apologize for anything was pretty tricky, you know, and I wasn't sure how he was going to handle that. He called me up one day, and he said, "What are you doing tomorrow?"

This was a Sunday. I said, "Well, not much. What do you have in mind?"

He said, "Well, I'm going to Kankan," which is a major city in the north, in fact, where he comes from. They were having a meeting of all the regional governors there, and he said, "Would you like to come up with me?"

I said, "Sure." So I played checkers with him all the way up in his Antonov 24, a Russian plane, with steam pouring out of the vents the whole way. They're not very well attuned to pressure.

Anyhow, we got to Kankan, and went to the meeting. I was the only pale face in the whole room of a hundred or so governors and other civil servants. He opens up the meeting and says, "I want to introduce, before we get into the business, my friend the American ambassador." Now, this is just after we'd had the house arrest. He said, "You all know what happened to him a couple of weeks ago. It shouldn't have happened to a dog." They all stood up and pounded their feet and clapped like crazy. And then I was dismissed. That was the apology.

Q: Did you report back that apology duly accepted and all that?

MCILVAINE: Yes. Then what was interesting, speaking of how I had to finagle to get to see the country, I really fooled him. I had heard that there was a drought or a flood--I forget which--in that area. At this point our AID mission had been thrown out, but I found we had a whole warehouse full of tools and things like shovels and a two-ton stake truck, so I loaded that full of shovels and sent it up to Kankan with the driver for the drought or flood workers. Then I drove it back. I wandered all over the country doing this, which he, Sekou Toure, was not counting on, and saw a lot of it. In Africa, there are always people on the road. We'd stop and pick people up all day long. Sometimes I'd have 20 or so people in the back of the truck with their gear, and they'd get out at this place and that place. I had a marvelous trip.

When Sekou Toure heard about that, he started to have a fit! He said, "I don't like people traveling around." But I was currently the hero of the country, and I was going to make the most of it.

Q: Did you have trouble keeping up morale of the embassy? You were rather isolated and couldn't get out and travel.

MCILVAINE: At that embassy, we had the best morale of any embassy I've ever been in. I think this is often true of places where it's tense and difficult, because everybody gets together and looks out for each other. We got along fine. I remember just before I left, things had calmed

down and become more or less normal and wasn't quite as exciting, and we began to have a little trouble with the embassy.

Q: How did your officers do their work if it was difficult to meet people?

MCILVAINE: I'm not sure how they did it. Certainly you couldn't go and--well, there were certain things that were made available, and that's about it. It couldn't have been very in-depth reporting on economics, as there wasn't any economics. The politics was all Sekou Toure.

Q: You were there during an election in which he got 99.7 percent of the vote.

MCILVAINE: You see, it was so important, I'd forgotten that!

Q: It was the election of 1968.

MCILVAINE: I was certainly there. I've forgotten his election.

Q: At one point, Stokely Carmichael visited Guinea. Were you there, and did you go out and have anything to do with him?

MCILVAINE: Yes, I met him and shook hands, but he didn't want to talk to me. By this time, he was married to Miriam Makeba, the famous South African singer. Sekou Toure gave them a plot up in Labie, which is in the highlands, and they built a very interesting house there and lived there for some time. I think Stokely Carmichael is still there. She, I think, has left him. At least I saw that in the papers recently.

Q: There was an article in the paper on her today, in the Washington Post. She's making concert tours here. But Stokely Carmichael, I might say for the record, was a radical black American activist on the Students' Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, I think.

MCILVAINE: That's right.

Q: He, I think, had left the United States. Was he accused of something, or he just left?

MCILVAINE: I don't remember.

Q: I don't recall.

MCILVAINE: I'd hate to say, because I'd probably have it wrong. But anyhow, he certainly left America and, I believe, has been away ever since.

Q: But when he settled there, he was not much of a presence, then?

MCILVAINE: No. I think he kind of hoped he would be, but Sekou didn't trust him.

Q: He didn't want any other luminaries in his universe.

MCILVAINE: No.

ALBERT A. THIBAUT, JR.
Political/Economic Officer
Conakry (1969-1971)

Albert A. Thibault, Jr. was born in Massachusetts on August 5, 1941. He received his BA from the University of Windsor in Canada in 1962, his MA from the University of Toronto in 1963, and another MA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969. His career has included positions in Guinea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Thibault was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea at the time you got there in '69?

THIBAUT: Let me start by saying that, in many ways, Guinea was the most memorable of my assignments, of all of the assignments I've had. It certainly left vivid memories. Very briefly, Guinea was a West African country which had been a former French colony. By political conviction and certainly to create, as he put it, "the New Guinean Man," and the "New African Man," President Ahmed Sekou Toure had established a socialist Guinea, creating all the infrastructure of a Third World socialist economy and political order and society, to the extent that he could influence social attitudes. The Party was everything, meaning the PDG, the *Parti Democratique de Guinée*, it was called, the Democratic Party of Guinea. The Soviets had enormous influence, a huge embassy, as did the Chinese who were their rivals. The Chinese had built the People's Palace in Conakry, a large, very modern convention hall, which they staffed, because the Guineans didn't have the technical expertise to maintain it. The East Germans ran the security and intelligence services and were also very influential. So, needless to say, the Western countries, including the United States, had cool relations with Guinea. The number one whipping boy were the French, their former colonial masters. Guinea had been the only colony in French West Africa that had, in 1958, spurned post-independence association with France, a decision by Sekou (as everyone called him) that infuriated De Gaulle. The French departed abruptly, supposedly removing even the light bulbs as they exited. But, in addition, the regime also had a phobia about NATO, especially the FRG, no doubt reflecting East German inputs. So, West Germany, the United States, and France were constantly being sort of pilloried in the country's one paper, *l'Horoya*.

That was the setting in which we arrived in September 1969. We did not have an ambassador at that time. In fact, we had a succession of chargés from the West Africa desk who would come out of the Department for six or seven weeks, rotate in and out. McIlvaine had left. I don't know where he went. He may have gone to Kenya, but he had left. So actually I never did serve under him. Then we had a fellow by the name of Bob Melone, who I believe later became ambassador to Rwanda, who was chargé for quite a time, six months or so, but again brought in from the desk. And then finally an ambassador arrived in the person of Albert W. Sherer, Bud Sherer, a

terrific guy, previously ambassador in Togo, but more relevant to Guinea, he was an East European hand who had been DCM in Prague and political counselor in Warsaw and was a navy guy from World War II. He had seen and experienced Stalinist regimes close up for many years. We had a very small staff. I was the reporting officer. I was econ, political and AID affairs officer. I was what they called an FSO-7, a very junior guy. The country team could easily have fitted around a table not much bigger than this one.

Q: We're talking about a table about the size of a door.

THIBAULT: Not very large, that's for sure. Yeah, about the size of a door. The embassy was located in an old auto showroom. Guinea had been quite prosperous in French days and Conakry had a gloss about it which had very much faded by the time ten years had rolled around, after independence. We had a big plate glass window downstairs where USIS was located. Upstairs was the executive suite and some of the cubbyhole offices where we worked. So that was the American Embassy.

Q: You were there, what, two years?

THIBAULT: A little over two years, from September '69 to December '71.

Q: Was the United States, I mean this was the height of our involvement in Vietnam. Were we castigated by this all the time? Was this part of the motif there?

THIBAULT: Well, imperialism was a constant refrain. The North Vietnamese had a large embassy present. They would often be brought out to a huge stadium that, I don't know if the Chinese or whomever had built it, where they would be hailed as the poster boys of the victims of imperialism. The atmosphere was incredible. The stadium was packed. You had what my wife came to call the "Guinea cheer." You would have the president, Sékou Touré, in his flowing white robes, often flanked by his cohort, Kwame Nkrumah, who had been kicked out of Ghana. They would circle about the stadium in an open Mercedes. Following the President's lead, shouting into a microphone - "*l'imperialisme*" - , the crowd would chant "*a bas* , "down with". The President: *le colonialisme*; the crowd - "*abas*". President - "*le neo-colonialisme*"; crowd - "*abas*". We must have attended two to three dozens of such events at the stadium, to which the diplomatic corps would be summoned with rarely more than a day's notice, often just hours, as announced over the "Voice of the Revolution." Like Fidel, Sekou could go on for hours, seeking to whip up the "*militants*", or party faithful who were supposed to be the entire population, fully mobilized behind the Revolution.

Q: As a reporting officer, were you able to get out and around much?

THIBAULT: My time in Guinea was very much divided into two phases. The first year, until November 1970, you could travel about the country. We were under tight observation and you had to have permission from the government in order to leave the capital but people were relatively open. Africans are very friendly. I spoke fluent French, so I had no problem in communicating. We reported extensively on our interactions with the government and on events that we thought were of interest to the Department. I am more cynical today of just how much

attention Washington paid to Guinea at the time, but I took it very seriously. We had also a reporting list that was tasked from Washington and there was only one reporting officer. So I reported on United Nations programs, for example. AID had closed its mission and I had to monitor and report on our residual programs, primarily PL 480. I also did economic reporting; for example, there were bauxite mines, in which there was some U.S. investment. And I handled the commercial work as well. And to the extent that Washington had any interest in political reporting I did that as well. Mainly what the president was saying, his pronouncements and how this fitted into West African regional politics and the like. I was extremely busy.

Q: What about the rest of the diplomatic corps? Was this a sort of cohesive little group? I'm talking about the Westerners there.

THIBAULT: Yes, there were not many but we were all on friendly terms. The other "large" Western embassy were the Germans, West Germans that is, mainly because they were there as a counter to the East Germans. As a result of that, they ran several aid programs and a large technical school as well, so they had some people there. The French, of course, were not present. There were no relations between France and Guinea. There were three or four Italians, the Japanese, the Indians, Pakistanis, and a handful of other countries. There were surprisingly few African diplomats, mainly because Sekou was at odds with all the "collaborators" who had become associated with the French. We all knew each other well. Again, I was very junior. I was a Third Secretary, but it didn't prevent me from hobnobbing with ambassadors and more senior people in the dip corps.

Q: Was there a general feeling that Guinea was on a downward spiral because of the socialist influence?

THIBAULT: That was very clear. You saw no growth that was occurring. As I said earlier, Guinea had been a relatively prosperous place before independence. There was a large, I wouldn't call them French although they had French nationality, Lebanese community. Throughout West Africa many of your trader community were Lebanese and there were still a large number of them left in Guinea. But there had been far more, plus French and other nationalities, before independence. And they had left the infrastructure of a very nice colonial city but you could see the decay and the projects that had come to a sudden halt and the fact that only Soviet- and Chinese- funded projects existed. And most of these were showcases for the party and Sekou, such as the People's Palace and the stadium. Roads were abominable; there was no investment in the country. So you certainly saw economic decline and stagnation.

Q: How about you and your wife? Were you able to make contact with the people? Or with sort of an East German influence, was that available?

THIBAULT: No, my wife taught at the small American school which covered a number of grades. She was one of three American teachers. The director was an African-American woman who had been in Guinea for a number of years. Through her, she was able to meet Guineans. As I said earlier, they were very friendly. I can't say that we had a very large circle of Guinean acquaintances or friends, outside of the government, because there were constraints there. But we were able, certainly, to develop relationships, yes.

Q: Well, this was, I think I'm right, a period where many American blacks were going after their roots, or not?

THIBAULT: Well, you had some, but not so much going after their roots. I mean, the *Roots* TV series was after this. But you had so-called American revolutionaries. Stokely Carmichael was in residence, African nationalists, if you will. He was the most prominent of them in Guinea but there only a handful. Stokely was a great buddy of our Bill Davis, our PAO, who himself was African-American. Bill was an extremely effective officer. He had a very wide selection of Guinean friends and buddies and Stokely would come to his house. As I said earlier, this experience was clearly divided between pre-November 21, 1970 and post-November 21, 1970.

Q: All right, let's talk about November 21, 1970. What happened?

THIBAULT: On the morning of that day, which was the day after *eid al-fitr*, the end of Ramadan, the ambassador got up. He always got up early. His house was on the Corniche, or seaside road. Conakry is like a big finger, a narrow peninsula that juts into the sea. His house was on the water, a few yards from a small beach. He thought he saw activity on the horizon. Being an old navy man, he went out and got his binoculars, looked again, now spotting a flotilla of warships far out at sea. And then to his astonishment they began launching boats like Boston Whalers which, as he watched, landed on the coast, some of them not too far from the ambassador's residence. That was the beginning of an attempt by the Portuguese, who were in neighboring Portuguese Guinea (now Guinea-Bissau), to overthrow the Touré government. The reason for their hostility was that the headquarters for the liberation movement for Portuguese Guinea was located in Conakry and they had an enclave there. So they would maintain contact with their people, being directed by their leader, Amilcar Cabral, who was a very charismatic personality. Cabral was recognized not just as leader of the PAIGC, the name of their party, but even in Pan-African terms as one of the great African liberation leaders. The Portuguese then were under military rule. So they launched this expedition to be rid of the PAIGC once and for all .

I should tell you that we had one policy guidance from Washington, and I recall being told this by the desk before I left Washington, to keep our contacts with the PAIGC to the lowest possible profile. They didn't say not to have any contacts at all, but to keep them at the very lowest profile, because at that time, Portugal being a NATO country, we were in negotiations with them for the renewal of our facilities in the Azores. They did not want to do anything to upset the Portuguese. So for the Americans to go hobnobbing in any visible sense with the PAIGC was not something that Lisbon, or Washington, would welcome. The country team, in concert with the desk agreed that I, being the most junior person and a Third Secretary, was disposable or, I should say, deniable. These were very carefully calibrated and calculated forays and I'd meet Cabral and his subordinates on the diplomatic cocktail circuit, because PAIGC representatives would be invited by others. So I would chat with them, making sure that others were present. Not surprisingly, they would always invite me to meet with them at their camp outside the city. So in careful coordination with the Africa Bureau, I was allowed to do that once or twice but it was a very sensitive subject.

So to resume, on November 21, the Portuguese fanned out. In fact, to my knowledge, they were overwhelmingly African troops. They began seizing strong points and the fighting raged all day. I had left to drive overland for the first time to Liberia a few days earlier. As it happened, I was returning from Monrovia and entering Guinea that very day. I stopped at the border of Liberia and Guinea at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The crossing point was in the bush with nothing in sight but there was a border post and the road. While looking at my passport and visa, the Guinean border official exclaimed, "Oh, it's two o'clock. I must turn on the news from Conakry," referring to the regular two o'clock news broadcast. And immediately he did that, I could hear the Voice of the Revolution describing how "our brave troops are fighting the Portuguese, the imperialist invaders. The President of the Republic is at the head of the valiant resisters. We are certainly going to drive them into the sea." Very inflammatory, very highly charged language. So the border fellow, while very distraught and upset by the news, nevertheless allowed me to enter Guinean territory. I hadn't gone more than about ten kilometers after picking up my Embassy driver, who had been waiting because the Liberians wouldn't allow Guineans into their country, when we rounded a bend and immediately were surrounded by guys with their weapons drawn, all pointed at me.

It was a police post. I was immediately asked for my papers which I showed them. I said, "I'm a diplomat. You have no right to examine the car." They said, "Monsieur, we're at war! We have to search you and we're going to detain you." To add further insult to injury, from their point of view, they looked through my wallet and they came across a calling card from a person I'd called on in Monrovia. And he said, "Ha! You've been in touch with the Portuguese!" I said, "What do you mean?" "It says right here! General Tire! Military man!" I said, "No, that's the name of a company." *General Tire! Tire* in French also means to shoot. So I was really in the soup. I was brought under heavy escort to the provincial governor, who was himself rallying the *militants*, as they called them, the Party faithful, who were a sort of paramilitary force. Well, one of the reasons for my trip upcountry had been to call on the new ambassador to Washington, who happened to be this governor. We had had a very good conversation on my way into Liberia. So on my way out of Liberia they bring me to see him. We fell into each other's arms and then he brought me up to speed on what was going on in Conakry. I was held there for about three days, at a hotel, with a World Bank guy. The ambassador managed to get a message out to me, saying my wife was okay and they were working with the government to have me flown to Conakry. So finally, I did fly back to Conakry.

What had happened was, as I say, the Portuguese had used some of their African troops, who were abandoned on the beaches by Portuguese officers, their white officers who returned to their ships. Presumably to add legitimacy to the enterprise, the Portuguese gave it the cover of being a Guinean exiles' force that had attacked and was seizing the town and was to overthrow the Toure regime, but they weren't numerous enough, not strong enough, not well organized enough, whatever. So the Guineans beat them back and finally pushed them back to the sea, where many of them had fled. A lot were just shot in the water and a number of them were taken prisoner. That's when the domestic purge began.

The president's view was the Portuguese would never have dared to attack the bastion of African liberation, as he called Guinea, unless they could count on a "fifth column" in the country, consisting of counter-revolutionaries, traitors, spies and their collaborators. How would you

know if someone was a collaborator? Well, prime suspects were those who had had a substantive connection with the French in the past, and there were a lot of former military people who had served in the French army and, of course, many civil servants, teachers, professionals, and businessmen. There was a whole class of people who, under the French regime, had been part of that system. The huge purge that immediately followed the aborted invasion rivaled the Thirties in Russia in its atmospherics and organization and that's how we reported it to Washington. Day in and day out for months you would have confessions on the radio: a monotone voice in which people identified themselves and then described, in very elaborate terms, their involvement in the *complot*, in the plot, and their collaboration with the Portuguese. In fact, you'd recognize the voices of people you knew. I myself was mentioned a number of times because I had traveled upcountry and stopped and called on people. Here was an American NATO spy who, just before the Portuguese attack, had obviously been coordinating their responses on the eve of the attack. It all fell into place. It was also very sad. I can well recall one morning driving into the embassy and seeing the bodies of a number of people dangling from an overpass. And what's worse, they had brought buses of schoolchildren and the families of those who had been executed, who were on the road looking up, watching the bodies sway gently, while singing revolutionary songs and shouting slogans in support of the president. We would visit cemeteries to count new mounds in order to judge the death toll of the purge.

Amazingly, in spite of my alleged involvement, as publicly reprinted in *Horoya*, I was not told to leave, the Ambassador was not called in, I continued my normal activities with government officials. For the remainder of my time in Conakry, another 12-13 months after the attack, the atmosphere was totally charged with the purge, which went on week after week, month after month of bitter denunciation of the West and particularly of the Germans, the West Germans. Again, we didn't bear the full brunt of it but the West Germans did and again I'm sure their East German cousins were behind that. Many non-official foreigners were expelled. Any foreigner married to a Guinean who had been arrested, usually a wife, was expelled with the children "to be raised by the Party." It was a very vivid experience, a very personal experience for me and my wife.

Q: What about the American sort of revolutionaries, Stokely Carmichael?

THIBAULT: Well, they started packing pistols on their hip and wearing berets mimicking Che Guevara in order to display their identification with Sekou and the revolution. To give you a flavor of the regime, when the telephone would ring, a Guinean wouldn't answer "Hello"; rather, you replied "Committed to the revolution." "*Prêt pour la revolution.*" As a Guinean, you assumed your phone line was monitored and you took no chances by being less than ardent in your zeal. The revolutionary rhetoric was everywhere. As I say, we at the embassy were not directly on the receiving end of the Guinean vituperation and of the media attacks, or at least far less so than were the Germans. One reason being that, a day or two before the attack itself the German foreign minister ...

Q: Genscher?

THIBAULT: Yes, Genscher had visited Lisbon. That was proof positive that the Nazis in Bonn were giving orders to their acolytes in Lisbon and, of course, the East Germans were feeding

this. Technicians at the German school, the German funded school that I mentioned, which was a technical school, doing excellent work, were all arrested. Ironically, many of the so-called Nazis were Israeli citizens who were working under contract for the NGO that operated the technical school. It took a long time before they were released. It was sort of like the aftershock from an earthquake. There were incidents that would flare up unexpectedly, months after the failed attack. One of them involved a bauxite mine that was owned by Aluminum Company of Canada, Alcan, and Alcoa of the US, a fifty-fifty venture. Roughly half the staff were Canadians and half were Americans, meaning the expat technicians, maybe about 15 or 20 of them working on a little island off the tip of Conakry, where there are bauxite deposits. We got word that they had all been arrested and were being brought to court. The ambassador immediately sent me down to the courthouse to find out what was going on. I reached the prison like enclosure, getting there just in time to see the truck pull out. They dropped the tailgate and the prisoners walked off the back of the truck onto the top step of the courthouse and immediately were brought into the courtroom. There was a judge sitting at a tribunal. The proceedings lasted about ten minutes at most, in which, without ever making a statement, they were all found guilty of antirevolutionary activities and marched out to get back on the truck, with sentencing to be announced later. At that very moment, a man came running in with a piece of paper, shouting at the top of his lungs, saying, "Wait! Wait! Wait! The president has given them an amnesty!" While he had sent me to observe, our ambassador, Bud Sherer, had gone to the presidential palace saying all hell would break out in Washington if these people weren't released immediately and that had had some effect. So they were returned to the small boat, went back to the island, and by that afternoon they were at their jobs as if nothing had happened. It was just a surreal atmosphere.

The ambassador had good access to the top leaders. Many of the people around the president, as is often the case, were much more reasonable to deal with. We had a special relationship with the foreign minister, who before this had happened, before the Portuguese attack, had been sent to either Bethesda Naval or Walter Reed on some medical issue. I can't recall what it was. That was something we used to do in those days, I don't know if we still do it. We would sometimes arrange for local dignitaries in Third World countries, where they had inadequate medical facilities, to have them sent to one of our military facilities. They always were very grateful for that. But there was follow-up treatment and the RMO, the State Department's regional medical officer for West Africa was stationed in Conakry, because it had the worst medical facilities of any of the countries in the region. So it was logical to place the RMO there. We had an acting RMO who was the personal physician of Wilbur Hayes, I don't know if you remember, the congressman ...

Q: Oh, yeah, he was the one was caught, went into the pool

THIBAULT: The Reflecting Pool

Q: With Fanne Foxe, who had a very large bust size

THIBAULT: She was a foxy lady! Well, this doctor from the same home town as the congressman was his great and good buddy and, I don't know why, but he often would spend a little time in an embassy in Africa, filling in for an RMO who was on vacation. He volunteered for that. Actually, he was a very decent guy and a good physician. In Conakry, he provided

follow-up medication and monitoring to the Minister, invariably accompanied by a *pique* ...

Q: Injections.

THIBAUT: Injections. The Africans absolutely believed that the *pique* was essential to sound medicine. So the ambassador instructed me, "Al, you go with him." The doctor didn't speak any French. "Go with him and try to pump him of any information. Try and steer the conversation." We'd work up talking points on issues for me to raise with the minister while he was bending over, baring his rump for the *pique*. There was Thibault, trying to pump him of information! What a place!

Anyway, this atmosphere of terror continued for the remainder of my tour there. The security measures that were then put in place were notched up, ratcheted up to an incredible degree. You would have checkpoints on major roads every 200 or 300 yards and these young kids at night, armed with AK 47's in Party uniforms and armbands would stop you as you were coming home from someplace. They would see you stopped down the road, at one checkpoint, and yet would stop you at another. They weren't asking for money. It wasn't a shakedown. They just wanted to see your papers. We soon learned that those from "brotherly countries" always seemed to be waved through. The Russians, the Chinese, the Algerians, you name it and they always were "people's democracies." So I soon learned that they would ask me, "Who are you? Show your papers." I would say, "I'm from the People's Democratic American Republic." (It sounds even more impressive in French!) "Thank you!" You'd be waved right through. As I told my colleagues, "We're popular, elected by the people, democratic, a republic. The People's Democratic American Republic, why not?" Better that than to have one of these kids loose on the trigger or something.

So we would be following this unfolding process, comparing notes. In the embassy itself, we had radio duty, because Horoya was only published once a week and it was just a rag. Yet, the president was constantly to be heard on the radio. All information, most announcements and summons to the People's Palace for chiefs of mission, were all conveyed via the Voix de la Revolution, by radio. You had to be tuned all the time, especially at night. So we would assign our team, our staff, those who spoke French, to radio duty. It was scheduled, assigned duty and you'd report back to the country team the following morning. So the nine o'clock news would come on, and then go on forever. The president was like Fidel. What was worse is that he or his ministers would first speak in French for a time, and then their remarks would be translated into one or two local languages, after which the French broadcast would resume. So it could go on at great length. Very often I would set up a tape recorder, like this one. We had a servant, whom I told, "Michel, it's your job to turn this on at nine o'clock." I would have to come home at eleven or twelve, or whenever, and with pen and paper listen to this a couple of hours, taking notes to see if there was any nugget worth reporting to the country team the next day. What a place!

What was interesting too, a reflection of very different times compared to today, is that security was a post responsibility. You didn't have a regional security officer on the Embassy roster, you didn't have an RSO. I don't think the position existed; it certainly didn't exist in Conakry. To the extent that security issues arose, you were asked to apply common sense without much specific guidance. Washington was very relaxed about this. When the Portuguese attacked and there was

much shooting all over the place, we were all at home. I was out of town but everybody else was at home. My wife and I shared a house with the CDC's measles/smallpox program officer and his wife, a duplex. They all sought refuge in an interior room without any walls. When I came home the ground was littered with brightly shining copper shells. The Guineans had been shooting wildly seaward, in case the Portuguese decided to land on our side of the corniche. Having served many years later in Saudi Arabia and in India, when security was a big issue, let me tell you the reaction, the institutional reaction, was very different thirty years ago from what it is today. Nobody was called home, no evacuation of dependents, no sending out of teams, no security review, no accountability review boards, no Mylar for windows, no moving to a secure location, and of course no concern then with an attack on a diplomatic facility and no concern then with suicide or other car bombs, or with any of the threats that are felt so immediately today. I mean it was a very different world then.

Q: Well, was there ever any consideration of getting Americans out of there, the embassy?

THIBAULT: No, and we had all our dependents with us. It never occurred to anyone.

Q: I would have thought that, here you have an economy in a downward spiral anyway and if Touré is going after all those with essentially foreign connections, foreign training, he's just gutting the ability of the country to work.

THIBAULT: Right, I agree. That's exactly what happened and in fact what that resulted over time in was a tremendous exodus of Guineans to neighboring countries, particularly to the Ivory Coast. When we were there, when I was there, I mean if there was one paradise on earth, it was *Cote d'Ivoire*, the Ivory Coast and particularly Abidjan. And of course the president's great target, in terms of his own personal vituperation on the radio, was Houphouët-Boigny, the president of Ivory Coast, whom he would denounce vociferously. Now they had all known each other and worked very closely with each other in pre-independence days. And Houphouët led the movement by all of the French colonies, with the exception of Guinea, to remain in economic alliance with France. At that time, they had a West African franc which was tied to the French franc, so it was considered a hard currency. Of course, Houphouët had the famous wager with Nkrumah: Ghana became independent in '57, Ivory Coast in '58, who in ten years would have progressed the most in economic terms, each following different paths? I think within six months it was clear who was going to win that one, and it wasn't Nkrumah in Ghana. So Ivory Coast acted as a magnet, as did, to a lesser extent, Senegal, where Senghor was the president. And again, Senghor was one of these, in Touré's language, one of these collaborators and "running dogs" of the French. The fact that the French sort of bolstered their economy, subsidized it to a large extent, to a point where the standard of living there was much higher than in Guinea, attracting all of these Guineans, just was rubbing salt into the wound, as far as Touré was concerned. Or Sékou, I should say as everybody called him Sékou.

Q: Did we have any aid programs when you were there?

THIBAULT: Not really, no. In fact, that's why my title was political, economic and AID affairs officer. The AID program had been closed down before my arrival. We had one TCN, third country national, a Greek fellow, and I was the officer supervising him. He was maintaining the

individual program accounts. That is, there were loan agreements in which the Guineans were obliged to make certain payments, but we had no program *per se*, with the exception of the measles/ smallpox eradication program which was operated out of CDC in Atlanta. This was a West African program in which we had teams consisting of an American with locals, aiming at eradication of measles and smallpox. They were very successful, as we know, particularly with smallpox. That was the only AID program that I can recall along with some minor PL 480 activity. I can't remember if it was Title I or Title II sales. But that was it.

Q: Were we monitoring what the various Soviet bloc people and the Chinese were doing?

THIBAULT: Oh, of course we were monitoring them, absolutely. I won't go into the details of that, but yes, that was an issue of interest to us. Not only in terms of individuals, as intelligence targets, but in terms of what they as governments were doing in Guinea and as a part of a larger pattern of what they were doing in Africa. So, yes.

Q: Well, just to sort of pick up the feelings of the time. Was there concern, now I realize you were a very junior officer, in your first post and all that, but were you picking up the feeling that we were really concerned about sort of the Communist Bloc being on the move in Africa and taking over things? Or were you seeing this as a miserable failure?

THIBAULT: I think both, in the sense that we certainly saw it as a miserable failure. On the other hand, there was a concern that Sékou Touré, as a very charismatic leader, might be a Trojan Horse for the Soviets. Nothing I have said about him begins to convey a flavor of the man's personality - someone who filled a room by his sheer presence, a very powerful speaker, a very engaging person, if you were to meet him one on one, as I observed him on a number of occasions. He was a very handsome, highly charismatic man. He was one of the icons of radical opinion in Africa. So to the extent that he could reach out to Africans, I think this was a subject of concern. In fact, of course, as I and others could readily see, Sekou's appeal was diminished by the utter failure of the Guinean economy and the steady exodus of Guineans to neighboring countries. At that time, of course, we were concerned with the stability and the long term future of pro-Western governments in West Africa but the feeling was that this was primarily a French issue. They had priority in trying to shore up their presence and their influence in the countries that had once been under their domination.

Q: Well, you were sort of, in a way, in the wrong place for this but there had been, particularly during the late Fifties and the Sixties almost hysteria in approach about Africa being the shining hope. All sorts of things were going to happen. Were you getting anybody who had been around more, sort of a dying down of this feeling?

THIBAULT: No, this was, of course, the Nixon Administration time and, no, just getting them to pay attention was always a challenge. We did have one visit then, though, by the assistant secretary, David Newsom, who came out. He was very well received by Sékou, who brought him to his private home, to his country retreat, so to speak. But, no, I don't think there were any illusions about what we could achieve with Guinea, particularly with Guinea.

Q: Well, I've heard stories of Sékou Touré who threw people sort of basically in jail and maybe

not even feed them or anything.

THIBAULT: Well, there were these stories, absolutely, many of them well documented. Many of the people who were imprisoned in the wake of the Portuguese attack died there. Those who came out of it said they were very ill-treated. Sekou died suddenly in 1984, at the Cleveland Heart Institute, and within three or four days the whole edifice that he had built up, around the Party, particularly of the Party, collapsed. What seemed so strong and permanent was all built around one man.

Q: You get any feel for the Guineans, as far as their native abilities. I mean, different countries have got particular strengths. If you take away the problem of the president.

THIBAULT: No, we found the Guineans to be very engaging, very nice people. Very sharp and they had that reputation elsewhere in Africa, in West Africa. They were a people who were ill-served by their government; given their many qualities, they deserved a far better government. The universally held opinion was that, left to themselves, the Guineans would be very, very different, without a tyrant running roughshod over them.

Q: Well, I would assume that with a tyrant like that you wouldn't have a problem that hit some of the other places, like corruption.

THIBAULT: You would or would not, did you say?

Q: Would not. I just would think you would not want to get caught.

THIBAULT: Well, there was very little to be corrupt about, to begin with. And of course, as a diplomat you're shielded somewhat from this. The Party controlled what meager resources were available. Foodstuffs, for example, were distributed through Party channels, through what they called *comites*, committees, at the local, even the block and village level. Access to education, medical care, all of that depended on your standing with Party officials. How this was administered, how this was managed, I don't pretend to know in detail. In addition, there were different ethnic groups as the Guineans are a compound of different ethnicities and the Peulh, from the northern part of the country, had been opposed to Sékou Touré, who was a Malinke, in the pre-independence period. So there was a widespread feeling that he didn't trust them and that they suffered as a result. The foreign minister I mentioned himself was a Peulh, or a Foulah, another word they used, but he was a symbol. Most of the people in the regime were Malinkes, as was the president.

Q: Had Gaddafi come into power by this point?

THIBAULT: He was in power. He came into power in '67 or '68. I don't recall any Libyan involvement there.

Q: Any other country, other than the Portuguese, messing around there?

THIBAULT: No, other than the Eastern Europeans I've already mentioned. Guinea does not

occupy a strategic location. It's got large bauxite deposits, but that's about all. So it doesn't have much to offer, to make it worthwhile. You'd have to have a political objective in Guinea which, surrounded on all sides by countries that had rejected the Guinean approach or model, didn't really mean that you obtained much traction. It wasn't any beachhead, it was more like a retreat. They were into survival mode.

Q: Nkrumah play any particular role there?

THIBAULT: He was visible, he was certainly visible, and he was often invoked by Sékou, but no, I don't think so. His fate in Ghana certainly made Sékou doubly aware of plotting around him or the potential for plots against him, particularly by the army. Which is why he relied so heavily on the Party as opposed to the army. But no, in terms of internal decision-making I don't recall Nkrumah playing much of a role.

Q: Did he play up to this non-aligned business, travel around a lot or stay pretty much to home?

THIBAULT: He stayed very much at home. He traveled very little. I think the feeling on our side was that he was afraid a coup might occur during his absence. Nkrumah was overthrown when he was traveling. So he stuck to home. In fact, he traveled very little outside of Conakry itself. So, as I say, I think Nkrumah's example influenced him.

Q: We're talking about 1971?

THIBAULT: I left in December '71.

DONALD R. NORLAND
Deputy Chief of Mission
Conakry (1970-1972)

Ambassador Donald R. Norland was born in Laurens, Iowa in 1924. He joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Morocco, the Ivory Coast, France (NATO), the Netherlands, and Guinea, and ambassadorships to Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Chad. Ambassador Norland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Well, in 1970, you went back to Africa. Had you been making African noises?

NORLAND: Yes. And Earl Sohm was very prominent in the personnel system at the time, and I had been in correspondence with him. We tried to get something other than West Africa, but this was the only thing that was available. So we were assigned to Conakry, Guinea.

The problem at this point was that our two sons were out of elementary and at the junior high level and could not accompany us. My daughter, on the other hand, did come and attended an international school there. (I think there were eighteen students and fourteen nationalities.) But

we had to arrange for the boys to go to the American School of Las Palmas, in the Canary Islands, for the first year, and then to Mount Hermon, in Massachusetts, for the second year.

Conakry was another example of what we've talked about. I don't know how much detail you want. It was an extraordinarily demanding post, for the simple reason that the president belongs on the list of tyrants of the twentieth century. That is Sekou Touré. He aspired to be a Leninist. His outer office was filled with his own works, and, in addition, works by Lenin. Even though he was a Muslim and did not believe in subordinating Guinea's interest to the Soviet Union in any respect, he was ideologically very close to that country.

An event occurred on November 22, 1970 that transformed the whole assignment. Not many people remember it, namely the invasion by Portuguese naval forces and commandos of the capital of Guinea, Conakry. The invasion began on the morning of the 22nd. We were obliged to remain in our houses, but the shooting went on during a good many hours over two days coming from the ships offshore. I saw them with my own eyes; this was not imaginary. I went from looking at those ships with binoculars to consulting Jane's Fighting Ships; I could identify the ships as being part of the Portuguese navy. So for me there was no question about this.

Q: Before we get to this, in the first place, you went to Conakry as the deputy chief of mission. You arrived when, and what was the situation when you arrived?

NORLAND: Arrived in July of 1970. The ambassador was already there, another great Foreign Service figure, Albert W. Sherer. He had come from Togo, but he had spent five years before that in Poland. He was really an Eastern European specialist. He'd been assigned to Czechoslovakia before that. A man of great dignity and perceptiveness and a wonderful boss. I remember the first day; he handed me a paper which I still have somewhere, saying, "Here's how I view the relationship between the ambassador and the DCM. You will do the following things; in effect, you'll run the embassy, and I will conduct high-level contacts and negotiations, except where we agree that you will do it." And it was a marvelous setup.

But the situation was bad even then. We'd had constant problems with suspicions about Americans. This was a time of great troubles in Guinea, and the leader, Sékou Touré, was looking for a scapegoat. For example, he did not trust the Germans. One of them lived next door to us, i.e. the German DCM, named Walter le Walter.

Q: Which Germans were these?

NORLAND: These were West Germans. There were also East Germans around. They were in a compound, isolated on the edge of town. Almost from the time of our arrival, the West German ambassador was accused of having conspired against Guinea. This was a time when the Catholic archbishop, whose name was Tchidimbo, was accused of conspiring against Guinea. You had one person after another in the business community accused, sometimes publicly, of being anti-Guinean. It was a terrible atmosphere. The number of these cases was multiplied almost indefinitely, resulting in a siege mentality.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea that was causing all these problems?

NORLAND: One of the problems was that the economy was going very badly; things had deteriorated. And when you have a very poor economy and you are making all the wrong decisions as to how to remedy it, you can no longer blame people within the country; you start to blame foreigners.

At the same time, there was some provocation from outside. Sékou Touré had allowed the PAIGC (the liberation movement for Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau; PAIGC stands, in Portuguese, for the Party for Independence of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau) to establish its headquarters on the outskirts of Conakry. The Portuguese were constantly accusing Guinea of assisting the liberation movement of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, which, of course, they did. So the Portuguese were undoubtedly sending in observer spies, trying to recruit Guineans, who were otherwise angry at Sékou Touré because the situation was deplorable, especially the economic situation. We couldn't get food, so we organized a weekly flight from Brussels, on Sabena Airlines, that was our lifeline for fresh fruits and vegetables. This despite the fact the country was wealthy. It had great potential, including mineral resources. There was a mountain in the north, near a town called Boké, that consisted of bauxite. The Russians had a bauxite operation about seventy-five miles from the capital. The French had long exploited Guinean bauxite, for forty years perhaps. The French company was called Fria. Fria transformed bauxite to alumina because of the abundance of hydropower. Guinea is mountainous. It has the headwaters of six major river systems, including the Niger. It has climatic variations that made it agreeable. We were only able to get upcountry once. But in the old days, American missionaries from all of West Africa used Kankan, a city in the far eastern section of Guinea, for rest and recreation.

Q: Sort of like Simla or something like that.

NORLAND: Exactly. They had adequate accommodations and opportunities to recover from the heat and humidity of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and other places.

Sékou was in a mood that can only be described as paranoiac and xenophobic. He was irrational. And he was trying to build momentum for his party. The more the people resisted, the more he implored and cajoled them. We attended one political rally after another. Sékou insisted that the diplomatic corps attend most of these functions.

The Chinese had built a Palais du Peuple, which seated probably twenty-five hundred people. It was beautiful, very well done. It had only been inaugurated a few years earlier. Whenever a high-ranking person came to town, there would be a reception and a gathering at the Palais du Peuple, where Sékou would speak.

From time to time this was interesting and entertaining. There would be local dances, and Miriam Makeba would sing. Miriam Makeba was, at the time, married to Stokely Carmichael, and they were living in Guinea. We used to attend the same dinners; some people thought it useful to bring them together with Americans. Stokely later changed his name to Kwame Touré. Miriam was a delightful person. Of course, her singing enchanted us all.

But Sékou's attempt to mobilize the people by means of the party, the PDG (Parti Démocratique Guinée) led to excesses. And one would sit in that auditorium and listen to long speeches. At one point, Sékou actually made a seven-hour speech--four hours with an intermission and then three more. It was the same old rhetoric.

I'll never forget a Swedish diplomat happened to be visiting, and saw how the system operated. Sékou changed the language. You were not allowed, when you picked up the telephone, to say "bonjour" or say "monsieur." The first words you had to utter were "Pret pour la révolution" (ready for the revolution). This is not imagination; it was real. Anyone could be accused of conspiring, even for not answering the telephone in a certain way. It was "Pret pour la révolution," and then talk about your business. Everybody was being monitored. The atmosphere was tense, really disagreeable.

Q: What were American interests in this country?

NORLAND: Our principal interest was that ALCOA and ALCAN together with a German, an Italian and a French company, had developed a consortium called the CBG (Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée), which was going to exploit that mountain of bauxite at Boké in the north of the country. The big new operation, in addition to Fria and the Russians, was to be exploited jointly with the Americans of ALCOA to be the operating company. Operating personnel came from Pittsburgh. So we had the challenge of helping get CBG into operation. There was a need to identify a Guinean to be the front man acceptable to Sékou Touré, and able to bring the Guinea government along and make it possible for the operation to succeed. The World Bank helped enormously. The Guinean ambassador to the United States in the early Sixties, for five years was Karim Bangoura, described in one of Dean Rusk's memoirs as being the most effective foreign ambassador in the United States at the time. He helped get the World Bank loan that enabled the CBG to go forward. He had completed his tour here and returned to Guinea where he became minister of transport. We used to see him. But he had to discourage us from coming around to see him, because of this terrible suspicion that Sékou Touré had that foreigners were recruiting Guineans as spies. In November '70, Bangoura was arrested and later killed.

Q: Well, tell me, under these circumstances, what were you and the embassy telling the ALCOA people? From what you're telling me, it sounds like it was the sort of place to say, "Well, is it really worth it to you to do this?"

NORLAND: It was worth it. They felt they had the markets. They had the bauxite under an arrangement that was well out of town: It was a hundred and fifty miles to Boké and the port of Kamsar, where the bauxite would be loaded. And they felt that they could somehow work with the local authorities. Through a Guinean, whose name was Marcel Cros, a relative of Sékou Touré's, they felt they could somehow arrange for immunity from this terrible paranoia. And CBG didn't have much interest in getting too close to us, for that reason.

But we were very frank. We told them the situation was uncertain. Yet, in many ways, they knew more about it than we did, because they were in daily contact with the people in the north on whom they depended for so many things. And it was in the interest of Guinea to make this

operation go, because, as was predictable, within a few years bauxite from this one plant would account for about eighty-five percent of Guinea's foreign exchange.

Sékou desperately wanted that revenue; he had very little else in the way of support for his government.

But he did have a country with resources, and if it weren't for his incredibly paranoid mentality, that country could have succeeded. Many a high-ranking American came, saw the country and its economic potential, its mineral resources, water and land, and declared that Guinea would no doubt be one of the success stories of Africa.

I can give you the names of at least two assistant secretaries who came out, who were terribly impressed by Sékou Touré and who said, "This guy has found the secret for erasing tribalism." Guinea is torn by something like thirty tribes, but there are three main groups. One is in the north; one in the south, from which Sékou came; and then the coastal tribe. We had people who were absolutely overwhelmed by this man's rhetoric. He was a brilliant orator, no question about it.

Then cholera broke out. We were told this was the first time cholera had broken out in Africa in many years. Why? Because the level of infrastructure in the city was so bad. And Sékou Touré refused to admit that it was cholera. We had the WHO people who wanted to come to Guinea to verify it, and at first he wouldn't let them come in. When they came in, he wouldn't let them take their equipment or findings out.

It's difficult to imagine the scope of this man's political hold on the country, and his paranoia. It was a never-never land.

Q: Were the Soviets, the East Germans, the Communist Chinese playing on this?

NORLAND: Yes, and they overplayed it. The Soviets had their ambassador thrown out twice. They interpreted Sékou's language as meaning that they could override the bureaucracy and do what they wanted to do, so he threw them out. There was that element of independence in spite of this terrible atmosphere. I can't begin to tell you how difficult it was.

Q: How did it work for the embassy staff there?

NORLAND: We hunkered down. As a matter of fact, I came across a card the other day: How to behave in a roadblock. This came after the invasion but, even before, people were setting up roadblocks and shaking you down. There were areas of town where you could not go, could not drive. One of the areas (just a little footnote) was on the south corniche, bordering on the Atlantic, where Nkrumah had been given a house...

Q: This was after he'd been...

NORLAND: After he'd been deposed. Nkrumah was pronounced as the co-president of Guinea at one point. Do you remember that?

Q: *Yes.*

NORLAND: He lived there, you could not go near it. If you came near it, they'd shoot at your car. You'd had to detour around; it was a pain in the neck.

And then the cholera. We had a medical doctor, a resident there named Dr. Jassie. We didn't have an effective vaccine, so we had meetings of the whole staff; I remember one in the garage, where we got everybody together, and the doctor was telling people to protect themselves against cholera. "Be sure to keep clean, and eat bananas." This was his antidote to cholera. No Americans got it, but it was a difficult time.

We have other people who should really be interviewed before they forget. One of them is Johnny Young, who was our administrative officer, a young officer at the time. He's now the head of Personnel. He came back from Sierra Leone about six, eight months ago, where he'd been ambassador. But Johnny and Angie Young were there, and they suffered along with all of us. Some others did not want to stay. Bud Sherer sent a telegram to the Department saying, "Because of conditions here, I've got to make this offer that anyone who wants to leave will be allowed to leave." And we had one person who left.

Macomber (M) was furious. He said, "You're not the personnel system out there. You've got to go through us. We can't allow this to happen."

Bud Sherer stood up and said, "Look, we don't want anybody out here at this time who is not willing to endure this thing with us."

Because of steady leadership like Bud Sherer's morale wasn't too bad.

Every time you had a Guinean contact, though, you had this feeling that you might be hurting the person you were talking to.

Q: *You were running the embassy, but obviously you were taking over from him, and you had the political officer or economic officer. How did you operate?*

NORLAND: We would certainly not go out and make random contacts. We would almost always go through the established procedure, which was go to Protocol, register, and then be actually accompanied, in many cases, by the Protocol Office to the person that you wanted to see. And we conducted our business in a very official way, very much like the Soviet Union during those years.

The economic officer was a guy, now retired, named Ollie Jones (E.O. Jones); he lives up in Dover, Mass. He spent much of his time covering the port. I remember he used to get out there and talk to people coming off ships, wanting to see the town or whatever, and he would find out why they were there. He would follow the bauxite operation through the offices of CBG in Conakry. Just sort of taking what you could. It was not well organized reporting of the kind you would want.

And we had the Agency (CIA) there. They had quite a lot to do. In addition to the countries you just mentioned, there were diplomats from Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. It was the Czechs or East Germans, one of the two, who succeeded in planting a small listening device in a drawer of the desk in the ambassador's office. There was an apartment house about 50 feet from the ambassador's office window which triggered the device.

Q: *We're talking about fifty feet.*

NORLAND: They had a way of activating the listening device in the drawer of his desk from that apartment house which they'd rented. I don't know how public the story is; I've seen it in security briefings. But it provides an example of the atmosphere and the work of many of the East Bloc countries. We were not allowed to talk to the Russians, even though they had a compound just a few hundred yards from the ambassador's residence. We could see them on the beach, like us, until the 22nd of November.

Q: *Okay, this was about five months after you had arrived.*

NORLAND: That's right.

Q: *Had anything led up to this?*

NORLAND: It came as a surprise to us. And that's not an unimportant part of the story; the shooting first erupted one morning. We telephoned around and asked what was going on. Miraculously, the phone system, or the internal radio system, worked throughout. Everyone was asked to stay home. Bud Sherer telephoned to Washington and we got a few reports out. But we just hunkered down.

Q: *What was this all about?*

NORLAND: On the one hand, it was about the efforts of the Portuguese to destroy the headquarters of the PAIGC. A second objective was to use some dissident Guineans that the Portuguese had recruited and attack the largest prison, which was right on the water's edge, called Camp Boiro. The goal was to release some Guinean opposition who had been imprisoned there by Sékou Touré. Part of the evidence is that they burned one of Sékou's residences just a quarter of a mile from where we lived, on the north edge of town.

But there are some mysteries. I would love to do a story about the Portuguese invasion. Nobody has ever taken much time to look into it. It's a historical footnote nobody pays attention to. But for us it was a very important...

Q: *Well, how did it play out?*

NORLAND: The invaders came and spent probably about eighteen hours in Conakry. Sékou mobilized what he could in the way of military opposition. His luck was such that he was not in that residence on the edge of town. The invaders succeeded in releasing some prisoners and

rowed them out to the ships. They attacked the old radio station. They missed the new one. Their intelligence was defective; they didn't know where key officials lived. There were a few skirmishes. The invaders returned to their ships and sailed away. And then all hell broke loose.

Q: Did you mention about the headquarters of this...

NORLAND: Yes, they hit the PAIGC headquarters, but didn't destroy it. They didn't capture PAIGC leaders, one of whom was Amilcar Cabral. He was a real hero, someone that I was able to talk to on the fringes of receptions. I was not allowed to meet with him officially because he represented a liberation movement we didn't recognize. The only thing the Portuguese destroyed was this large presidential residence.

The most important consequence was to confirm the paranoia of Sékou Touré. Life was difficult up to then; thereafter it became almost impossible.

I might recall some of the things that occurred during and after the invasion. For example, we had Peace Corps volunteers. The one American casualty was a Peace Corps volunteer who was driving back along the beach road just after the invasion began. He was stopped at a roadblock by the Portuguese. Our understanding was that he was about to be released when Guineans defenders apparently tried to contest the roadblock. Our PCV (Scott) got caught in cross fire and was wounded. This caused quite a stir, as you can imagine. We had a medical doctor to care for him, and then he was evacuated. Within days, all the Peace Corps volunteers were gone. We didn't have an AID operation resident at the time. Then the roadblocks were set up.

And they also instituted something which I'm sure that people will never really believe, and that's why people like Johnny Young and others ought to be interviewed so they can attest to what I'm going to say. They stationed soldiers about every hundred yards on the beach. This was the Atlantic Ocean. And they would not allow anyone to walk on the beach. So, for the remainder of our tour, with few exceptions, we'd not feel safe to walk out from our house to the beach. We would not dare to go out on the rocks near the water.

We were not allowed to travel in the interior. I made one trip out of town, to Kankan, and one trip to a waterfall. Other than that, we were forced to remain within the city limits of Conakry from November 22, 1970, until I left in about August of 1972. We flew out for R&R, in the summer of 1971. Other than that, it was virtually a prison.

What made it tolerable was that the Department was soon able to see that we were not able to operate, to do anything. We were confined to our quarters, confined to the city. All our actions were suspect. We had roadblocks everywhere.

Fortunately, Bud Sherer had a very good friend as Director General, who said, "We're obviously not making use of your talents. We'll develop a plan here where we will use your talents"

Q: John Burns, was it?

NORLAND: No, actually it was another officer whose name will come to me. But he said, "We need an ambassador to Czechoslovakia. We will bring you (Sherer) back and make it appear as though it is dissatisfaction with the way we're being treated. The Guineans will never know the difference."

David Newsom, then assistant secretary of state for African affairs, came to Abidjan for a conference. I was sent to Abidjan, that's another time I got out of the country. I was asked to explain the plan. He was not in favor of it. I don't know why. David was basically conservative, as you know. I'm sure you've talked with him at length.

But the Department eventually approved. And the result was that Bud Sherer said goodbye to Sékou Touré and left in early 1971. He slipped out, spent some time in the Department, and went on to Czechoslovakia.

I was made chargé d'affaires. To emphasize how much a "chargé" I was, I was authorized later to move into the residence. I stayed there almost a year, which made my year there a lot more comfortable. We were living in what was known as the paillote, an enlarged thatched hut. It was a Frenchman's idea of how to adapt local architecture for modern needs. Instead of a hut twenty feet across, it's a hundred feet across. But you have the same conical roof and the same thatch. That was where the DCM normally lived, so we were glad for the opportunity to live in the residence.

We cut staff to a total of eight Americans and hunkered down.

By early '72, the Guineans were suffering deeply; some say there was a threat of starvation. And Guineans came to us and said, "Look, we'd like to have resumption of PL 480 food." I remember I didn't even ask for instructions. I went to see the Minister in question and said, "Did I really hear you correctly? You are asking the country which, according to your newspaper, is imperialist, neocolonialist, subtly attempting to subvert your government, you're asking the U.S. government to give you food aid? I cannot believe it." And the Minister (named Keita) was obviously taken aback. He started the government line. "It is not the government that's saying those things. We don't believe them. That propaganda is not the government's view."

This was kind of a breakthrough. They realized they were in such desperate straits that they had to change policy

Q: *Why couldn't the Soviets...?*

NORLAND: Because the Soviets were not themselves able to offer grain or come up with the resources needed. That's a logical question, and I'm sure that we probably even alluded to it at the time. I can't remember ever putting the Soviets forward; that would have been contrary to our basic instincts.

Q: *Were we really interested?*

NORLAND: The answer is we were still fighting the Cold War. Believe me, this was an active arena of the Cold War confrontation in Africa.

Q: *Who gave a damn, really?*

NORLAND: Well, Cold Warriors were wholly in charge of the U.S. government. Henry Kissinger was the national security advisor. And we had one Cold Warrior after another come through. The CIA was interested in what we were doing. They had two people there. We had a specialist who came out because the Guineans actually went to the trouble of developing disinformation. They claimed they had a telegram implicating the U.S. in anti-Guinean propaganda. I can remember the handwriting specialist saying, "This was put together by the Soviets." We had some things going. The East Germans were active. Bloc countries were active.

Q: *Looking at it with not an awful lot of perspective, you kind of wonder what was all the fuss about.*

NORLAND: Well, here's the global strategic view of the time: that the Soviets were using a base at Conakry for refueling their surveillance air missions over the South Atlantic. Guinea became a pawn in the Cold War. And one of the real achievements of Bill Harrop, was to get Sékou Touré to have Russian use of Conakry for refueling those flights. We're only sixteen or seventeen years from this, but you have to recreate the mentality of the time.

Q: *Were we extracting any concessions from the Guineans as far as our living conditions there? "We'd like to be able to travel around; don't do this to us."*

NORLAND: We were fighting at the time to get reciprocal restraints imposed on Guineans, in this country. And we didn't. That was one of the things that made us mad. I remember being very angry about the failure of Kissinger to press for what we thought would be a natural counter-action.

Q: *It wasn't until the Reagan administration that we really...*

NORLAND: That we implemented certain reciprocal actions that made it seem that we meant what we said. Meanwhile, we sat out there. The instructions from Washington were: "Don't do anything that will create a stir. There is only one person and only one agenda that is to get any publicity--Henry Kissinger's." I got that from many people. Remain low key; don't do anything or say anything publicly even if it's anti-Touré.

When I had occasion to meet with Touré, introduce visitors and so forth, I held our ground. This is one of my most pleasing moments, i.e. standing up to him. I understood when he would say, "Your country has been a part of this conspiracy," I would say, "Mr. President, I can assure you that is not true." And he would say, "But you are in NATO, Portugal is in NATO, and their ships were out there. How could you not know?" And I said, "I don't accept that there was a failure of communications if that's what you're suggesting. I can assure you that this embassy was not aware." That's all we could say, because it was true. "Maybe somebody in NATO knew where those ships were but not Embassy Conakry."

Q: I don't think anybody probably paid any attention to the Portuguese navy anyway.

NORLAND: Navy people pay attention to ship movements generally. How those ships could have slipped out of Portugal to Guinea-Bissau, waited there, and then launched this operation, how they could have done this without any of our spy operations detecting it, I don't know. But we did not know. We never convinced Sékou of this.

So we sat there, and we waited them out.

Q: You were seeing Sékou Touré personally. Was he a madman? How was he?

NORLAND: He was an obsessed man. He was a man who demanded total obedience. It was unbelievable. He would treat everybody in his entourage in a way that left them frightened.

One example came during these so-called party congresses, when he would make a speech. The tradition was when Touré arrived you'd stand and applaud. Not applaud calmly, but vigorously. There were confirmed reports that after about eight or nine minutes of applause, one of the ministers in the front row appeared to stop and sit down before any of the others. He was dismissed. There are reports that he was killed as a result.

Another occasion, school children were being bussed to school. The buses detoured because three people were hanging by their necks from the bridge in the center of town. And one of them was a woman, by the way. Rather intimidating, you might say.

Frankly, I didn't think Touré would dare move against us, partly because of Boké, but also because I felt I could see through him. When you meet some people you're sure they're acting. Self-important is the idiom in French, the way they move, the way they talk, this commanding personal attitude that says, "I'm in charge; I know everything; I'm omniscient and what I say is gospel." And then he would tell stories that were unbelievable. Unbelievable. One, about having been in an aircraft, falling without a parachute in a tree and being saved. He talked as if he believed it. You'd listen; you couldn't take it that seriously. This pompous, incredibly arrogant behavior reflected real weaknesses and great pretensions.

Later on, by the way, I had an opportunity (this is maybe new) to confirm my impressions. His vice president Saitordage Diallo, who was from the north and was a wonderful gentleman, had contracted TB. He could not get the needed treatment in Guinea, so he asked us, and we said we would be glad to treat him. He came to our dispensary, and Dr. Jassie treated him. I served as interpreter, I greeted him when he drove into the dispensary, and escorted him out. He did this from time to time so I got to know Diallo quite well.

When I left the country in 1972 and came back to Washington, I found the vice president was at NIH, getting treatment for his TB. Partly for personal reasons, because I liked him and I wanted to show an interest, and since I was living in Bethesda, I visited him. After about my second visit, with the nurses out of the room, he said, "You know, I'm ashamed."

I said, "What would cause you to be ashamed?"

And he said, "My country, with all of its resources, having been brought to this level by that man Touré."

And yet, all the time that he was in Guinea, Diallo was standing up next to Touré. This was confirmation. Even Touré's right-hand man saw him as paranoid.

Q: How did Sékou Touré end his time?

NORLAND: He had a heart attack in 1984, in April. It's true that he began making sounds about changing policies. He came to this country in the early Eighties, for example, was received by the president, and had a meeting with David Rockefeller and a group of American businessmen. The thought was that Americans might consider investing in Guinea if they could be convinced that Sékou had changed his stripes. He was slow to change, but he had to. He was looking to this country for help, as well as to the outside world, much less to the Soviet Union. But Touré had a heart attack. He was flown to Cleveland in April of 1984, and he died (I understand) in Cleveland.

At that moment, you had two great political rivalries develop between those who wanted somehow to maintain the Sékou Touré regime and those who were absolutely bound and determined to get rid of it. And that's still playing out. You still have people who say, "Well, you know, he gave us pride, and he gave us standing, and he said no to de Gaulle in 1958."

A year and a half ago, I asked for my papers from this 1970 to '73 period. I have an African historian who wants to do a biography of Sékou Touré.

But Guinea had an effect on my perceptions. Fortunately (I mean it) I had had that course on revolution at Stanford. I saw the megalomania, the paranoia, the xenophobia. There was not really intellectual command of world realities. It's shameful that Africa should have been burdened by people like that. He was just as bad, in his own way, as Stalin.

Q: How about Nkrumah? Did he play any part, or was he just given a house?

NORLAND: He was given a house.

Q: And co-presidency.

NORLAND: That's right. By this time, he was ill with cancer. I saw him on several occasions sitting at meetings without being given the chance to say a word, possibly because he was too weak. He died while I was there. We were all invited to participate in a symposium on Nkrumah at the Palais du Peuple.

Q: Oh, my God.

NORLAND: I was the American representative. They say that there's a film that Sékou made of this, and that I'm shown talking a bit about Nkrumah. I had put together a proposed statement and sent it to the Department. The reply was, "No, we don't want to say anything. Cut it way back; just do a paragraph of the usual thing." Nkrumah died while in Romania receiving medical treatment. He was buried in Guinea, and re-buried recently in Ghana.

Q: Is there anything else that we should cover in Conakry?

NORLAND: Not really, just that we kept going. The people who held out, those eight, including Johnny Young and Madeleine Byron, and others, managed to survive and developed esprit de corps. Great people.

JOHNNY YOUNG
General Services Officer
Conakry (1970-1972)

Ambassador Young was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. He was educated at Temple University and entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Before being named Ambassador, Mr. Young served in a number of embassies in the administrative field, including Madagascar, Guinea, Kenya, Qatar, Barbados, Jordan and the Netherlands. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1992. He subsequently served as US Ambassador to Togo (1994-1997), Bahrain (1997-2001) and Slovenia (2001-2004). Ambassador Young was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Then still in 1970 you went to Conakry. Is that right?

YOUNG: Went to Conakry, Guinea as general services officer. At that time it was probably one of the worst places in Africa.

Q: When were you there?

YOUNG: From '70 to '72.

Q: Sort of describe the situation in Guinea at the time.

YOUNG: Well, I went ahead without my wife who remained behind to have our first child. She was pregnant with our first child and we learned very quickly that Guinea had no facilities at all for her to give birth at post, so she stayed behind and I went ahead. I arrived I think in July. It was the height of the rainy season. I was moved into a good size house. Things were kind of run down and shabby and it was raining like I had never seen rain before. I mean it just poured. I've never witnessed that kind of rain before. Our previous post was in Madagascar and we would have rain occasionally, but never anything like this. I mean torrential rains. The houses had

corrugated tin roofs so the rain would pound down on this roof. I mean something just unbelievably loud and frightening if you were not used to it. I was not used to it.

Then I moved into this house. I was very lonely. I missed my wife quite a bit and there was another single, there was a single young man there and we became friends. He was new at the post as well, so we used to pal around together. We would go out at night after hours into the beer gardens and drink beer and watch the local folks dance and we'd chat and make friends and what have you. I figured well, this is not a nice place, but we'll make do. It was clear to me as I looked around that everything was shabby and fallen down and broken down and I could see very readily what had happened when the French pulled out in the late '50s and literally ravaged that country. They were going to teach them a lesson because Guinea was the only country of the then Francophone countries that said it didn't want to be a part of the Francophone set up. That it wanted to go it on its own and France was furious. They pulled out all of their people. They ripped out the electrical wires for the street lighting, for the apartment buildings and offices, broke the generators of the local hospital, tore up the streets, I mean everything you can think of, they did. It was horrible. They broke the elevator to the one skyscraper, which was just mean and vicious, and it was ugly and the country had not been able to overcome that. It was readily apparent. I mean holes in the streets, broken down lights. You couldn't get electricity on any kind of continuous basis so it was just a dreadful situation in terms of the infrastructure. They broke things and the cranes ... I mean you just name it, they broke it. I mean they were determined to teach that country a lesson and they did.

Anyhow, there I was lonely, raining, miserable and I'll never forget my early introduction to Guinea. One morning I got up and I felt something crawling at my back and I took off my pajamas and sort of gave myself a good shake and out dropped this huge cockroach. It had been in the bed with me. On another occasion I remember going home after work and reading a Herald Tribune that was two weeks old at that point and being very happy to get it, an International Herald Tribune and I had a scotch in one hand and the newspaper in the other and suddenly I heard this thing fly in from the rain and right towards my head. Boom it bounced off my head. It was a huge flying cockroach. I had never seen one of those in my life and so the newspaper went in one direction and the scotch in another direction and I think I started to take off in another. After several introductions to the bugs and the insects and things like that, I got used to it and went on with life and got on with my job. My job was a tough one because the infrastructure as I mentioned earlier was so broken down. Nothing worked in that country. To get goods from the port was worse than pulling hen's teeth. It was almost impossible, but we had a third country national, a Lebanese fellow who was the miracle worker of the embassy and he could do anything. He got all of our goods in and out of the country. I'll never forget the ambassador told him once, he said, "Don't ever tell me how you do these things because if you do I'll have to fire you." We knew that a lot of it was done through little bribes and what have you to the port officials. It was the only way you could get anything done and he did it and we were grateful for it.

I remember on another occasion the ambassador saying to me, "Johnny, you're the most important person at this mission." I said, "Well, thank you very much Mr. Ambassador, but I find that hard to believe." He says, "No, really, you mean more to morale at this post than I do."

Well, I never took him seriously for a minute. I thought he was just being very kind. He was an extraordinary ambassador.

Q: Who was he?

YOUNG: His name was Bud Sherer. I just loved him. I never ever thought that I would ever become an ambassador, but years and years later when I did he was my model. He was an incredible man and I'll get to something else in a minute that will indicate what an extraordinary person he was, both he and his wife, Pam Sherer, just a fantastic couple. Anyhow we struggled in Guinea to get our work done. It was a struggle for the ambassador to meet with Guinean officials. Everything was so leftist at that time. It was unbelievable. You couldn't buy something as simple as an airline ticket and say, I want to leave tomorrow. You had to go through all kinds of government offices to get an airline ticket to leave and we worried particularly in the case of medical evacuation of the delay and in several cases the ambassador had to intervene at the presidential level to get these authorizations to buy tickets to get people out on an emergency basis. Tough for the ambassador, tough for the mission, tough all around to get things done. The government was inward looking. It was leftist leaning and didn't have anything good to say about the United States and the West. If you called a government office the first thing you would hear on the other end was not hello, but it was [inaudible] revolution. Ready for the revolution. That was the mantra all over town. That was how the phones were answered. It was an indication of the kind of indoctrination that the local population was going through.

Q: The president was?

YOUNG: Sekou Toure, an extraordinary leader. At the time we were there he was still at his height in terms of power and influence on the continent. Sekou Toure was the kind of man who could stand up in a stadium and speak for seven hours straight without a single note and have the people enthralled. He also had his country divided in terms of having people express their loyalty to the government. That was the only way that they could get a little bit of food that was available and distributed to the government. Those who expressed the greatest loyalty to the government were the ones who got the little bit of meal, a little bit of rice, a little bit of tomato paste, whatever the case may be, because all of the food was handled through the government. There were no private grocery stores or markets or anything like that. I remember my wife for example couldn't find a single onion in its entirety. She could buy a half an onion and buy several halves because things were so scarce. You could not get anything. We had to bring everything into that country, everything. We hooked up for example with a company in Belgium called Belex Cargo and they brought in everything. Planeloads of goods would come in every Friday and I'd send out my GSO trucks and we'd get everything in and bring it to the embassy, divide it up and distribute it and we all ate like kings and queens. As tough as it was we did put in a great effort and we did eat quite well.

As I mentioned earlier my wife was waiting to have our first child who was due on October 25th, but on October 25th no baby and no baby a week later and a week later and a week later. Finally it was several days after November 18 that I got a telegram from Washington. In fact, I used to call the communicator every morning to see if he had received a telegram, he said, no telegram, no telegram. One morning he called me.

Q: So, you were calling the communicator.

YOUNG: Right, the communicator, everyday. Any word yet from my wife? No. So, one day he called me and he said, "Hello Johnny?" I said, "Yes?" He says, "I have a telegram you'd be interested in." I said, "What does it say?" He says, "Mother-in-law Virginia Clark advises son, David John Young born Wednesday, November 18, 1980, weighing 9 pounds 3 ounces, mother and baby fine. That's the biggest God damn baby I ever heard of." I had a good laugh, we all had a good laugh. I had stopped smoking at that point for several years and I said to someone, "Give me a cigarette" and I started smoking again and I continued smoking for another five years. I got the telegram several days late, so it was about November 20th, 21st. Now, I mention this because I was home in bed on the evening of November 22nd which is a fateful in Guinean history. I was stirred out of my sleep by what sounded like cannon sounds. We had made a huge investment in food that we had shipped to the post and we had it in a storeroom at the end of one of the hallways in the house. I kept saying to myself, who's trying to get into my storeroom. All I could think of was the value of all that food we had in the storeroom. I kept getting up and going to check the storeroom and everything was fine. I kept hearing boom, boom, rat a tat tat, boom. I couldn't figure it out. The next morning I got up to go to mass. I was standing outside of the gate waiting for the person to pick me up to take me to church and it was the admin officer who came by and he says, "Johnny, you can't stay here." I lived in an area that was close to what they called the village ministerial, which was near where a lot of the ministers lived. He said, "Last night there was an attempted coup. There's still trouble in the air. We're all meeting over at the DCM's residence." The DCM at that time was a fellow named Don Norland. So, we all gathered over at Don Norland's house. We gathered all of the Peace Corps volunteers, as many as we could. We all went to Don Norland's house and that's where we stayed for literally several days until we could return to our respective homes. Well, on the night of the 23rd things were still uncertain so we stayed at Don's house. Suddenly I guess as dark descended the fire started again, the cannon fire started again and we could see the tracers through the trees and I remember Don screaming to all of us to get down on the floor and we all got down on the floor and that's where we stayed for the rest of the night, down on the floor as these bullets and cannons and what have you sailed through the trees. The Guinean forces were challenging rebel forces that were attempting to come in from the sea and Don's house was right on the coast. We could see, we knew what was going on. That went on all night long. On the 24th we didn't have that at night and by the 25th we could return to our houses.

Well, things were pretty bad after that. Sekou Toure turned on his own people he suspected in being involved in the plot to overthrow him. He turned on a number of people in the foreign community he thought were involved in the plot as well including a number of Lebanese people. I'll mention one Lebanese person in a minute, someone who was with our embassy. I'll never forget a couple of days after that, going to work one morning and going under an overpass and before coming out of that overpass seeing the hanged bodies of people we knew including the director of the electricity department whom I had dealt with just a few days before in an effort to get electricity to several of our houses. We saw people who were strung up in the public square for everyone to see. It was a very tense time. Now, this witch hunt that Toure had embarked on stretched out over a number of months and a number of people we knew were involved including a number of Guinean officials. It was really pretty grim and many of them were never heard from

again. They were killed and murdered and never heard from again. This was a time when we were concerned about human rights, but frankly couldn't do very much about it. Diallo Telli was a famous Guinean for example who had been caught up in events of that time and was tortured terribly and eventually killed.

Some months later the Lebanese fellow who worked for us had gone on vacation with his family when this hunt for coup plotters was still on. He was planning to return to Conakry with his family. He was housed in an apartment along with our other diplomatic personnel. This was at a time when we treated third country nationals basically the same as we would an American diplomat. He lived in an apartment building that we had and we treated him the same as everyone else as I mentioned earlier. But during this time we suspected that if he returned to the country he would be in great difficulty. We tried to get a message to him in Lebanon. We tried also through our embassy in Paris because we thought he was traveling to and from Lebanon through Paris. We did succeed in getting the message to him, but he decided he would send his family back anyhow. He sent his wife and daughter and his brother back to Conakry and we didn't think that was particularly wise, but that's what he opted to do. He stayed out longer. I went together with my wife to the airport to meet his wife, daughter and brother. We met them and we took them to their apartment building. The apartment building we lived in at the time was under surveillance by the government of Guinea police. From time to time they would have one of their policeman sit outside of this building in a chair. I arrived. My wife went home with our baby. I went with his family to the apartment building. We got them settled. We were sitting in the apartment building having a Coke when there was a knock on the door. We opened the door and in marched I think about four Guinean policeman and they wanted to know who let these people in this building. I said, "I let them in this building. Why are you here?" They said, "We are part of the government of Guinea and we are the authority here and we have a right to be in this building." I said, "You have no right to be in this building. This is U.S. government territory and you should leave immediately." Well, they said, "No, you will leave immediately." I said, "I will not." They said, "You have no right to have allowed these people in this building. This building is under surveillance and you have to get out." I said, "I'm not going out." They said, "Yes, you are." So, we got into a little back and forth there. They then took a bayonet, they had a machine gun with a bayonet and they put that in my back and they said, "You will go with us." I said okay and I went with them. They left Mr. _____'s family there and they marched me out of the building and the other Americans in the building all had their doors cracked at that point because they knew there was some commotion going on in the building and something was going on. As I descended the steps I passed the ambassador's secretary, a woman by the name of Marcella Wheeler. She had her door cracked and she was looking out the door. I said, "Marcella, be sure you tell the ambassador what has happened to me." She said, "I will." They marched me out. They put me in the back of a little Jeep and then they took me to jail. I got to jail. They sat me in a cell and they gave me a piece of paper and a pen and they said, "You will now write your deposition which is your confession." I said, "I will not." They said, "Yes, you will." I said, "I will not write any deposition." They said, "You will or you will stay here." I said, "I'll just stay." I remained there in the cell and the policeman who was outside of the cell would occasionally answer the phone when it rang and each time the phone rang I would say, "Is that my ambassador?" He would say to me, "No" in very clear terms. He said, "Are you ready now to do your deposition?" I said no. So, we went back and forth on that for a while. Each time the phone would ring I would say is that my ambassador? No. This went on for several hours.

Finally, at one point, we said to them, you will not receive a single further shipment of food from the United States government. He said, "I sent all that to Washington. It was received in the White House." I learned later from a friend of mine who was in the White House, Fred Rondon, and Fred said, "I was in the situation room and this cable came through that you had been arrested and you were in jail. I thought I couldn't believe Johnny Young had been arrested and was in jail." It was that leverage of no further shipment of food that persuaded President Sekou Toure to act to get me out of jail. I mention all of that to just illustrate what a difficult situation Guinea was at that time.

Now, after the attempted coup and difficulties in the ensuing months, I remember the ambassador called the staff together and said, "This has been a really rough time for us. Some of you may want to leave and if any of you want to go, I will do everything I can to see that you get good onward assignments, but you don't have to stay on here if you don't want to. Just let me know if you want to do it and I will do it for you." Not a single person at the mission took the ambassador up on that offer because they had such great respect and admiration for him. They were prepared to undergo whatever the hardships were at that time in order to continue their work with him at that mission. I'll never forget him.

Q: How about just day to day working? You need clearances and everything else. Was the government out just to be nasty to you or was this just the way it was, to you as Americans or was this, were other countries having the same problem including say the Soviets?

YOUNG: Oh, no, any Western country, they were very difficult. The Soviets were in their glory day there. The Soviets and the Eastern Bloc countries were treated very nicely, and we did not hear of the difficulties that they had. They didn't have any French embassy there because they had broken relations with the French when the French pulled out in the late '50s. I think in '57 or '58.

Q: What happened to the Lebanese man?

YOUNG: He finally returned after things quieted down, packed up his bags and left. We got him a job at the embassy in Cameroon. He went to Cameroon and he was there for a little while and they finally caught him with his hands in the till and he was released and we didn't hear from him anymore after that.

Q: Could you get out into the country or anything like that?

YOUNG: Absolutely not. We were basically under city arrest. My wife and I made one of the few trips that was possible before they completely shut down any travel out of the country and on that trip we were able to go to Freetown, Sierra Leone. We went by road and returned by road. Again it shows you how fate operates. Little did I know that many years into the future I would return to Sierra Leone as the American ambassador. We went there and we saw colleagues there that I had met. We met two young gentlemen who later on came into the Foreign Service and have done very well. Steve Noland and his brother. They were teenagers at the time. That

was one of the last trips anyone was able to make by road outside of Conakry. We were literally confined to the city.

Q: Since you're a Catholic, what was the faith of the church?

YOUNG: That's a good question because the church was fine. No problem with the church. After the coup, the church was kind of implicated in being part of the coup and it was our embassy that managed to get a message to the Vatican on the whereabouts of Archbishop Kimball. We did play a role in that, but the church unfortunately had no way of communicating at least to the Vatican. The Catholic Church was fine.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the Soviets or the East Germans there?

YOUNG: We had pretty good relations I mean to the extent that you could have good relations with Soviets back in 1970. I'll never forget the Soviet ambassador would invite our ambassador over to his residence from time to time for them to sit down and have a tête-à-tête and the ambassador would always say, "Well, I'm going to the Soviet Embassy for lunch. I won't be back for the afternoon because they're going to ply me with Vodka" which they did and of course he couldn't return to the office after that. The relations were good, but limited. For example, the goods that we were able to obtain locally from any kind of store we were able to get from a big Yugoslav store that was set up to cater to the diplomatic community in hard currency. That worked out very nicely. We were very happy for that. I mean it wasn't the caliber of goods that you would get in a Western store, but the Yugoslav store was good and it peddled Yugoslav products and they got dollars for it and they were very happy and we were happy, so it worked out very nicely.

Q: Did you get, I mean I realize your job wasn't political reporting, but I imagine there wasn't much going on there.

YOUNG: Oh, there was a lot going on. The problem was you couldn't get it first hand. You had to get it from bits and pieces that you would glean from different contacts. We had a very active political section and a superb political officer, a young man at the time who has subsequently done well in the Service, a fellow by the name of Al Thibault. Al has done quite well.

Q: I've actually interviewed him.

YOUNG: A terrific officer, a wonderful reporting officer, but you couldn't just go to the ministry and have a discussion with officials. It was what you could get off of radio, reading between the lines, what you could glean from the few contacts that you had. Very few people had real Guinean contacts except for our public affairs officer. He was exceptional, Hank Ryan, in terms of how he was able to get into the Guinean community and we got good bits and pieces of information from him as well. We were trying to read the country and get a sense of where it was going and how the political decisions were being made.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Guineans regretting that they'd broken off with France the way they did and were the other countries like Senegal and all seeming doing much better?

YOUNG: They knew that other countries were doing better. Senegal and Abidjan at that time were really models of success. Guineans were fiercely loyal, fiercely proud and they were also terrorized. I mean by their own government. They were afraid to voice their opinion about what was going on in their country. They couldn't speak to each other. They didn't know who would turn them in. They lived in a state of terror. A huge community of Guineans lived outside in Togo, in Benin, or in the Ivory Coast, but I mean they were just all over. Huge community of them. I think it was up to a quarter of the population. It was very large.

Q: Did Guinea have a segmented into important tribal units?

YOUNG: Oh, no. It's tribal; I mean lots of tribes there, but the main tribe I think was the president's tribe. I think he was what they call Mandinka, if I'm not mistaken. All those tribes, I can't even remember them all. It was not a major issue at that time. People were held together through terror, through sheer force and in that situation suspended their tribal beliefs just to survive.

Q: How did your wife with a new baby adjust to this?

YOUNG: Well, my wife is an extraordinary person. She realized the limitations of the situation we were in and she managed to have a very good life there. She developed a group of friends and she would visit with those friends. They had all kinds of projects that they would work on, but they couldn't do the kinds of volunteer work that she did in the future in other countries. I mean there was no local ladies' group and local charities and that sort of thing. None of that existed in Guinea. Her focus was just on her baby and helping him to grow and develop. She did that very nicely and made a very lovely home for me.

Q: Well, was it '72?

YOUNG: 1972. Now, while we were there she became pregnant with our second child and became so dehydrated that the regional medical doctor who was resident in Conakry, a Dr. Corey Marko, had to confine her to bed. Eventually we left and then she had to be treated in the States for her dehydration. We left somewhat in an emergency situation. I'll never forget I had to pack up the entire house myself and this was at a time when we couldn't call the GSO section although I was the GSO or call the contractor to do the packing. They gave us boxes and tape and paper and we had to do it ourselves. I packed up the entire house myself. Mind you we had only been married a couple of years, but it was amazing what we had accumulated in just a couple of years. I did that. That was my first time to pack up the entire house and I had to do it on one other occasion, but I'll tell you about that later.

ROY T. HAVERKAMP
Deputy Chief of Mission
Conakry (1972-1974)

Roy T. Haverkamp was born in 1924 in Missouri. He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and later earned degrees from Yale University and Cambridge University. Mr. Haverkamp joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Korea, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Guinea, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, and Grenada. He was interviewed on April 11, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You went to Conakry from 1972-74. How did you get that assignment?

HAVERKAMP: I was very interested in Africa and asked for an assignment in East Africa and they had the gall to tell me that they had something I would want that was near, but not all that near. So they sent me to Conakry. Actually it was a very good assignment because at that time they were not going to send an ambassador and I would have been Chargé. But they changed their minds before I got there and sent an ambassador, who was a very good man and it was by far and away the right thing to do. I don't think it was lack of confidence in me, but rather the realization that President Sekou Toure might refuse to deal with a Charge for very long.

Q: When did you arrive in 1972 and what was the situation in Guinea at that time?

HAVERKAMP: I arrived around August or September of 1972. It was just after the Portuguese allegedly tried to invade Guinea and the Guinean president, Sekou Toure, who was ruthless and an autocratic dictator, had arrested and killed a lot of people, particularly people he felt were close to us, who really weren't any threat to him. He took advantage of the invasion scare to do away with some of his enemies, real and otherwise.

Q: Who was the president?

HAVERKAMP: Sekou Toure, who had been president since independence. Practically everybody was afraid to deal with us because so many people had been arrested and were being arrested for participation in the alleged invasion. It was just too dangerous to get close to foreigners. We had important, but not vital, interests there. The Guineans have, among other things, the richest bauxite deposits in the world that were being developed by an international consortium, which included Alcoa, Alcan, and French and British companies. Alcoa was the largest partner, I believe. That was up in the northern part of Guinea. We had contributed something like \$60 million in aid counterpart funds to help build an infrastructure to make this viable. Guinea also has rich deposits of iron ore, gold, diamonds. It is a beautiful country with the possibility for tourism.

Q: How did we at that time interpret how Sekou Toure was running the government and particularly towards the United States?

HAVERKAMP: He was in charge. We were not out to overthrow him. We knew we just had to settle down and ride out a difficult period because there was no sign that he was going to allow a free election or loosen his hold. I can remember, for instance, going to meetings with him and he would sit in his office and talk for five or ten minutes or a half hour or two hours and suddenly he would say, "Well, bring in the boys," as he called them, and a servant would open up a side

door that looked like a door to a closet but was to the back steps, and up would come the cabinet who were standing there the whole time waiting to be called in.

But he was very keen on one thing. Once his government made a promise he would fulfill it, particularly with the big bauxite companies. He stuck to that.

The country's finances were in a mess. They had a currency that was called the sillie and in terms of international value it really was a silly. I don't think any currency trader was dealing in sillies outside of Guinea. He had really ruined the country economically. The money was worthless. He had controlled prices which didn't make it worthwhile for farmers to produce and sell in town, if indeed they could ship their goods into town and know they would arrive in saleable condition. So farmers produced for their immediate families or if they lived on the border they could go into Senegal or Liberia and trade crops for things that they needed like cloth, food, transistor radios, etc.

Q: Was the Cold War still a factor in how we looked at things in Africa at that time?

HAVERKAMP: Yes, it was. But again it was a lesson in not taking an ideological view of the world because while he was a Marxist, trained and influenced by the CGT in France, which was dominated by Marxists, he was very pragmatic in dealing with the bauxite companies. It was far and beyond his main source of foreign exchange and he wasn't about to destroy it.

Q: CGT is your General Federation of Workers in France, which is a Communist trade union..

HAVERKAMP: Yes. From independence he had help and advice from the Soviets. Yet, he gave the best bauxite concession to a Western consortium. The Russians had concessions that our people said were not economically exploitable. In other words you couldn't recover your costs when you sold the bauxite or converted it into alumina. The Russians were desperately trying to recover money they had lent him or the price for goods that they had given to him. They did have one thing that was disturbing and that is they had pretty easy access to the port and to the airfield in Conakry. Mr. Toure undoubtedly charged port fees. They had submarines, guided missile frigates on other ships that would come in there and stay for a time. They didn't have a base, but access. At the same time he let our regional military Attaché plane come in.

Q: So I suppose there was a great game of spying and counter spying at the port?

HAVERKAMP: Yes. I remember going with the military Attaché plane up to Bamako, Mali. This Attaché in his old beat up C-47 flew about fifty feet over the deck of a couple of Russian naval ships in port.

Our relations with the Russian Embassy by that time were not like it was early on when you and I came into the Service where you insulted each other and other people kind of stood around watching for a show. You knew what they were going to say and they knew what you were going to say. You weren't going to do any business with the Russians, their military especially was unapproachable. I remember trying to talk to a Russian admiral once at a reception and his lookouts saw me coming fifty feet away and he was never where he was when I spotted him. It

was a good spot for Soviet spotting. The Cubans were also there in numbers along with the Chinese, North Koreans, etc.

Q: Were they using the fields for ocean surveillance?

HAVERKAMP: Later TV-95 Bears stayed from Conakry for awhile.

Q: Was this a transshipment point for things to Cuba?

HAVERKAMP: Not that I know of. It was important for the Cubans in the sense that the PAIGC was there, which was the liberation movement for the Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau. They were trained and supplied by the Russians and the Cubans and operated from Guinea. The PAIGC, though, did not want to be tied exclusively to the Communist states. I think Guinea was one mission in the Foreign Service where the ambassador got authorization before he came out that he and I would be allowed to meet with them. It was his idea which was a superb idea. They were friendly, wanted us to meet with them and took help where they could get it. They were easy to talk to with no ideological hang ups in conversations with me. Later when I was in London, negotiations for independence were held there and I saw several of them.

Q: Who are the PAIGC?

HAVERKAMP: It stands for the African Party for the Independence of Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde.

Q: What were we interested in doing with them?

HAVERKAMP: We were interested in having contact with them because they were very effective. In the end the Portuguese revolution really started there because General Spínola, who had been Governor General went back to Portugal and understood that the government could not continue to control Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola as they had for centuries and had to make some changes. He started the revolution in Portugal in 1974. While I was in Guinea the situation in Guinea-Bissau was rather like parts of Vietnam at times. There were areas where the Portuguese could go on the roads in convoys during the day, but the guerrillas controlled them at night. The PAIGC were beginning to throw bombs in cafes and public places in the capital. Our interest was to know and understand their ideological convictions, if any, and to avoid leaving the Soviets and the Cubans as their main foreign influence.

Q: Did we cover Guinea-Bissau?

HAVERKAMP: Officially it was Portuguese territory and Lisbon covered in that capacity from the Embassy, we covered what we could of the PAIGC from Conakry. The leaders were sophisticated people. I think they like most of the African liberation movements first came to the West for help and then turned to the East when they didn't get any. Interestingly, VOA could not or would not send correspondents to Guinea-Bissau as the fight really got going, but I listened to reports from the capitol by a BBC reporter.

Q: While you were there were the Portuguese still in Guinea-Bissau?

HAVERKAMP: Yes, they were. I left after about a year and a half in 1974 and the Portuguese were still in control.

Q: Who came out as ambassador?

HAVERKAMP: Ambassador Terry Todman.

Q: He is one of the major figures in the Foreign Service. Could you explain your impression of how he operated and how effective he was?

HAVERKAMP: He was one of the most effective people I have known because he had kind of a lawyer's sense of what was important and what he could and couldn't do and how he could do what he felt he could do and had to do. He wasn't afraid to say in a very convincing way what the strengths and weaknesses were and how we had to play them. I think he sized up Sekou Toure immediately and for him it couldn't have been personally very satisfactory because there wasn't very much that anybody could do. But he had access because he was shrewd, intelligent and trustworthy. He had sound convictions and the good sense not to be preachy or uselessly confrontational. In Guinea he had a disciplined approach in which he distinguished between a needy people and the persons and policies that put them in that position. He operated on the sound assumption that it was not right nor in our interest to let people go hungry because we did not like their leader.

Q: Did we see Sekou Toure as a independent or a tool? This was in the high Nixon/Kissinger period where things seemed to be seen in the East-West confrontation. Were we trying to put Sekou Toure into the Eastern camp as far as Washington was concerned?

HAVERKAMP: I don't think Washington really cared all that much. He was already there having been established early on. He came to power in the days of President Kennedy, I think or certainly late Eisenhower. While he was allowing the Russian supported PAIGC to use Guinea, they were no thorn in our side. Remember in one of Kissinger's books, he talks about the inevitable progress of decolonization and notes that in NATO the only member with significant colonies was Portugal and Portugal's role as a colonialist were numbered. As long as Russian use of Guinean territory was minimal and the bauxite operation was working, Washington was calm. They had no great expectations from Sekou Toure and I believe recognized that Portugal's days as a colonial power were running out. There was concern over Russian military staging and concern on human rights grounds over the arrests and assassinations following the alleged Portuguese invasion.

Q: Were there Americans working on the bauxite operation?

HAVERKAMP: Yes.

Q: Were there any problems with them?

HAVERKAMP: No problems as Americans. As long as they went about their business running the bauxite operation, the Guineans were very happy because they needed the money. The reason Western companies got that concession was because we paid his share in foreign currency that he could use as he wanted. The Russians wanted to get their money back from their operation. Early on, before I was involved in Guinea, Washington did a very good thing. They insisted before the Western consortium negotiate they should make sure the Guineans had good lawyers to represent them because they had nobody who really understood how international conglomerates worked. The Guineans hired Coverington and Burling in Washington to look out for their interests. So we had a foil between us and the Guinean government, which worked well. The Americans handled things very well. The head of the operation was an American. There were also quite a few French Canadians and other foreigners.

Q: In this period were there any other major issues going on? You said it wasn't quite as interesting because it was sort of a status quo operation going on.

HAVERKAMP: Nothing more than I have already mentioned, i.e. Russian military doings, the PAIGC and the bauxite.

Q: Was France playing any kind of a role at that time there?

HAVERKAMP: No, their relations were very tense, they had no French mission there. There were some French people still in jail as a result of the alleged invasion. Francois Mitterrand had been an old friend of Sekou Toure from Toure's times in France and came down to try and negotiate for the release of French prisoners. Terry Todman and I spent about an hour and a half talking to him at one time at the airport. Mitterrand had just come in, he had access to Sekou Toure, one of the few French people who did, to see what he could do about the French prisoners.

Q: How about the problem of UN votes. Did that come up or did we just sort of write Guinea off.

HAVERKAMP: I can't remember ever being instructed to go in on a UN vote. It was probably done in New York. We may have, but I just don't remember it.

Q: It sounds like it wasn't the most fun place to be. Sounds like you were constrained in a way.

HAVERKAMP: Well, you were and what you could do, I think, was just to lie low and use professional discipline to keep everything moving without causing any unnecessary conflict. Terry Todman kept pushing, for instance, to get permission to go out of Conakry because we were restricted to Conakry. The countryside was beautiful, but there was nothing in the way of facilities out there. Morale was very important because the exchange rate was set by the government making an onion cost \$2 or a tomato a \$1.50, if you could find them. So we had to bring our food in. It was cheaper to fly our food in from Brussels because Sabena still had landing rights there. But they had trouble because when there was fog they didn't have any kind of GCA equipment. You would go out to the airport when Sabena was due to land and everybody from the foreign community, except the representatives from the communist

countries, was there with wives and children waiting for the food to come in. If the plane didn't land or the food wasn't on it, life was pretty difficult.

But I think we did the right thing. We lasted it out and eventually Sekou Toure died a natural death. I haven't followed it to see what has happened since.

TERENCE A. TODMAN
Ambassador
Guinea (1972-1974)

Ambassador Terence A. Todman was born in 1926 and raised in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. He attended the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico and served in the U.S. Army. Ambassador Todman received a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University. His Foreign Service career included positions in Tunisia, Togo, Chad, Guinea, Costa Rica, Spain, Denmark, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Michael Krenn on June 13, 1995.

Q: After three years in Chad, you moved on to another African nation, Guinea. Was that, did you want to stay in Africa?

TODMAN: No. Absolutely not. I was told about how really important this assignment was, how difficult it was to deal with Sekou Toure [president of Guinea], and yet how critical Guinea was as the one country that had said no to the French, and how they felt. They said that with what I had been able to accomplish in my other assignments, they felt that I was one of the few people who could go in and do this job well. I had the African experience already, the U.S. really needed me and didn't see anyone else that it could send to do the terribly important job that had to be done. And so I allowed myself to be talked into it. In any case, we can't choose embassies and not everybody gets an ambassadorship anyway. So, I said, OK, I'd take it. David Newsom [Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs] knows this, because after I signed the papers and took the oath of office, he said, "Well, if you hadn't taken that we would have given you Tunisia." That's when Talcott Seelye went to Tunisia. Oh...! And, again, what made sense to me was to get back to the Arab world and Tunisia was vacant at that time. And they told me, they admitted, after I said that, if I hadn't taken that I would have gone to Tunisia. But, anyway, OK. I was talked into it. Because of my sense of the importance of service to the country, I said yes. If I had had the faintest inkling that there was another possibility, I absolutely wouldn't have done it. And I've told Dave ever since that he did me in on that. OK, I did go.

Q: I don't want to skip over the service there, but I guess our time is getting a little short...

TODMAN: Well, believe me, that Guinea is an important, very important part...

Q: It turned out to be as significant as they had hinted it would be?

TODMAN: It was extremely significant.

Q: Well, let's do spend some time there.

TODMAN: It is true that Sekou Toure didn't give the ambassador the time of day. He'd call him in, he'd summon him, lecture him and then dismiss him. And he didn't allow any other Americans to come in, no support of the embassy. The anti-Americanism was rampant. They used to go through the streets saying, "Disgorge the neo-imperialist and the neo-colonialists." These were references to the Americans. Sekou Toure had a feeling that we had not helped Guinea at a time when they broke away from France. And because they were hosting the Portuguese Guineans, Amilcar Cabral and company, against the Portuguese, they accepted the word of others that we were working against Guinea, to overthrow Sekou Toure. And this was being fed to him steadily by the communists, the Eastern Europeans. All of the communist countries were represented in Guinea. There was only one other western ambassador, that was the Italian, second being the American. There was a Swiss chargé d'affaires and a Belgian chargé d'expedition des affaires courant. There was no one else there from the West. The British weren't there, the French had been thrown out, there was no one. But all of the Eastern Europeans, the Soviets, of course, the Cubans, the Chinese. And it was being piled on us. And there were demonstrations after demonstrations against the United States. They had actually raided the ambassador's house, once. Students had broken in and the wife was there alone, and screamed. Life was miserable. The embassy was in the worst shape, psychologically, that I have ever seen any institution. The personnel used to go to the office and barricade themselves in, basically, and not go home for lunch. They couldn't travel outside of Conakry. They stayed there and ate K-Rations, the Army rations. Or some people would bring a sandwich with them. When I went in, the first thing I did was to order the removal of all the Army rations. The plane that took my household goods in, took out all of the Army rations. I said, "There are Peace corps people all over Africa who need these rations, who can use them. That's it," I said, "This embassy is going to close at twelve, we'll open up at 1:30, 2:00 and I don't want anyone here during the closed hours. You will go home." It was a tough time. But it was breaking that sense of a state of siege. When I went to present my credentials to Sekou Toure, after the ceremony, he sat down and he gave me his lecture. Then he said, "You may leave." And I said, "No, I've got some things I want to tell you." And I talked to him and a conversation developed. We spent three hours conversing during my first meeting with him. And then after that there was an exchange every single time. And he would tell me "You Americans are about to do this or do that." And I would ask, "Where do you get this nonsense from? You show me letters." When he did, I said, "Let's call this number, here. One, this place doesn't exist. Let's dial it now." And gradually and finally, I began just exposing the falsehood of all the things to which he was being subjected. And I said, "They're making you look like a fool. Because you're going out here shouting things that don't make sense. I'll make a deal with you. Anytime you hear anything, day or night, call me, and I pledge to you that I will tell you the truth about it, if I know it. If I don't, I want twenty-four hours and I'll get you an answer. When you have the facts, if you want to go on the air and blast us, do. But, be guided by the facts so that the people accept you as a responsible leader of a major, important country. And he said, "OK." I used to get called at two and three o'clock in the morning, I'd get called on Sunday, because he had these reports being fed into him all the time. And I was able every time to answer, or to say, let me check this out and I'll get back to you. I got the support needed from Washington, they got back to me. And gradually confidence was built up and the blasts, the attacks against the Americans stopped. I was allowed

to bring people into the country to help out on things that were needed. We were allowed to travel outside of Conakry, with the proper passes. And with all of this happening, from the time that Sekou Toure got to accept my word, and have confidence that I would be telling him the truth, not only did the attacks cease, but other Americans were able to come in, a dialogue was started and gradually Sekou Toure began to support some of the positions the United States was raking, including in the Organization of African States. And Sekou Toure, who had been denouncing, at all times, the neo-imperialists, neo-colonialists, (read: American,) became someone who without saying this is the U.S. position, would take the same stand and defend it. So what we got was a 180 degree shift in the attitude in Guinea, and when you have a Guinea out there with us, it's a major thing. And that was really major.

There was something else that was extremely important, I don't want to dwell on Guinea too much, although it really was a big change. I told you that the Portuguese Guineans were there, the independence movement, the PAIGC [Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde.] I got authorization, quietly, from the State Department, to deal with them. And I got to know Amilcar Cabral well, I also got to know the other leaders and the whole understanding was that nothing was to go public. If anything was ever said, it would be totally denied. But otherwise, we'd maintain contacts. And I remember ordering some USIA films in Portuguese and I got the comment, "You don't even know what language they're speaking in the country you are in, it's French ami." And I said, "No, I want Portuguese, because it's for the Portuguese speaking element of the population." So I got films in Portuguese, and for the PAIGC, at night, in their camps, they were looking at American films, USIS training films and things about the United States. And all of this was going on in contact with the Portuguese Guinea independent movement. And on this I had an enormous run-in with Kissinger, because he was all for the Portuguese. And I was sending him messages saying that's a dying thing. When Amilcar Cabral was murdered, I immediately sent his widow a message, saying, "Take some comfort in knowing that the principles for which he fought and died are those that are going to prevail," After I sent it to her, I sent it in to Washington. I could have been fired then, but, what the hell. This thing isn't about that, it's about what you believe in. The consequence of our contacts was when independence came to the Cape Verde Islands and to Guinea Bissau, the United States was able to be the first country in there. Excellent relations right from the start, because there had been this history of cooperation with them, understanding for them during their very difficult period. And this happened in Guinea. So the foundation for the relationship between the United States and at least those elements, Portuguese Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands - Guinea Bissau, were laid during this time in Conakry. And I'm sure Sekou Toure knew that this was going on, so it was something else that undoubtedly helped to convince him, to make him understand that we weren't working against him. That here was a serious country, with a belief in principles which it was founded on. So, it really is important, that's why I felt we couldn't just jump over it.

Q: No. This was probably the first nation, then, that you worked in, in which there was a large representation from communist-bloc nations.

TODMAN: Yes, total.

Q: What kind of working relationship, if any, did you have with those missions?

TODMAN: I had excellent relation, very good relations with the Hungarians. It was very funny, because the Hungarians, I mean, you could see what was happening there. The Hungarians would say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," quickly to the Soviets, whatever they wanted. But they went ahead and lived their own lives. The Romanians, very tough inside, but they exercised a certain amount of independence on foreign policy questions. I had good relations with them also. Because since they had such tight control over their own people at home, they felt that they could take the liberty outside to take different stands. The Hungarians were pleasant, but they were careful about how far they went. The Romanians were a lot more willing to take stands on international issues that were not necessarily coincident with the stands of the Soviet Union. I developed reasonable relations with the Chinese, after the Ambassador became dean [of the ambassadorial corps.] Because while the Cuban was dean, he didn't clear his message with me. It was a message on behalf of the entire corps. So I arranged with the chief of protocol to give me the opportunity to speak at the ceremony of good wishes to the president. nobody knew what I was going to say. But word for around that after the dean, the Cuban spoke, the American ambassador would speak. So, it was a tense moment. He made his speech, and then, for those who didn't know, there was a shock when the chief of protocol said, "The ambassador of the United States." And I said, "I asked for the word, because I did not receive the courtesy of any advance information of what was going to be said on my behalf and on behalf of my country. But having heard it, I have no reason to take exception and I merely express my own good wishes and my agreement with what was said." Then the Chinese who was going to succeed as dean came over to me and said, "I'm going to be dean next and I want you to know that I'm going to behave as a proper dean and you can expect better relations with us." So, I got that.

But, while I was in Guinea I traveled to all of the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, because I wanted to come back with some knowledge of what these places were like. This is when the incident I told you about happened, where I went and saw no blacks in any positions, and when I went back to Washington and had that conversation about assignments and got that ridiculous answer. But, that trip was very helpful, because when I returned from visiting their countries, then I stopped getting all of these blurbs about the glories of their countries. Because they knew that I had gone, I spent a week in each one. I was taken around and I had briefings and visits. And, so it changed the nature of our relationship at that time.

I was able during my time in Guinea, also, to make the opening for the return of the French and then of the British. Because after my relations with Sekou Toure got to be good, then I could talk to him about anything, so the way was paved for them to get back into the country. So, it was a very, very, really crucial period and I think it's the country in which I made the major difference in terms of relations with the United States. From one of total hostility, total, including these denunciations constantly and the marches, to the point where this had stopped. Life was very, very difficult. There were no supplies available in the country. Everything that you ate was imported. We had vegetable gardens instead of flower gardens. Fish was rationed, everything was rationed, and you had to be on the list to be able to buy anything. A very, very tough life. Because the French had really treated them brutally. The French took out everything that was French provided. They took out maps and even the building plans, so if anything went wrong they didn't know where to go fix. They ripped out telephones, took pens. Just took everything. They just said, "You said you want to be independent? You wanted to be without us? OK. we

take out anything that reminds you of us.” It was quite a time of rebuilding and it worked. Sorry that was so long.

Q: No, that was fascinating. Your first two ambassadorial appointments to Chad, then to Guinea coincided with the Nixon administration and the end of that in 1974.

TODMAN: Yes.

Q: What... You read so many books about people who worked in the State Department during that time and their relationship with Kissinger, not very good. What did you think of the Nixon-Kissinger team in terms of foreign policy and your working relationship with them?

TODMAN: Well, I started out on, I suppose, the wrong foot with Kissinger from my Guinea experience. Because I was pushing for freedom for the African countries and Kissinger was supporting the Portuguese empire, so that was not a very good start. When I came back, when I was getting near the end of that, I made it very clear that I did not wish to go back to Africa, back to any black-ruled country. I said, I have Arabic, I have Spanish, I have French, I have experience and I have to go someplace outside the traditional African places. That was not a nice thing to be facing them with either. So, “Well, you don’t have enough experience for our large countries, so we don’t really quite know what we can do with you.” And I said, “Well, you figure it out, but I’m not going to another one of these.” And the question was, “Well, when will you be ready to go?” I said, “Anytime. I will go directly from this conversation, if you’ve got a place for me to go to, or I’ll sit in Guinea until you’ve got a place. Timing is not a factor, so feel free on that.” “Where would you like to go?” “I’ll go anywhere, except one of the black-ruled countries, Africa or the Caribbean, no. But you pick it, anywhere. I’ve got the languages I’ve told you, and if I don’t have it for a country, I’ll learn it and I will. So, it’s up to you.” And this was a problem for them. At that time, they couldn’t get the man who that they had named for Costa Rica confirmed. It was a young fellow Nixon had brought in and wanted to get him to go down once, and then come back as assistant secretary, whose name escapes me at the moment. But, they couldn’t get him confirmed. And the Costa Ricans were starting to complain, because they had been waiting for a long time without an ambassador. Also, [Robert] Vesco had just gone into Costa Rica. So, you’ve got Vesco who’s gone down, they can’t get [Stanton D.] Anderson confirmed as the ambassador, you’ve got the Costa Ricans complaining, you’ve got this black guy out in Guinea saying that he’s got to get out of Africa and not go to the Caribbean. And somebody came up with this really unusual idea of let’s kill three birds with one stone, or four, Todman to Costa Rica. It’ll serve them right. And you know, we’ll get this done. And that’s how I got appointed to Costa Rica. And the first meeting with Kissinger, again, with the Foreign Minister was not a very good one. Because, I had read a lot about Costa Rica, I knew about some of the problems they were facing. And Kissinger was saying something in that meeting with Fascio, the Foreign Minister, that I didn’t agree with. And I said so. Kissinger was furious: “You see what I’ve got to deal with?” But, Kissinger came and visited while I was ambassador to Costa Rica, everything went very well. And Kissinger understood I was a professional. And we developed a feeling of, really, mutual respect and liking that made for an excellent working relationship. He knew that I didn’t speak without having thought about what it was, that I would stand up for what I believed in, that I was respectful, but that I wasn’t a “yes” person. I think he got to like that and the result is that Kissinger says that he discovered me and put me up there.

And I said, "Yes, thank you very much." It's fine, why not? But we still get along exceedingly well and I know that we have a good feeling about each other. We did have these times where there were things presented, but...

Q: *You say that you were eager to get out of Guinea, anyplace...*

TODMAN: Out of Africa, out of Africa.

WILLIAM C. HARROP
Ambassador
Guinea (1975-1977)

Ambassador William C. Harrop was born in Maryland in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree in English literature from Harvard University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1954, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps and studied for a year in the graduate school of journalism at the University of Missouri. Ambassador Harrop's career included positions in Italy, Belgium, and ambassadorships to Guinea, Zaire, Kenya, and Israel. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1993. Ambassador Harrop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

HARROP: Yes. I was on home leave after less than two years in Australia and was telephoned by the then Director General [of the Foreign Service], Nathaniel Davis. Actually, we were out skiing. We'd had a visit to Australia from former Deputy Secretary John Irwin. While he was there, he had dinner at our house. When I mentioned that on our home leave we were thinking about skiing, he said, "Well, why don't you use our place?" It turned out that he had a lovely, big apartment in a new ski area called Snow Bird outside of Salt Lake City. So we did. While we were in John Irwin's apartment, I received the telephone call from Nat Davis, asking if I'd like to be Ambassador to Guinea. Our sons have joked about it ever since. They heard me say, on the phone, "I'd be honored." They said, "What was that, Pop?" I said, "He's asked me to be Ambassador to Guinea." And everybody laughed and said, "He'd be honored to be Ambassador to Guinea." So that's what we did.

Q: *When you went back to Washington, what was the situation in Guinea and what were our concerns there?*

HARROP: It was a tense time. Sekou Toure had been in office, I guess, for about 12-14 years. He was the leader of the radical, Pan-Africanist movement of hostility toward the Western world, particularly France. He was defiantly and determinedly trying to implement socialism in Guinea, now a poverty-stricken country which had been relatively prosperous. Guinea possesses about one-third of the world's supply of bauxite, as well as marvelous iron ore resources, water power, good soil, waterfalls useful for generating hydroelectric power, diamonds. But the economy had been virtually destroyed by this socialist regime. The Soviets had a strong position in Guinea. I

remember that they had a mission of 1200 people in that small African nation. The Chinese had about 700 people.

Q: *How many did we have?*

HARROP: We had 16 people.

Q: *It seems as though the socialist idea -- I'm trying to use the term in the normal definition of government as meaning control over most matters -- has really had a pernicious effect in much of the world. We're recovering from it now. Why did it take root in Africa so much and why was it so destructive at that time? Do you have any thoughts on that?*

HARROP: I think that it took root in Africa because communism or "African socialism," in fact, is the most effective tool for a determined leader to use to take charge of a society. I think that that's the real purpose of it. There was also a revolt against the capitalism of the former colonial powers -- a desire to get away from that and change things altogether, as well as an honest idealism based on concern for the "common man." But actually I believe such idealism was manipulated as a weapon in the hands of a determined, forceful leader.

Sekou Toure was a very ruthless authoritarian, but a man who had a certain amount of personal charm -- as is so often the case. He was one of these people who would work all through the night. I encountered another in Siad Barre in Somalia some years later. Sekou Toure would offer me a meeting very late at night. Or I'd go to see him at his request at 6:00 AM and find that he hadn't been to bed yet. He was just a dominant figure, trying to regiment the society. [Guinea] was called "the party state." It was organized in party terms. The governmental institutions were really manifestations of the party, so that a person's role in the party was that person's prominent, primary credential. After that the individual was given certain jobs as a mayor, governor, or something else. Every citizen was perforce a member of the party. Sekou Toure insisted on certain dress codes. He enforced a regimentation of society beyond anything that you could imagine. He banned any private, commercial activity. Most people who have seen Africa think of it as shopkeepers, markets, women with piles of grains and nuts in front of them. That wasn't permitted in Guinea. There were no shops -- there just was no commercial activity in Conakry or in Guinea generally. It was an unspeakably sad country.

The tremendous presence of the Soviets was an interesting challenge, as far as I was concerned. In fact one of the things that we encountered right away was the use of the Guinean airport, which had been built for them by the Soviets, for surveillance flights over the [U.S.] Atlantic Fleet. Large Soviet "Bear" aircraft, the Tupolev transport, would operate from three airports. One was Conakry, another was Havana, and the third was Angola, out of Luanda. They would patrol the Atlantic Ocean and overfly NATO shipping. I set out to try to reverse this disagreeable and potentially dangerous situation, and finally succeeded in doing so by exerting continuing pressure on Sekou Toure, appealing to any sense of fair play that he might have. He always had great respect for [President] Kennedy and a high regard for the United States, as a matter of fact, despite his determination to establish a socialist system. He was totally dependent on us for PL [Public Law] 480 food supplies, because the productive capacity of his rich, agricultural country

had been totally undermined. Since there was no profit involved in producing food, people just didn't do it.

In the end, and with some objections to it back in Washington, I rather equally ruthlessly used our PL 480, Title I relationship with Guinea to force him to close the airport to the Soviets -- and succeeded.

Q: Let's talk about this policy a bit. Here we were selling food [to Guinea] for local currency, which was...

HARROP: Guinea was what was called an "excess currency country," along with India and its rupees. The [Guinean] currency was called the "Syli". We had billions of Sylis.

Q: Where was the opposition to "putting the screws on" [Guinea]? You know, there should be a "quo" for a "quid."

HARROP: Well, that element in the United States which felt strongly about starvation in Biafra felt the same way about starvation in Guinea. There is that strong feeling that humanitarian assistance should not be affected by political considerations. I was exposed to a recent manifestation of this in Israel, when our support of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union was [regarded] as a humanitarian "duty" of the United States and should not be mixed with the construction of settlements [in the Occupied Territories] or with other political issues. It's the same kind of argument. It was seen as cynical or cold-blooded to use food as a weapon for political purposes.

Q: Were the Soviets in any position to provide food supplies as we stopped providing them?

HARROP: They tried to do this for a short time but were not really [able to do so]. They were over-extended in Africa.

Q: Outside of these overflights, what were the Soviets and the Chinese hoping to get out of this?

HARROP: I guess it was a foothold, a reflection of their rivalry with the United States, maybe a dream that they could turn Africa "red." I don't know. Certainly, there was a rational case to be made for our efforts, looking at [the situation] retrospectively [from the point of view] of both sides. They [the Soviets] wanted to give us a black eye and to establish a Soviet presence. They wanted to replace the former colonial powers and the West by the East and socialism. They were also in keen rivalry with the Chinese. I would even suggest that maybe they were internally rationalizing some of this to themselves by their use of Guinea and Angola for the overflight purposes. This was one way in which they could, in their own councils, explain why they were spending ridiculous amounts of money in these parts of the world, and that there was a direct, strategic payoff. Imagine, maintaining a 1200-man mission [in Guinea], building factories, railroads, highways, ports, a university, hospitals. It was just incredible.

Q: I assume that they brought all of their supplies in.

HARROP: Yes, everything. There was one area in which there was an economic quid pro quo for the Soviets from all of this investment in West Africa. This was fishing. They heavily exploited the fishing resources of that area of the [South] Atlantic. In fact, they have rather drained it of fish.

Q: Outside of trying to stop these [Soviet] overflights, or using [Guinea] as a base for these flights, what was American policy toward Guinea?

HARROP: There was a humanitarian element to American policy toward Guinea. We had a sense of responsibility for human beings in Africa. This had begun with the Kennedy administration. The Peace Corps had been in and out of Guinea twice. Finally, we gave up trying to keep the Peace Corps there given Toure's suspicions and outbursts. We had no AID operation, except for PL 480 [activity]. We tried to get one little AID project going. I worked on it during the whole time that I was there. It was very, very difficult to do. Obstacles were put up both bureaucratically and politically at every step. It was frustrating, but we felt a sense of not wanting to "abandon" the people of Guinea, who themselves suffered miserably from their misguided leadership. I think that there was some of this sentiment throughout Africa, combined with our reaction to the Soviet presence. I don't know whether either the Soviets or we behaved in a rational way in acting as if Africa was a valid field [for competition] between ideologies and great powers. But the United States felt that we had to play that game.

Q: Did France play any role at this point, or had they been pretty well excluded?

HARROP: The French were totally excluded. While I was there, a very skillful, young French diplomat named Andre Levin, who had been press spokesman [for] Kurt Waldheim when he was Secretary General of the United Nations, was assigned to Guinea as French ambassador. Waldheim had been active in trying to mend fences as a mediator between Guinea, on the one hand, and France and the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other, since there had been accusations of interference and conspiracies. Sekou Toure went through phases of accusing the Western powers of trying to overthrow him. Levin had been very skillful in supporting Waldheim's mediation and had managed to ingratiate himself with Sekou Toure. He was appointed to reestablish a French Embassy in Guinea. He did very well. The [West] Germans also came back with a Chargé d'Affaires, about that time. They were trying to keep their hand in. During all of this period, dating from the early 70's, a major bauxite operation was going on -- a consortium of firms led by Americans, but including Canadian and some small French and [West] German interests, also. That is still going on, to this day. Guinea is still the world's major source of bauxite, I believe.

Q: How did you find Guinean officialdom?

HARROP: Only a very few close associates of Sekou Toure had any real authority. They were all "scared to death" of Sekou Toure. You had to deal with the president to get much done. Bureaucratic obstacles and a kind of intellectual lethargy were highly frustrating. Sekou Toure was brutal to his own ministers. I remember, before going to Conakry, I called on President Kennedy's Ambassador to Guinea, who had been there in the early 60s -- his name escapes my mind.

Q: *McIlhenny?*

HARROP: No, before McIlhenny. This man had been an editor of "Look" magazine and later wrote a book called, "The Reds and the Blacks." He was later editor and publisher of "Newsday" -- his name was Bill Attwood. I went to call on him in Long Island, where he was running this "Newsday", one of the largest newspapers in America. He had had a strong attachment to Guinea and had played a strong, "Kennedy" role there. He had arrived in Guinea shortly after the ascent to power of Sekou Toure. In his office in Long Island, I recall, he had a picture on the wall of the government of Guinea at the time that he was Ambassador. He said, "Well, this man was assassinated. This man died in prison. This man was tortured to death. This man is now in exile." Tears came to his eyes as he went over this government of men that he thought of as his friends, all of whom had been destroyed by the dictator. For me, it was a moving experience, I must say, to see Attwood's very graphic recollection.

Q: *How about your staff? How did you find that they dealt with what must have been a very difficult post?*

HARROP: We were not permitted to leave Conakry. There were some lovely mountain areas -- it had been a resort for most of French Africa for years during the colonial period, because of the lovely climate. When you get up high, it's like Baguio in the Philippines. We couldn't go to that resort area. I wanted to visit a friend of mine who was Ambassador to Sierra Leone, one of the neighboring countries. I couldn't even drive down there -- it would have been a four-hour trip -- because we weren't allowed to leave the capital. Diplomats were kept in town. So it was hard for the staff. It was one of those places in which you depend on your internal resources. That whole small American community was involved in everything that we did -- everyone worked together, entertained together, and had parties together. It worked out well. We had volleyball teams. We built a tennis court. I think that morale normally stays higher in a post like that than it does in a post like London or Rome. There is often not much sense of cohesion in a large mission.

Q: *What about UN voting? Was this sort of a futile exercise? Every year an Embassy receives a list of UN issues and reviews them with the local government to try to get support. Did that bother you? I assume that Guinea was always on the opposite side...*

HARROP: Usually. However, on some issues Sekou Toure was helpful. For instance, he was sympathetic to us on the Cuban Missile Crisis. That occurred before I got there, of course, but he had seen the American point of view on that issue and admired John Kennedy. On certain other issues raised in the UN which I can't recall now -- possibly one of the resolutions calling for the independence of Puerto Rico -- he had some sympathy with the United States. He was not necessarily a lost cause on such issues. The man was politically rational. He was fiercely independent and did not want to be a Soviet stooge. You could deal with him. Strangely enough, I rather enjoyed working with him. He was the prototype of post independence African socialist leaders.

I remember two different conversations I had with him. On one occasion I was trying to persuade him to allow the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to bring a team of experts to give him some advice on how to manage his economy. He said, "Look, that's fine for a country like Switzerland or Belgium, but in this country the IMF and

IBRD are irrelevant. They understand nothing about Africa. We couldn't possibly implement the policies they recommend, these free market things. It would not work. It's out of the question for me to accept their advice."

On another occasion he called me over for one of those very early morning meetings. It was interesting. There are two parts to the story. He summoned me at 6:00 or 7:00 AM. I had the feeling that he hadn't slept all night. He looked just exhausted. If a black man can look pale, he did. He looked wan and just sad. He said, "You know, Ambassador, I'm so fed up with these Guinean people of mine." I said, "What do you mean, Mr. President?" He said, "Well, over and over again I've explained to them and demonstrated and told them that they must work for the good of everyone. They must work, not for themselves but for all of society and for all of the people. But they won't work -- they won't do it. I'm just sick of them. They won't do the job that they've got to do to make this country great." He did not seem aware that this was a vivid admission of the failure of his Socialist philosophical approach. Later that morning, I recall, there was a big political rally in the football stadium, where he would assemble 10,000 people to hear him speak. The diplomats sat on one side -- we were very regimented. He was in his classic white outfit -- everyone had to wear pure white robes -- waving the white handkerchief he always carried. He looked the same to me as he had looked two hours earlier -- absolutely exhausted, tired out. He began speaking, and I marveled to watch a politician taking sustenance from the crowd. You could almost see the blood flowing into his veins, you could sense the oxygen, you could see him begin to absorb energy from the crowd he was addressing. Then, by the end, he was his charismatic self -- a fascinating thing to watch. I knew that he was drained and discouraged, and yet that political life came back into him as he spoke to his people. It was an interesting experience. Toure was a remarkable orator. He could speak for hours and would often publish the verbatim text -- I have a dozen of these books he gave me. His extemporaneous rhetoric would emerge -- in fact, was -- orderly sentences, paragraphs and chapters, although in the substantive content was balderdash.

Several years after that Sekou Toure died. It must have been six or eight years later [about 1980]. He died in a hospital in the United States. He was brought back to Pittsburgh -- ALCOA's headquarters -- by the bauxite company in Guinea. He died there, leaving behind complete chaos. No succession had been organized at all. Finally, a succession emerged which strongly backed free enterprise, capitalism, human rights. One of the tragedies of Africa is that the Western world was unable to respond to their call for investment after they had adopted the market economic policies we had been pressing upon them for years.

Q: You left there in 1977...

HARROP: Yes.

RICHARD C. HOWLAND
Office of the Inspector General
Washington, DC (1978)

Mr. Howland was born and raised in New York and educated at Adelphi College and George Washington University. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1960, serving several tours at the State Department in Washington, DC and abroad in Phnom Penh, Djakarta, Vientiane and Surabaya. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Howland dealt primarily with personnel and East Asia matters. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

HOWLAND: Then we flew back out to Dakar for another week-end rest stop, which we deserved after Guinea Bissau. From Dakar we went on to Guinea, which in 1978 was almost as bad as Guinea Bissau. In many ways it was worse. It had been a dictatorial quasi-communist, totally deprived police state since 1960, much longer than Guinea Bissau. The government had totally wiped out the private sector. They had expelled all the Lebanese merchants, and Sekou Toure was running the country like a 12th Century African emperor, rationalized by a phony Marxism ideology. The only "private sector" we noticed in Guinea was a few old ladies selling mealy corn by the side of the street opposite the Embassy.

There were banners and slogans everywhere with the usual inane revolutionary slogans; it reminded me of Indonesia under Sukarno, but this place was more brutal and dilapidated. The streets were pure potholes but it didn't matter, there were no vehicles except for the Ministers' Mercedes-Benz limousines. Sekou Toure's children and his ministers, and the upper levels of government, were flying to France every few weeks and living high off the hog. The people totally suffered.

The Embassy in Guinea in those years was located in the former General Motors dealership building, which had big glass windows. People walking back and forth on the street could see right into the offices because they were next to the street behind the windows. No one feared any security problems in Toure's police state, but if there had been it would have been pretty awful. I think there were 12 people in the Embassy. I can't remember the Ambassador's name or that of the DCM. The admin officer was another Peace Corps person who had been converted into the Foreign Service, because she was willing to serve as an admin officer in West Africa. She subsequently went on to be a consular officer in Mexico. She was an FSR-5 and she was terrific. We were barely off the plane before she was telling us this post is really deep in guilty stuff.

She said, I've told all this to the Ambassador. He just kind of laughs it off, so I'm telling you guys. Among the things that had been going on, she said, since the Embassy provided fully-furnished housing, people arrive with bales of used clothing in their household goods shipment. As soon as it arrives, they start selling this used clothing on the outside. There's no other way of getting clothing in this country. They sell it at the outside at the black market rate, which was 80,000 to one or whatever, and then use the receipts to convert it into dollars at the official rate. She said, always be suspicious of a hardship post where people are reenlisting year after year. There's some reason for that and the reason is usually black market money, not the differential.

Another interesting quirk we found right away. When we inspected the commissary books, we found that these 12 Embassy employees were buying 300 cases of Heineken beer a

month, i.e. or 600 bottles of beer a month per person. Obviously somebody was selling it on the outside, making a fortune. Everybody was selling something on the black market. The Embassy had no trouble getting people to do a second tour in that godforsaken place. They were making fortunes.

So, we went to the Ambassador and told him all of that -- the used clothing sales, the commissary beer sales, etc. It appeared he may have known all about it, that Guinea was such a hardship post, that people needed special "inducements" to serve there. We took appropriate steps when we got back to ensure that these "inducements" were stopped and people involved were properly disciplined.

WALTER J. SHERWIN
Program Officer, USAID
Conakry (1979-1982)

Walter J. Sherwin was born in 1931 in Germany and was educated at the University of Wisconsin. He served in Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Senegal, Niger and Guinea. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1999.

Q: All right, so what happened after Niger?

SHERWIN: I left Niger in July of '79, and was transferred to Conakry two months later. In late '78, when I was being considered for the Conakry position, I was sent on TDY, temporary duty, to Conakry to become acquainted with the U.S. Embassy there and with the country, and to develop a program strategy that was to be implemented once I arrived at post. During the prior nine or ten years, there had been no full-fledged AID mission in Guinea because of difficult relations with the Sekou Touré government, which was Marxist and somewhat pro-Soviet. The only thing we kept going without interruption during these years was Food for Peace Title I loans. But in 1976 the U.S. government perceived an opportunity to gain influence in Guinea and decided to undertake a major project called the Guinea Agricultural Research and Training project, or Guinea Ag, as we fondly came to refer to it. Between '76 and '79 there were only intermittent visits by an AID technician, so the project got off to a rather slow start; the only activities were participant training of future project technicians in the States, and preparation of plans for construction.

Q: What was the strategy, how did the strategy work?

SHERWIN: My job was to establish a new small office and to create a limited development strategy. Now, except for the Guinea Ag project, very little funding was available for bilateral programming. But there was a source of funds called the Accelerated Impact Program, AIP, that was run by the Office of Regional Affairs, so I proposed the use of AIP funds where you could get up to \$250,000 per project.

Q: What was the concept behind the AIP program?

SHERWIN: It was to start pilot projects which, if successful, could be expanded into larger ones that missions would fund out of their bilateral allotments. And of course, as the title suggests, the aim was to achieve accelerated impacts. To do something that had quick impact and would not require as detailed a programming process as regular projects would. I proposed a couple of projects, one in community forestry and another in mother-child health, based on my meetings in '78 with various ministries and discussions with the Embassy. My report with these proposals was submitted to Washington and was pretty much accepted as a valid strategy. I was transferred then to Conakry in September '79 and remained there until July 1982.

Guinea was a very difficult post. Because of the policies of the Touré government to maintain socialist control of just about every economic activity, the country became increasingly impoverished. Conakry was in terrible shape; the automobiles were decrepit, the roads were falling apart, and the economy was going downhill. It was a luxury to have electricity. It went out just about every day. But politically, there was a slight relaxation of control -- for example, people could speak to foreigners once again -- and the country was turning from a pro-Soviet stance to a more neutral stance. It certainly wasn't pro-Western. We were very interested in getting Touré into this more friendly posture, and the Guinea Ag project was a key factor in this effort. But this was an extremely troubled project.

Q: What were its components?

SHERWIN: Its components were to construct a research center and a number of training centers in three or four different locations in the interior, and to use that as a base for training farmers in improved agricultural processes. Initially, back in '76, it was thought that some renovation of existing facilities would suffice, and that we could concentrate on the technical assistance and training, but it turned out that this was not possible. The existing facilities were totally inadequate, and it was decided to move into construction. A major construction program was designed, but this put AID into a situation like a circus ring, trying to ride two tigers moving in opposite directions. It was difficult for us to stay on top of things.

Q: What were the two tigers?

SHERWIN: Well, as I think about it, there might actually have been more than two tigers. For one thing, you couldn't interest an American firm to do the job in Guinea. The conditions were too difficult, and the job wasn't large enough to interest them, so we had to depend on contractors already in the country. Most of these firms were French, there was one Italian and one Spanish firm, and a local government-sponsored firm, a para-statal. So, it was agreed to contract through one of them, on the basis of competitive bidding, of course. Now, these firms were accustomed to using construction materials that were available locally or came from the Eastern Bloc. They were not used to procuring American materials. But AID was prohibited from using Eastern Bloc materials on a project. So AID decided, in its wisdom, to take this responsibility on itself, to separate the construction contracting from the procurement of materials. This was a highly unusual arrangement; normally, a construction contractor has responsibility for procuring the materials, shipping them, clearing them through customs, and transporting them to the job site. Instead, AID hired the African-American Purchasing Center in New York to do the procurement

and shipping, and it became the responsibility of the Guinea government to receive and transport the materials to the construction sites. This division of responsibility later caused serious problems. Other factors made this a troublesome project as well. AID had to work through the Small Business Administration in hiring an architectural and engineering firm, or A&E firm, to draw up the construction plans, prepare a bill of the materials to be procured, work with the host government in clearing and moving the materials once they arrived at port, and supervise the construction. Unfortunately, the SBA approved the hiring of an A&E firm which had some experience working in the States and the Caribbean but had no African experience. All of these decisions were made in the years before I came to Guinea. Hindsight, of course, is 20-20; at the time, nobody anticipated the problems this combination of decisions would ultimately cause. Well, by the time I arrived we were still in the early stages of the project. We had only gotten as far as receiving some contractor bids on the construction, and these were way beyond the budget allocated for this purpose.

Q: Contractor bids?

SHERWIN: Yes. I should note that when I arrived at post I had the help of an engineer supplied by the AID regional office in Abidjan called REDSO (Regional Economic Development Support Office). He came to Conakry about once a month. REDSO also supplied legal personnel as needed. Anyway, there had been some competition in the bidding, but at my initiative, we persuaded the Guinea government to introduce some further competition to try to reduce the cost. The Guinea government was in charge because the work was to be under what AID called a host country contract. However, we worked very closely with them, almost as if it were a direct AID contract. We received new informal bids from the Spanish firm and the para-statal, to the annoyance of the French and Italian firms that had already bid. The new bids were lower in cost but proved unacceptable for other reasons that had to do with the firms being less than fully competent, as I recall. But the original bidders were now forced to lower their excessive bids, and we ended up with what we thought was a really fair-priced contract with a French firm.

So we solved the price problem, but then a whole series of other problems ensued. The A&E firm was extremely slow in preparing a bill of materials that the contractor required. The host government, as I said, was responsible for receiving the construction materials. There were terrible conditions at the port; some of the materials were damaged or lost, some stolen. Inventories were not well-kept. These and other factors all contributed to delays and cost overruns. Everyone, of course, was deeply concerned, and you can imagine the amount of cable traffic that flowed between Conakry, Abidjan, Washington and New York. The REDSO engineer made frequent visits to Guinea to work with me, with the A&E people and the government to try to resolve technical issues. There was also a project manager assigned to the post, but he didn't arrive until several months after me, and he was an agricultural person. Originally it was thought that we would concentrate on training and research, and that's the basis on which he was selected, but instead he had to devote most of his time to keeping tabs on the construction, something he did to the best of his ability but which he wasn't really trained for. As for me, I was completely new to construction management, certainly to anything as complex as this project was.

Well, in 1981, an assessment team was brought in to take a look at the problems. They made a

number of recommendations. Corrective actions were taken, but the problems were more numerous and pervasive than we were able to cope with, and ultimately, after I departed post in July of '82, the Inspector General was asked to do an audit of the project. He was extremely critical of the way AID had organized the construction, of the management, the quality of the work, and above all the cost overruns. AID acknowledged many of the flaws and, in fact, issued a lessons-learned memo that was distributed throughout the Africa Bureau. But the bureau vigorously disputed the way the auditors had calculated the cost overruns. For example, they included as part of the U.S. cost \$9 million in local currency contributions of the host government. That was not a dollar cost, but host-country-owned counterpart from PL 480 food shipments. The report also failed to recognize the efforts that were undertaken to improve the project and hold down costs. For example, we reduced claims for delays that the contractor had levied, delays in receiving materials. We reduced that from a million dollars to \$565,000. We worked closely with the A&E personnel and the REDSO engineer to downgrade some specifications that were unnecessary, like a swimming pool and fancy tiles. We rearranged construction schedules to avoid claims for delays in arrival of materials. And the additional competitive bidding we introduced at the outset saved us millions of dollars.

At the same time, I know that I along with other parties involved in this project made mistakes. One mistake may have been turning down a proposal for a resident engineer. At the time of the offer, I underestimated the extent of the problems we were facing and assumed that the REDSO engineer could meet our needs through his frequent visits. So did he. We also considered the fact that there was no housing for a resident engineer up-country. If one had come, he might well have improved construction oversight to some extent, but I don't know how we would have housed him on site, so perhaps it was a moot issue.

There's no question the project was very flawed. The trouble was, we were trying to do something for political reasons that was really not possible in the Guinea environment and under AID's procurement restrictions. Everybody was determined to get the project implemented come what may.

Q: Was there any agricultural technical assistance going on?

SHERWIN: Not while I was there. Several technicians were in training in the U.S. for eventual assignment to the project. I assume they were assigned once the construction was completed.

Q: Was there any pressure from the embassy for an American presence?

No, the embassy didn't interfere with management; they were simply interested in having the project move forward.

Q: Was anything built?

SHERWIN: Yes. I think construction was completed a year or two after I finished my tour in Guinea. A smallholder project was approved, a kind of Guinea Ag II, not as large as originally planned. While I was in Guinea, I had worked on a memorandum of understanding with the government that the follow-on project would be geared to small farmers, independent farmers,

no assistance to state farms.

Q: They bought that at a time when they were heavy into state farms?

SHERWIN: They bought that, yes. The government was just beginning to see the value of private enterprise. The community forestry project that we mounted with AIP funds also was designed to work with smallholders. This was in an upland area called the Fouta Djallon. The project ended in 1985. I can quote the final paragraph from a cable that was sent from Conakry to Washington: "USAID believes this has been one of the most successful projects, in terms of implementation and village level impact, financed by USAID undertaken since renewal of U.S. assistance to Guinea in 1976. FYI: Although a follow-on project was proposed, AID/W made a decision not to approve a new start in FY 1986. Unless this decision is reversed, this project will be terminated December 31, 1985. End FYI." Here is an example of where something good was accomplished on a pilot basis, and AID, for lack of resources or what have you, probably did not follow up at the time with a continued program. I believe, though, that in the late '80s or early '90s a major natural resources management project was started, and perhaps this is still in existence, built on the experience of our small pilot project.

The other project that stemmed from my strategy statement of late '78 was mother-child health. In the end of tour report that my successor, Edward Costello, submitted in June 1984, he wrote that "this was a very cost-effective child immunization and maternal health program in and around an upcountry crossroads town [Mamou]. The project was completed on January 31, 1984. (By the end, virtually every community in Guinea wanted a similar project.) The project provided the experience and laid the basis for a country-wide vaccination, malaria control and oral rehydration therapy project whose planning is now well advanced. The \$2.8 million bilateral Combating Childhood Communicable Diseases (CCCD) activity, a component of a \$47 million regional CCCD project, will be signed before the end of this year." I was less than happy about the Guinea Ag experience; I was very pleased with the community forestry and mother-child health experience, so it was quite a mixed bag for me.

Q: I'm sure it was. You had an experience with doing a project in a context in which the AID regulations and requirements drove people into doing things that were inappropriate because of the procurement rule that you couldn't buy and didn't want to buy from Eastern European sources. You couldn't buy or get American contracts, so you were trying to force something, using the assumption column in the logframe, that really wouldn't work.

SHERWIN: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Why were we so political? Why were we so fascinated with this man? Did you ever meet Sekou Touré?

SHERWIN: Yes, on one occasion.

Q: What was your impression of him from your time and experience there?

SHERWIN: Well, as a person he had charisma, to use that overused word. Just looking at him

and talking to him, he made a very good impression even though he was extremely ruthless and was running a highly dictatorial regime. I'll never forget the dinner that you and the AID Administrator and I had with Sekou Touré in his palace -- an attractive, colonial-style building that had served as the French governor's mansion years earlier. This was in 1980. Doug Bennet and you were on a tour of Africa and you spent less than a day in Guinea. We had a strong political interest in Guinea, but it was very difficult to do anything of a scale that would support such a strong interest. We tried it with the Guinea Ag project which I've already described.

Q: What was our strong political interest?

SHERWIN: I think our political interest was military; it was to keep Touré happy and to make sure that he never gave any bases to the Soviets. I don't know in detail what our interests were, but I think we were trying to keep him at least neutral in the Cold War.

Q: It might be that because of the location of Guinea, the U.S. Navy was concerned that a Soviet presence would evolve there.

SHERWIN: Right, I recall that there was a U.S. Navy port visit while we were there. If I could describe this dinner, I recall that I served as the interpreter there. You and Doug Bennet were seated on one side of the table and Sekou Touré and I were on the other side. A television set was on at the end of the table, I don't know if you remember. What was being featured on the TV, of course, was the party program and Touré himself. While this was playing, he was carrying on a perfectly good conversation with us. We were talking about the Senegal River Basin organization, and he was fully alert to everything being said, but never took his eye off that television set. I was wondering, was he just enamored with his own image or was he monitoring the way the party propaganda was being broadcast? I recently met a Guinean and asked him about this incident. He said, absolutely, Touré was concerned that the party line -- and his image was a major part of that -- be presented correctly on TV. He was a striking figure. He stood up to DeGaulle in 1958 and won independence for Guinea two years before any of the other colonies did. In fact, he probably hastened the decolonization of all those other countries. The French left Guinea in a huff and the country quickly went downhill under Touré's economic policies. I guess the one laudable thing he did was to reduce the amount of inter-ethnic conflict, to inculcate a sense of nationhood. Perhaps he accomplished that.

Q: Was he popular?

SHERWIN: I think by the early '80s, he no longer was. He was in control, but he was not popular. When he died in 1984 in a hospital in the States, rioters burned down his palace the very next day. Touré's ministers tried to form a government but were immediately overthrown by the military. There was no love lost for this man, but I think early in his reign, he probably was popular.

Q: That is an interesting observation because I recall, and I don't remember exactly when it was, probably in the '60s, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Joe Palmer, met with Sekou Touré in Guinea and rode with him in his white convertible through the city. Palmer was very impressed with the fact that there were no security guards around. Touré rode through the streets and the people just cheered and cheered. The Assistant Secretary's message that came

back to Washington was that Touré was a true African leader. I think that was the phrase that he used. Here was a true African leader, so he made a tremendous impact at that time.

SHERWIN: Come to think of it, even during my tenure there late in his regime, he was able to ride in an open car and wave his white handkerchief to the crowd. There were one or two attempts on his life, but the Touré government was able to maintain firm control.

Q: Do you recall that after that dinner we met with Touré's ministers about agriculture projects and other kinds of projects? We went into a meeting hall. I think you were there interpreting it. We were trying to get some ideas and they were coming forward with suggestions on this and that and the other thing. You might recall that one of the characterizations of Guinea was that it was the graveyard of AID projects. There were several. One was the four-town electrification. Are you familiar with that?

SHERWIN: I'm afraid not.

Q: At that time, they asked us to repair the electric plants. We did provide generators because the original ones hadn't been maintained. There were some old Dakota aircraft that had been given for the Guinea airline that were at the airport. Do you remember those?

SHERWIN: Yes, they were wrecks parked near the runway. They'd been donated in the '60s.

Q: This was in the '60s and you were there long after that, but this is relative to political efforts to respond with one failed project after another because it was such a difficult place. You were programming PL 480 local currency at that time too or not?

SHERWIN: Yes.

Q: What was that used for mostly?

SHERWIN: We used it for the Guinea Ag project. We also tried to use it for the mother-child health project which began while I was there. The community forestry project got underway later. I had difficulty getting the government to cough up the local currency for the MCH project. That was a constant struggle. They did make limited contributions from other budget funds, but not from PL 480 counterpart. We also programmed some of the local currency through European Economic Community projects.

Q: Well, anything more that you want to talk about in Guinea?

SHERWIN: The only thing useful, I think, would be to try to summarize the memo Ray Love, the deputy to the head of the Africa Bureau, sent out to mission directors, the REDSO director and Washington office directors in November of '83, lessons learned from the Guinea Ag project. I think the draft I have is close to the final version of his memo.

Q: What were his main points?

SHERWIN: His main points were that we need to face realities, that we should not be afraid to kill a project if we understand that it is not going to work. We need to be sure of contractor capability. We were at fault in this project for accepting the certification of the Small Business Administration for the competence of an American A&E firm. We didn't check out their overseas experience. Result: over-designed structures, inability to complete the work and poor supervision over the contractor. On host country contracting, Love felt that this was not a significant factor in the Guinea Ag problem. But the decision to use a host country contract must be based on the preparedness of the host country to assume the responsibility in the specific situation, not on a desire to circumvent the more rigorous procedures and language required for a U.S. contract or to curry favor with host country officials. Dividing responsibilities along clear lines was a dramatic problem. There was slippage and confusion among the various offices that had responsibility for this project. Responsibility for procurement and construction should not be split. The prime contractor should assume both. As a concomitant responsibility, the contractor should schedule inputs as well, and that schedule should be part of the contract.

In summary, the main points were to (1) establish clear lines of authority, (2) concentrate on selection of a person or firm on whom one may rely and who can take decisive action, (3) insist that any contractor have control over all actions essential to his task, demand performance and hold him accountable, and (4) be prepared to back up that demand when that performance is not forthcoming; take strong action when difficulties arise, including resident oversight. The cost of letting problems drift rapidly becomes excessive.

Q: Do you think that was a fair statement? How did that fit in the context of Guinea? They are all right and proper conclusions that we have with hindsight, but how about the situation now?

SHERWIN: It's fine as general guidance. But I don't know if we could even have had a construction component in the project if we had applied such rules, given the conditions in Guinea and AID's constraints on source of procurement. And, you know, that might have been a good thing. We should have concentrated more on technical assistance and training and done something smaller. It was the political imperative that got us into the mess on construction.

Q: I think that is a fair message. I personally experienced that too, because I met with Touré and the Administrator when they came to Washington, at which point the message was loud and clear: get it done. We were faced with a lot of this interaction between U.S. political security and developmental interest.

SHERWIN: A politically motivated project is fine if it is feasible, if you can achieve something, and if there is a reasonable return, but when you try to do the impossible, then you really are misusing resources.

Q: Any other observations about Guinea?

SHERWIN: It was a good case study. I think we've pretty well exhausted it.

ALLEN C. DAVIS
Ambassador
Guinea (1980-1983)

Ambassador Allen C. Davis was born in Tennessee in 1927. After receiving his BSFS from Georgetown University in 1956 he served in the US Navy from 1945-1953. His career has included positions in Monrovia, Moscow, Algiers, Ouagadougou, Dakar, Kinshasa, and ambassadorships in Guinea and Uganda. Ambassador Davis was interviewed by Peter Moffat on June 26, 1998.

Q: You went to beautiful Guinea in 1980. How did this assignment come about?

DAVIS: I got a telephone call in the middle of the night in Kinshasa from Dick Moose, assistant secretary for Africa, asking me if I would be willing to go to Guinea and be the ambassador there. I told him I wasn't at all sure that it was a good idea, that my knowledge and association with Guinea had been such that I wasn't sure I could be the right one to interact with Sekou Toure. I thought of him as a tyrant, a very cruel and inhumane fellow who was far too intolerant of any opposition at all. I told him to give me a few days to think about it. I got out some reading material and rather quickly came to the conclusion that Toure needed us - I hadn't realized that - and wanted to work closely with us. So rationalizing and obviously with the chance to be ambassador, it's hard not to take a reasonably positive stance. So I told him I'd try. About three days later I called back and said I'd be glad to give it a try. He kind of confirmed some of the things I just said about Sekou Toure's performance as of late. When I got there, I not only confirmed what I thought was taking place but very soon came to realize that it was almost impossible to do things wrong in the eyes of the government. If they got the impression - and by "they" I mean Toure, because he was an absolute dictator - if there was the slightest impression that you were headed down the wrong path, they'd find the most polite and infinitely helpful way to kind of let you know it and give you a chance to do whatever it was you wanted to do. But preferably to work with you. So there was a wonderful feeling of security, there was a splendid feeling that cooperation was what was desired and for the most part that's exactly what we got while I was there. Toure came to the realization that relying on the Soviet Union was just not all that helpful for them. The mainstay of the economy was - at least any foreign exchange earnings - was the aluminum plant in the north, which of course was basically American. He protected it with great determination and virulence. When there was a choice between doing what the Soviets wanted him to do and what we wanted him to do, we could just always count on his trying to do what we wanted to do. That wasn't always possible, because he was still very much linked to the liberation movement kind of people. He still had a black panther residing there. He paid almost no attention to him. The two-plus years in Conakry were some of the happiest days I ever spent. They were delightful, the climate was wretched, the countryside was not a particularly fascinating one to visit, but even trips out into the country were a total delight. The secret police were always there to help, not to cause trouble for you. At the same time, there was this gnawing, uncomfortable feeling whenever you felt grateful to Sekou Toure for anything, barely two blocks away from my residence there were people being starved to death in prison because they opposed him. And he knew about it, and he condoned it. There was no question in my mind. So working there as ambassador in my day was a kind of double track effort: when human rights report time came around, to say really blunt and almost impossibly hurtful things about Sekou Toure and at

the same time encourage him to continue along the lines of cooperating with us and to adopt ideas which fit our own about capitalism, economies that were allowed to function more freely. For example, as you may know the Rockefeller family had been kind to Sekou Toure way back when. They have all been so gruff and impossible with them. We kind of revived the David Rockefeller/Sekou Toure friendship. We had a kind of a marvelous visit with David Rockefeller at that Tarrytown Estate Keepwood - complete with flowers. He gave him a dinner around the swimming pool and fireworks afterward with the cream of New York, the UN, State Department, American government, and business community people were at dinner to talk with him. David Rockefeller provided him one of his personal staff to come out and advise him on economic things. He lived there for several months. It was a fascinating time.

Q: There was a perception that Sekou Toure had matured or mellowed from but from what you say, it was only half-

DAVIS: Yes. He was still doing pretty dreadful things, but less blatantly, less openly, with less "Look at me, I'm doing it." Look at the human rights reports from those years and see that we were really harsh in what we said about the prisons, and who he was keeping in them, and how unwilling he was to have a free press. And how unwilling he was to denounce some people like the North Koreans and others who were an anathema to us like the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Q: Perhaps just before your time there Sekou Toure had granted the Soviets aviation and /or submarine transit and fueling rights, which were withdrawn. Is that correct?

DAVIS: My recollection now is sketchy, but I believe the allegations were in the years - just even in the months - before I got there, there had been I think maybe a Soviet sub tender that was allowed to operate in and out of Conakry. Also Conakry had been used as a refueling stop for planes perhaps helping to move Cubans from Havana to Luanda. This is very sketchy and I wouldn't be able to remember. But that was certainly a pattern and in our policy guidelines, I remember that was one of the things that we were planning to get the Soviets to stop doing. By the time I got there, he was stopping it, and all of that was being scaled back, scaled down, made far less blatant. And in my judgment, as I recall, made far less effective as assistance to the Soviets and Cubans. Now, I can't remember - certainly Sekou Toure had not broken the relationship with the Cubans, but there was no longer the elaborate exchange of visits and rising to defend the Cubans every time they did something. That, too, was positive.

Q: Beginning in 1983, our relations had continuously improved.

DAVIS: Yes, by the time I left there, that would have been in early 1983. I guess there were probably a good six or seven years of a kind of upturn in our relationship. Of course, I stayed there for about two years and a half. All of the ambassadors before me had something like the stay I did, so it was a kind of continuing process that was quite well started. I left with a great deal of regret. I remember thinking how different my attitude toward Guinea and its government was when I left there than that was in my mind when Moose called me just a few years before that. Strangely enough, although obviously you do what you can to make a process like that improve and go remarkably and all the rest, it has its own dynamic and built-in laws. The needs

of Guinea lying mainly in the West, disappointments and failures in the relationship with the Soviets and this just predisposed them to not only continue the process but find ways to refine it and ways get the things they needed. The relationship with France was going really surprisingly well. And we all know how bitter the roots of the disagreement were back in 1958.

Q: In your pantheon of some of the big men of Africa that you studied, how do you rank them in terms of total wickedness among people like Mobutu, Toure, and Idi Amin, Bokassa? Do you find some better than others or were they totally self-seeking?

DAVIS: I don't know. I had a tendency to kind of focus on what's there that's good and useable and what's there that's hateful and should be stopped or slowed if possible. And then the ground in between where you look for the aspects of their personality that are useful that you go about your daily business. And with Sekou Toure you could almost count, without exception, on his doing what he said he would do. So he was a man of his word. You couldn't count on him to tell the truth always. You could count on him to be a fabulous kind of manipulator of what was there so that his version of it, as a politician, came across in the most favorable light. But if you asked him whether "A" would get done or "B" would get done, he would very often tell you. And if he had to say no, he would do so in a remarkably acceptable fashion.

It was the underlayer. It was the history of Mobutu, of Sekou Toure. It was what we knew about some of the really gross and unacceptable things that he not only allowed to happen but he probably told the people to do them - like having his people invade the embassy that was the residence of McIlvaine. And hold his wife and kids in absolute terror until somebody could get in there and chase these people out of the embassy back in the early '70s. So, all of that history was there as you dealt with him. So you were faced with holding onto it, remembering it, and keeping in perspective what was later happening when he could be one of the most charming people in the world. His way with an individual - for example, he asked me to come with him on a trip back to Washington. It was the one when the Rockefellers received him. He wanted me to fly in a plane that had been provided for him when we left to go back. He wanted to stop in Morocco. I didn't know at the time. I said yes, but I found myself in the presence of him and the king and all the rest - almost like a personal friend - now a personal friend who has people brutally executed and he holds people in prison until they die of starvation. You know, you'd better have a strong stomach. But when he would go to a village for example and he would take you along and there would be all of this elaborate adulation with the population would be really quite unimaginable. But as for ranking them - kind of putting them on a scale of horrors? Mobutu had some of that same capacity to charm but he was more like an exalted - more like a king - more like an absolute ruler. Toure would occasionally give the impression of being quite democratic. That was something he worked at and Mobutu, no. Surely the most corrupt and the greediest was Mobutu. One of the most I guess difficult for me - by far the most difficult for me was the president of Uganda.

KATHRYN CLARK-BOURNE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Conakry (1982-1985)

Kathryn Clark-Bourne was born in 1924 in Fort Collins, Colorado. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Washington. She later received a master's degree in mass communications from the University of Minnesota. Ms. Clark-Bourne's career included positions in Iran, The Netherlands, Nigeria, and Cameroon. This interview was conducted on August 2, 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *And where did you go then?*

CLARK-BOURNE: I went to Guinea as DCM.

Q: *Guinea as...?*

CLARK-BOURNE: Guinea, Conakry. There's Guinea Bissau and Guinea. Conakry is the capital of Guinea. It was Francophone. Guinea-Bissau was Portuguese. This was over on the West Coast, near Senegal.

Q: *Who was the Ambassador at that time?*

CLARK-BOURNE: I had two of them: Alan Davis and Jim Rosenthal.

Q: *When you got there, how did they use you as the DCM? Every Ambassador sort of has their own...?*

CLARK-BOURNE: Well, Alan was the first one. He wasn't there too long. I was the usual: running the place on the inside. But he did have me go represent our government in the ministries. But, as I say, he wasn't there too long.

Jim Rosenthal came in and Jim just sort of turned everything over to me. He'd been DCM in Philippines, I believe, before he came there. He said, "Kay, I never got to travel in the Philippines. I never got to do anything because I just had to run the Embassy. So, you're going to run the Embassy here. I'm going to get out and meet people and travel." That he did and I had some of the greatest challenges in my life while I was there, let me tell you.

Q: *Let's talk about them.*

CLARK-BOURNE: On one occasion, he went off to visit his friend, Bill Miller, who was the Ambassador in Ivory Coast. As Charge, I was awakened at four one morning by the duty officer. A cable came in from the Department, saying that the King of Saudi Arabia had sent them a telegram, saying that his pal, Sekou Toure, the Guinean Head of State, had had a heart attack and he wanted to send an airplane in and have it take Sekou Toure to the Cleveland Clinic in the United States, which was evidently used by the Saudis. The State Department asked me to check this out and see if it were true. So, I first went to his downtown residence. There were military guards around, but they all said that Sekou Toure wasn't there. Nobody would help me. The Foreign Minister lived just down the street from me. By this time, it was five or so in the

morning. The Foreign Minister was not there and his wife said she did not know where he was and she did not know where Sekou Toure was.

Well, time was fleeting and the duty officer caught up with me and said that a Saudi plane was on its way with doctors and that the King of Morocco, who was also a friend of Sekou Toure was sending a plane. Would I please tell the Guineans, because neither of these planes had permission to enter the airport. So, I dashed out to the airport and ran up the flight tower. They said, "We can't do anything. You'll have to get the Prime Minister to give us the okay to let these planes land." So, I dashed back downtown again, went to the head of the military guarding the President's home, and said, "This is the situation. I stopped by the Prime Minister's house and he wasn't there. Where can I find these people?" Finally, he said, "I'll send a soldier with you." First, we went to the Prime Minister's home even though I said, "He's not there." Then he took me to a villa on the outskirts of town, which was used by the government for visiting dignitaries and left me sitting in the car outside the gate for a while. Finally, he came back and said, "Okay, we'll take you downtown to the Prime Minister's office and you can meet with the Prime Minister."

So, we went down to the Prime Minister's office. The duty officer caught up with me again and said that the planes had been turned away and had gone to Liberia. I explained the situation to the Prime Minister and he said, "Well, there's really no need for them to send these planes in. But I'll have the airfield notified to allow them to land."

So, I went back out to the airfield. They finally came in with lots of doctors and nurses. We all went back to the villa outside the city. By this time, they had Guinean doctors there and the Saudi and Moroccan doctors went in. I was also allowed to go in--In fact, I had to interpret for some of them. They said the Secretary had had a heart attack and agreed to medevac him to the clinic in Cleveland. So, people were rushing around to pack up. We set out in a caravan of cars. By this time, it was late afternoon or evening. When a big caravan goes through the streets of Conakry, people usually stop and stare. But there were no flashing lights or police cars preceding the caravan. It was very quiet and nobody took much notice of us. We got out to the airport and they had to decide which plane to take. Just as we had thought that everybody was on, one of the doors burst open and four or five people came dashing down the stairs of the airplane. It turned out that Sekou Toure's suitcase had been locked up in the hold. So, they had to get it out and get it up to where he was. They finally took off. Of course, by this time, it was the middle of the night. I went back to the office and got off all my cables to everybody. Of course, nobody had visas or passports and New York and Cleveland and the State Department had to be warned. I went home and collapsed for a little while.

But then the cables started coming in. The first one said that, soon after Sekou Toure got there, he died. Then they said that the plane that was bringing his body back was coming in at a certain time. And then the cables came in that the leader of our delegation would be Vice President Bush and the Secret Service people were going to precede him and set everything up. Well, I lived in the Embassy for the next week. Fortunately, we had a commissary in the basement and I had a couch in my office. The Secret Service, after looking things over, were not very comfortable with security in Guinea and decided they would not let Bush stay there overnight, although I had arranged for a cottage for him. They'd bring him in the morning for the funeral and take him out as soon as it was over.

On the day of the funeral they first had a ceremony in a big sports stadium and then the entourage went to a mosque that had been recently built by the Saudis. They put all of the dignitaries, such as Vice President Bush, on an ancient, old bus, where they had to stand hanging on straps. So, as the entourage went down the streets, our Secret Service were running alongside this old bus. They got to the mosque and, as non-Muslims were not allowed inside, they had to wait outside. Finally, they returned to the Embassy and got Bush out of there. I got all my cables off and went home.

Early the next morning there was a military coup d'etat. I was awakened by the duty officer and wanted to get down to the Embassy. I set out in the middle of the night and none of the street lights were on. There were military guard posts on all the roads. The first one stopped me and said, "You can't proceed." By the way, this was on July 4th. I told them who I was, showed them my i.d., and said, "This is our national day and I have to go to my Ambassador's." They were very sympathetic about things like that, so they took me to a nearby police station and I was told I would have to be escorted and a civilian who happened to be there was told to escort me. He had been out of the country for 30 years and said he was a newspaper reporter. He took me over to the Ambassador's, talking me through many stop points.

When we arrived at the Ambassador's, we were told he had already left for the Embassy. My escort agreed to take me to the Embassy because he wanted to go downtown to file a story. He was carrying an infrared camera and was taking pictures of everything in the dark. We got down there and, of course, our concerns were the welfare and whereabouts of American citizens. There were not too many in Guinea-- about 40 or 50--and most of them were missionaries out in the countryside. There were also some business people because there was a big aluminum extraction operation there. We tried to get in contact with as many of those as we could and to get off messages to all of their relatives in the States, saying that they were okay. It was a bloodless coup d'etat, by the way--there was no shooting.

The new military colonel took over as the new head of state. Sekou Toure had taken over as head of state when the French left in 1958. He was, in a way, a dictator, and most everything was nationalized with businesses being run by the government. Well, the new guy wanted to denationalize business. People, for the first time, felt they could talk freely and openly on the streets. Little businesses were sprouting up and it was a very good time. He was very open and friendly to us--we had good entree.

Q: What were American concerns in Guinea?

CLARK-BOURNE: When we first got there, when Sekou Toure was still in charge, it was primarily his relationship with the Russians, as were our concerns in most countries. He was friendly with them. After he took over he had come to us for help to develop his country. As we had no interests there at that time, we weren't really interested so he turned to the Russians.

Q: When you were there, we're talking about what, '80, '82?

CLARK-BOURNE: No, we're talking about '82 to '85.

Q: What was the role of the Soviets at that point?

CLARK-BOURNE: You didn't see them around much. They had an embassy and they were giving monetary support to Sekou Toure.

Q: Were there any strategic elements to Guinea?

CLARK-BOURNE: No, not at all. As I say, it was very undeveloped--backward. We had no interest there. There was one American aluminum company and that was about it. And about 40 missionaries. For instance, we had to ship in all of our food from Denmark. You could buy fruits and vegetables and that was all. Occasionally, you'd go to a market and you might see a carcass of a chicken covered with flies hanging from a stall, but not too often. There just was nothing there.

When I first went there, there was one French hotel that had a restaurant in it. There were one or two restaurants in town and that was basically it. The first month I was there, I decided to take three friends out for dinner one night to this one restaurant. I wanted to see what it was like. I was told, "Bring your own wine because they'll charge you \$100 for a bottle of wine," so I brought wine. Well, they had no choice on what to order. They served us chicken in peanut sauce on rice and some salad and, for dessert, a big piece of pineapple cut up in pieces. They didn't even have coffee. Well, it cost me over \$300 for four people.

So, social life was just among ourselves, primarily, and the other embassies. Of course, we had social affairs and invited Guinean officials, but they didn't entertain very much. They couldn't afford to. They didn't have anything to entertain with, let's put it that way. So, it was a simple life.

Q: Did you have the usual thing, of trying to get the Guineans to vote correctly at the UN, or was it sort of a lost cause?

CLARK-BOURNE: Very often, the Ambassador and I were received by Sekou Toure and he would listen to us, but generally he would side more with the USSR.

Q: Were there any other elements there, like the Libyans or did anybody really pay much attention?

CLARK-BOURNE: No, Sekou Toure had his personal friends, the King of Morocco and the Saudi Arabians. He talked the Saudis into building a very nice mosque.

Q: Did the country play any role in the African context?

CLARK-BOURNE: Not too much, no. They interacted with the other Francophone countries in various meetings occasionally, as they still do today.

Q: How about the French? Was there much French influence there at that time?

CLARK-BOURNE: Interestingly, not too much. But, as I mentioned before, half way during my tour there, a lot of French people came in from Côte d'Ivoire looking for jobs. By this time, of course, we'd already had our coup d'etat and there were jobs opening up. There was a Francophone school. My first Ambassador's wife was a French woman and she taught in the school. French was the major language there.

Q: *You left there...?*

CLARK-BOURNE: In '85.

Q: *First, did you find any change in our relations after Sekou Toure died?*

CLARK-BOURNE: Yes, our relations improved immensely because the new head of state, as I said, was trying to cancel out whatever Sekou Toure had done with regard to nationalizing businesses. He was trying to privatize everything and of course, he would ask for advice on various things.

GREGORY T. FROST
Deputy Chief of Mission
Conakry (1988-1991)

Gregory Frost was born in Washington, DC in 1951. He graduated from the University of Kansas and then joined the Foreign Service in 1975. His overseas assignments include Liverpool, Lagos, Lyon, Maseru, Tijuana, Conakry, Hermosillo, Tegucigalpa, Brasilia, and Buenos Aires. Mr. Frost was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.

FROST: I decided I wanted to be DCM in Africa for my next tour. I had four plus French and there were a number of FS-2 level DCM-ships advertised in Francophone Africa. So I paid my own way back to D.C. for a week and lobbied for DCM-ships in Africa, you know, Central African Republic, Guinea -- which other ones were there -- Togo maybe, I don't know. Whichever ones were opening, I went to see the Office Director and whatever contacts I still had in AF and so forth. And I didn't care really which one I got, as long as I got one of them. I really wanted to be at a "real" Foreign Service post again, which as much as did like Tijuana it was not. And so I ended up in the next DCM in Conakry, which was my next assignment.

Q: *All right. Conakry is the capital of --*

FROST: Guinea, formally known as French Guinea.

Q: *What was the situation in Guinea? You were there from when to when?*

FROST: I was there from August of '88 to July of '91, so it was a three-year tour.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea?

FROST: Well, it was one of the notorious black holes of the Foreign Service, I think. You know, one of the most difficult hardship posts, famous in folklore in a way. And it had emerged only in 1984 from probably one of the worst dictatorships in the history of Africa, if not history of the world under Sékou Touré, who became president at independence 1958 and ruled as a dictator until his death in 1984. They were the first francophone country in the whole wave of independence that crested in the 1960s. Ghana was the first one Anglophone in '57, followed by Guinea in '58. When Touré died of natural causes in 1984, he was president for life and had made no provisions for a succession. Lansana Conté, the senior colonel in the army, staged a coup and took over. And so at the time I arrived Conté had ruled as head of a transitional military council about four years. And there was a lot of interest in Guinea beyond what it probably otherwise merited, because everybody had heard of Sékou Touré and the idea was can we help this country get out of this terrible national nightmare that it suffered under this despotic ruler and, you know, bring them forward? Toure had kicked out the French at independence. Guinea was the only newly-independent country in francophone Africa that didn't develop kind of a cozy neo-colonial relationship with France. They were the other side of the coin from that represented by Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast who was kind of in the pocket of the French.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And Sékou Touré said, "Well, we want to *really* become independent" in '58."

So the French said, "Well, that's fine. We'll just leave and take everything with us."

And they did that. There are still scuttled ships in the harbor when I was there and they're still there today, that were sunk by the French to prevent them from -- you know, they couldn't bring them home so they didn't want the bad guys to have them, so I sank them in the harbor. So allegedly there are all sorts of, of urban legend-type stories about they took the silverware out of the restaurants and ripped the phones out of the wall.

Q: Yeah... That's --

FROST: And it was downhill from there, you know. My Economic Officer described it -- he had a good phrase I think. As he put it, "Guinea is a country still struggling to reach its *natural* level of under development," (*laughs*).

Q: Were you seeing sort of a reemergence of ties to France or --

FROST: Yes, the French were just coming back. And they were, they were, they were involved a lot of things. They were they were back. They kept the place going more or less. They provided -- they had an insurance industry there, you know, they had -- they, they were doing infrastructure, making it a -- you know, not a *very* livable place, maybe, but a *more* livable place than it otherwise would have been. You know, lots of practical stuff, you know, in the old neo-

colonial spirit. And there were -- AID was doing this airy-fairy stuff of you know, what AID does. And so the French were, you know -- I like the French of course, because -- and I spent a lot of time with French people while I was there. Most Americans don't and, you know, there were sort of pro-French and anti-French factions within the embassy in that sense. But the French were the -- the French were really doing what the country needed to get back on its feet. And we were doing this kind of typical traditional development work, the writing studies that sit on shelves and were never read and stuff like that. But AID was also expanding at the time. So yeah, the -- that was, that was main thing. The French were back.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

FROST: A fellow named Sam Lupo who was an admin type, spent most of his career in Latin America. He was Consular General in Rio and had been Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel before coming out there. He was kind of an old hand, but had no African experience previous to that and just learned French at FSI before he went out. And I think he was -- I think he was going to Belize but then that fell through and he ended up in Guinea for some reason because he still wanted to be Ambassador. So he had been there for a year when I arrived. And my predecessor was of in terms of Africanists a kind of legendary guy named Bill Mithoefer. Bill had been either DCM or Political Counselor in just about every African country there was.

Q: I've interviewed Bill.

FROST: Uh-huh, he's a very interesting character. And kind of larger than life figure.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: Somebody told me once, "I think Bill has probably entertained more Africans than any living American diplomat." And indeed, his living room furniture was filthy to show for it when I got there (*laughs*). But he had -- he was -- he was a tremendous -- he was a really good contact man, good, great pure Political Officer. His reports could have been better—he seemed to want to summarize his previous reporting on the subject before he got into the new stuff. But in terms of the information he developed he was just tremendous. And the Ambassador told me when I got there he that "If you he had a cocktail party with 50 people and let one secret or scoop loose in that room, Bill Mithoefer would always ferret it out."

Q: Yeah.

FROST: You know. And bring it back and report on it, you know. And that's the kind of guy he was, you know. He usually went -- he usually would call on people on the way to work just to touch base with the contacts and stuff like that. He was, he was remarkable for that. But he wasn't into management. I think I saw my role in Conakry as to kind of help the Ambassador clean this place up a little bit in a way, you know, without, without, without doing -- denigrating the good stuff and continue the reporting, which was pretty good, you know. And I think I did that. In Tijuana, you know, I still had this kind of -- just going back there for a minute, I, I was -- I was still this political wannabe I guess a little bit, and I organized a reporting program for the Junior Officers in Tijuana in my last months, and developed a reporting plan. The DCM came up

from Mexico City and, and, and said, you know, "You guys should do some reporting up here."

And the JO's were like, "With what time? With what energy?" you know, they were kind of resentful of it.

But I said, "Let's take this, the challenge. Let's see if we can do that, you know, and satisfy this guy and we'll all look good." So we all -- I did some reports and, and the -- the officers did them and we got kudos on several cables we did and stuff like that. So I, you know, I kind of was excited about doing that on a larger scale in Guinea. So, so we had two good second tour officers in Conakry -- Political Officer and one Econ Officer. And we did -- they did most of the reporting and I just kind of supervised and guided it.

Q: Well, what was the government at that time like?

FROST: Well, I mean they weren't really very competent. Most of the ministers were civilian. Or maybe by that time it was maybe half and half. Some of them were military. They weren't very good, there was no depth. They were, you know, everybody was falling all over themselves give them aid, and the ministers spent half their time dealing with delegations that were coming in, you know, and meeting visitors and stuff like that. You know, I'm not saying they wouldn't -- would have been good at doing any real work had they had time, but they didn't have time, you know? So it was just kind of your, your, your typical, you know inept African government with low levels of education generally.

Q: They had a military, but was it much of a military or was it just --

FROST: No, it wasn't much of a military. We had a minor military assistance program, which was, you know, run by our civilian Political Officer, which was basically giving them radios and trying to, trying to -- we gave them a few coastal patrol boats, you know. Because there was a lot of pirate-type fishing that went on done by South Koreans and whatnot and Taiwanese in there territorial waters that they couldn't police their economic zone. People were just vacuuming up the fish off the ocean floor practically (*laughs*), you know. And we were trying to -- trying to help them deal with that. It wasn't -- it was pretty, it wasn't very successful.

Q: Guinea is bounded by what countries?

FROST: Well, let's see, it got -- let's see. Starting from north and -- it's kind of like shaped like a kidney. It's kind of like -- let's see.

Q: We've got a map.

FROST: Oh. Back over --

Q: Yeah.

FROST: Yeah, well, you can see it's kind of --

Q: Guinea's in yellow.

FROST: -- you can see Guinea in yellow there, yeah. So clockwise you have Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. So you got a number of countries bordering us --

Q: Did any of them at that particular time have problems that spilled over or?

FROST: Only -- later -- it -- during -- towards the end of my tour there was the outbreak of the Liberian Civil War.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: Which later spread to Sierra Leone.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And generated huge numbers of refugees.

Q: Was Taylor going then or?

FROST: Taylor was starting then. It was -- I remember this, because I was -- it was Christmas Eve 1989 when Taylor started his insurgency, it was probably one of the most successful guerilla insurgencies in history. He started with a small band of guys up in the, the corner of the country - - there were some tribes that really hated -- that really hated-- Samuel Doe, the first and only I guess non-Americo-Liberian president who we had propped for ten years, but he was essentially a failure, you know. And, Doe did was to massacred a number civilians belonging to a couple of rival tribes to his up in the corner of the country by way of reprisal. This generated recruits to Taylors's insurgency, Doe's army was largely made up of members of Doe's own tribe, the Krahn. Taylor was an Americo-Liberian himself. But there were a couple of tribes, the Gio and Mano, who were his main supporters. And his massacres stirred things up and drew more recruits to his cause. And so there was kind of a snowball effect. Taylor's force gathered strength and power and recruits as he sort of swept through the countryside until he got to Monrovia, at which point he couldn't take the palace, the seat of power or the symbol of it anyway. You have to take the palace if you're going take and hold in power in Africa. If you don't, you're not a completely successful insurgency. So that was where he stalled.. And then his movement split. There was a rebel commander even more thuggish than Taylor named Prince Johnson. Taylor's movement was called the NPFL, National Patriotic Front of Liberia, I believe. Prince's was the INPFL. And he would ask people, "Well, you know what INPFL stands for?"

And they said no.

And he said, "It stands for I Need Prince For Liberia."

Q: Ah.

FROST: And this guy was -- this guy was -- he was a evil guy, but he was -- there was a clownish nature to him. And apparently there was -- we sent an envoy out at one point from Washington to talk to these guys, you know. And he went over and saw the prince's place. And he had a big Budweiser sign that said "Budweiser," followed by, "Headquarters Prince Johnson, Provincial President of Liberia," or something, you know. And they ushered the envoy in and served him warm beer and African food. And then a curtain opened apparently and Prince got on his guitar and played gospel music for them. And it was like this surreal sort of thing. Only Africa could have something like this. One of the stories said that knocked on his ex-girlfriend's door one day and she answered it, and he shot her right between the eyes then and there because she betrayed him or something. So he was like, you know. This was the alternative to Charles Taylor.

Q: Oh.

FROST: Charles Taylor you think of as a bad guy, but Prince was worse.

Q: Well, did you have any dealings with these people?

FROST: No, I was just kind of watching it from afar. Sometimes we could hear Charles Taylor on the radio because it would carry across the airwaves, you know, and so we could listen to some of his conversations. But we did not have any -- we just dealt -- what we were dealing with was the, was the backlash of the refugees coming across. And as I say, it later spread to, Sierra Leone as well.

Q: Well, was there any messing around in that area by Gaddafi?

FROST: Well, he had supposed -- there was some -- he had definitely was thought to have, to have somehow financed or supported Charles Taylor, you know, to launch the insurgency. It was kind of a weird combination, you know, Blaise Compaoré, who was in -- who was in -- let's see, I'm trying to get -- don't want to get confused here. Blaise Compaoré was in -- was he in Burkina? Anyway, the Burkinabés were supporting -- they were -- and they were buddies with Libya and they were supporting Taylor, so Libya supported them and they supported Taylor. And somehow -- Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast was kind of supporting him too and basically allowed Ivory Coast to be used as a launching pad for Charles Taylor and his 26 (really, I think that was all there were) original cadres. You know, and the reason is that, that Africans have very long memories. Houphouët-Boigny's daughter had been married to one of -- was it Tubman that was the last -- the President that was overthrown by Doe -- Tubman or Tolbert. Tolbert I think maybe.

Q: I think it was Tolbert.

FROST: Tolbert.

Q: Tolbert, yeah.

FROST: Anyway, he -- his daughter was married to one of Tolbert's cabinet ministers,

Houphouët's daughter. And so when, when, when Doe took power you may remember they took a -- they, they took out the cabinet members, they dragged them out on the beach, they tied them to barrels that were green and white and shot them, you know, just execution style, you know. And he was, he was one of the ones killed. So that was a Houphouët grudge. And I think Houphouët just thought, "Oh, if I can make some trouble for -- if I can help somebody make some trouble for Samuel Doe then, you know, I hate him so let's just go ahead and we'll let these guys launch out of Ivory Coast. And so he -- and it worked. I mean I don't think anybody dreamed that it would, it would work to the extent that it did, you know. And of course it destroyed the overall security climate of the whole region, you know, and made Guinea look like a island of stability, you know, as it spread.

Q: Was there blood diamonds or oil or any of that stuff that was in the stew?

FROST: Yeah. I mean that was -- that's -- there was, you know, the timber in Liberia and the blood diamonds in Sierra Leone, and you know, that was all sort of going on. Like I say, we were -- it wasn't really -- we weren't involved in that a whole lot in Guinea, but we knew -- we knew it was going on and the reporting was talking about it and stuff like that. And there was also -- I thought -- yeah, yeah, there was -- there was -- there was, you know, all of that stuff, yeah.

Q: Did we have Peace Corps there?

FROST: We did. And that was not really affected.

Q: Did you find you spent much time with the Peace Corps?

FROST: Quite a lot, yeah. We had them -- we had them over to our house for -- we had a pool and so we had them over to our house when, when they were sworn in and stuff like that, and we'd go out and see -- try to see them on our trips out in the countryside and so on and so forth.

Q: How did they seem to fit in?

FROST: They did well. They, they were, they had, you know, were liked in their villages I think and had -- it was a good program.

Q: Was there another ambassador besides Sam Lupo when you were --

FROST: Sam left after my first two years-- he had been there a year when I got there and so he did two years and then he left. And he was replaced by Dane Smith who'd been I think previous to that DCM in Khartoum I believe for his previous assignment. I had met him when he was in Botswana when I was in Lesotho and he came down for a weekend to take his daughter to ride horses or something. So I had met, had met him and his wife there. So he took -- but I was in charge during the interim, and that was really interesting because when that was when Guinea went to war, because basically remember there was a -- there was a ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), the local community of West African nations, had like an intervention for us in Liberia called -- it was called ECOMOG, the ECOWAS monitoring group,

although it was known colloquially as ECOMOB because they were --

Q: (chuckles)

FROST: -- more like a mob than they were an army. I remember going over to talk to the Defense Minister and all this stuff and they were all excited and they were painting all their tanks -- such as they had armored vehicles and stuff -- painting them white and painting their helmets white, you know, because white was the color of peace and they were peacekeepers and all this stuff. And you know, they were actually going into action and so forth. And the Deputy Commander was a Guinean. He was one of the old guard from the “temporary” original military junta, one of the, one of the only ones that was left by that time, you know. And so they sent him off to be commander of, of this force, you know, or Deputy Commander maybe. And so they were excited, you know, about going to war, you know. And it was kind of a fiasco, or ineffective of course, to say the least. But I developed a good relationship with the Senior Advisor to the President and would go down and visit him. They had this huge and basically empty building called the *Palais des Nations*. which was built for some Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference that was never held—it was an enormous white elephant. I went there to meet this guy but I didn’t go to an identifiable office. It’s really weird, I went to this huge building and he’d meet me at the door and had the key to some random room and would come up and unlock the door and I would, I would have a meeting with him, you know, ask him what they were planning and stuff. So it was kind of fun to do that, you know, because I was in charge for that little while-- at sort of the height of all this stuff.

Q: You said they were rather ineffective. I mean --

FROST: Yeah. I mean they, they didn’t, you know, they just kind of were -- I think they were pretty much ignored by Taylor, you know, and peace did not come.

Q: Were the Soviets messing around in those days?

FROST: Well, the Soviets were, were -- they were, you know, it was kind of a semi-client state of Soviet Union. Had been for -- and of course during, during the Angolan Civil War they were refueling planes to fly Cuban troops into Angola and stuff like that there, you know. And, and -- but of course remember, this was, this was -- glasnost had hit by then, you know. And, and the Soviet Union was on its way out.

Q: Mm-hmm.

FROST: In fact, the whole, the whole Soviet Empire was crumbling, you know.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And that was, that was -- they were just -- they were not -- they didn’t play, you know, because --

Q: How about China?

FROST: China? They had an embassy there too, but I don't think they were very active, you know, at that point. They were pretty, pretty, pretty small at that time. But it was interesting to be in the middle of this crumbling. Like I, I went out with a -- I, I had -- there was an East German and a West German embassy there, you know, and, and, and they realized they could see German reunification coming, I think, you know, and so the two ambassadors had dinner together one night, which had never happened, you know, and the German community was all shaken up by this, what's going to happen. And my poor East German counterpart was worried about his job, you know, because his country was going away He told me, "I have to go back to Berlin and I don't even know whether I'm going to have an apartment anymore, let alone a job," and you know. And the Romanian Ambassador whose name -- and I'm not making this up -- was Petru Despot was, was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, which is kind of --

Q: Ohh.

FROST: -- He had been there forever you know. And, and it was just all these things were happening, you know. I went to the Romanian National Day and that was weird, you know, because their regime was about ready to collapse, as it subsequently did a few months later. And then I had -- but I had dinner with, with my, my Soviet counterpart one time, just called him up and invited him, took him out to dinner. I wrote a little cable on it called "Glasnost in Guinea." I call it "My Dinner with Andre," because there was a film -- and his name was Andre and there was a film called that current at the time and I decided "My Dinner with Andre, Glasnost in Guinea," you know. Just -- he's like asking all these questions, "What's it like in South Africa? And gee, you know, it would be interesting to be there, you know."

And, and, and it was just kind of, you know, almost surreal, you know. And then, and then they had the, the -- what turned out to be the very last Soviet Army Day because a year from then the Soviet Army didn't exist. And so he didn't exist. They had -- you know, it used to be -- the rule was because ever since they invaded Afghanistan, for Soviet Army Day, you could only send one officer from the embassy and it had to be military, attaché, rank of major or below, and stuff like that, because we didn't want to hobnob with the Red Army and all this stuff. Well, they just, they just relaxed all that and they said, you know, "Anybody wants to go can go." And all of us got invitations, you know, the Political Officer, the Econ Officer, me, I don't think the Ambassador, but he probably wouldn't have gone. And so we all, we all went to this, the Soviet Army Day just to see what it was like.

And you know, talked to our counterparts and it was really strange. The Political Officer had kind of a surreal conversation with his counterpart. He said, "Well, I'm not allowed to talk to you because you outrank me, because you're Secretary and I'm just an attaché or something like that."

So my, my, my colleague says, "Well OK, well why don't we work a deal?" Said, "If I'm -- if I'm senior to you why don't I order you to talk to me?"

And he said, "OK, that'll work."

Q: (laughs)

FROST: And so they talked away. I went up to my counterpart, who I'd met at -- I'd been at a couple diner parties with already. He was a new one. Andre had left and so this new guy came in. I'd met this new guy and the poor guy, he, he was, he was -- he spoke Eng -- you know, usually in Africa they have guys -- and China's the same way -- they have people who speak either English or French. And they sent them to whichever country whose language they speak. Or sometimes they'll have -- the Chinese even had a tandem couple, I think, where they had the French speaker was a husband and the, the English speaker was the wife and, and they would -- one of them would either do the translating for the other and it was like a tandem team. But anyway, this guy -- this new guy, he was -- he spoke English, he was destined to some English speaking country and then all of a sudden he got shifted -- that fell through and he got shifted to Guinea where he didn't speak any French at all, you know, and nobody speaks Russian. So he was miserable and didn't want to be there, you know, really kind of dour guy, you know. So I went up to him that evening and I was trying to make polite conversation and I thought -- I said, "Well hey, you know, I've never had any, any Russian beer, you know, you must have -- probably get some from Moscow once in a while. Could you send me a, you know, six-pack or case if you got that much? I'd like to try it, you know. I've never had it."

He says, he says -- he sort of looked at me and says -- frowns and says, "You wouldn't like it. It's no good," (*laughs*). You know, they don't even have a beer there to be proud of, how *sad*.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And they were all running around being kind of giddy and I guess they'd never had an event like that where people actually came, Americans were there, you know, and six of us or however many, you know. And it's just -- it was just fascinating, you know. I went to the first -- the first national day after German reunification and, you know, my, my German counterpart -- West German counterpart, you know, was apparently favorite of the Foreign Minister Franz-Josef Strauss, which is how he got the job, and the Ambassador was an old school German diplomat. And the Ambassador was, was gung-ho for unification and the younger one -- my counterpart wasn't so sure about it (*laughs*), you know. And in -- anyway, it was just, it was an interesting time to be in an old Soviet client state.

Q: Did the State Department, our state Department intrude much? Or were you sort of left out there and --

FROST: Well, I mean of course the Office of West Africa Affairs has a whole bunch of countries to cover.

Q: Mm-hmm.

FROST: But they were interested in us. And like I say, everybody's interested in Guinea more than they otherwise would have been just because it's a legendary place. So but yeah, we were -- we, we, you know, they liked our reporting and, you know, we worked hard on that. And so it was -- we were not a preoccupation for anyone. That's, that's, that's for sure. And we kind of

had this -- kind of had this weird adversarial relationship with the embassy in Abidjan, because if you read their cables and you'd think -- if you didn't know better you'd think their host country was practically French, you know. And the French, the Frenchification is a very thin veneer there, which wore away, you know. It's pretty much gone now I think, you know. And so they were just -- I think they were just scornful of, of, you know, *our* host country as too bush a place and that meant they were kind of scornful of us, you know what I mean? And so we just kind of had this weird sort of, you know, we kind of trashed their cables and they probably trashed ours (*laughs*).

Q: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Well, I mean this happens. I mean it's partly identified with the country up to a point. I was in Yugoslavia and Belgrade and we had an adversarial relationship to our Consul General --

FROST: Yeah, the Serbia and Croatia rivalry.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

FROST: Yeah. Well, I've often had a theory that embassies kind of inevitably and to some extent reflect the environment in which they are in, you know. And that's probably why we were so combative. I mentioned the combative spirit of the South Africa Desk when I was there, probably because, you know, that's where our major clients were combative, so we kind of took on their persona a little bit, you know.

Q: Well, did events in South Africa resound in Guinea at all?

FROST: Well, let's see. I remember being -- I went to a trade fair in Abidjan I think once and I -- that was around the time Nelson Mandela was being released, I think, you know. And it was kind of a far off -- I mean it seemed like another universe, you know. I followed it as closely as I could out there given --

Q: Well, you were a hell of a long way's away.

FROST: Yeah. So --

Q: But you're in Africa, so.

FROST: Yeah, yeah. But it was just kind of -- I mean who would have thought, you know, that, that it all would have happened and so quickly. But it didn't really have much effect locally. There were too many local problems for everybody to worry about. I'm going to stop for just one second.

Q: Greg, did you have a feeling in Guinea that there was a potential for anything, either the people or the natural resources or something that could make it more than a marginal state?

FROST: Well, there were, there were certainly the resources. You know, it was one of the world's largest bauxite producers. There was also a functioning western-run gold mine and a

diamond mine as well, both of which we visited, were fascinating. These sort of enclave mining kind of places.

Q: How does the mining work? Because you know, you think of people mining there and looking and gee, that looks promising and sticking it in their pocket or something.

FROST: Well, it's -- you know, it's, it's very unglamorous. Bauxite is basically -- they had -- there's just a mountain of bauxite up in -- up near the coast in north not too far from Guinea, the south border. And the main bauxite mine was a conglomerate of Alcan and Alcoa and these big western aluminum countries and big companies. Basically they were just -- they were just moving huge masses of earth, you know, dismantling this mountain. And they had their own railroad and they ship it down to, to ships that would come in and, and load it up with bauxite and take it off to wherever it was smelted and refined, you know. They had their own huge generating plant because, you know, their big earthmovers -- were run on electric power that were generated by them. And the gold mining, the gold and diamond mining were the same way. There was a layer of gold bearing rock. It was alluvial gold, so it was sediment I guess, you know, with gold flakes and dust and stuff in it. And then the diamonds was, you know, diamond bearing layer. So you had to move huge amounts of earth to get to where the, the diamond bearing and gold bearing strata was and remove that. And then, and then you had a plant where you could process it and extract the diamonds and stuff like that. So it was -- but it kind of was, you know, and, and since the government really couldn't do much, you know, basically these mines would -- they would fix roads. If a bridge broke down mining people would go out and send their welders out to fix it and, you know, kind of do a lot of social projects.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: You know, and stuff like that. And of course the government, you know, got their cut of royalties from these places, you know. And -- but they expected the mine to do all this kind of public works kind of stuff too because they had no capacity to do it. So I mean -- yeah, I mean it's just that they -- imagine, 26 years Sékou Touré was in power, you know, and nobody was educated and, and you know, it was, it was horrible, you know. I mean the, the, the -- I had a -- I had a good contact of mine who wrote a book called *La Verite du Ministre* ("The Minister's Truth"), He was a Minister of Sport I think at one time under Sékou Touré. And he was a very educated man, a lawyer, great guy. You know, the -- he talked -- there was a story which he confirmed to me as true. There was some little kid that said -- he was at school one day and the teacher said, "What do you want to -- what do you want to be when you grow up?"

And he said, "I want -- I'd kind of like to be President of the Republic."

This got back to Sekou Toure who had the kid arrested and thrown in a concentration camp for being a threat to government. I mean it -- he said -- my friend said, "Honest to God, this really happened," you know. And I visited this place my last place in the country and I got -- it wasn't -- everybody knew where it was and nobody talked about it, you know, and it was just kind of fallen into disrepair. Camp Boiro it was called, and it was -- it was basically a small concentration camp in the middle of Conakry. Now, I got somebody to take me there just before I left because I really wanted to see it. You know, and people wrote in their own excrement on

the walls, you know, messages and stuff, you know, in their cells. My friend had been in solitary confinement there for ten years before he finally got released, you know. I mean so with that kind of -- that kind of atmosphere, you know, I mean it was just -- they kind of -- I mean -- West Africans are natural born traders, you know. They don't have to teach them commerce because it's like in their blood, you know. Look at Nigeria and stuff. You know what I mean. But these people had it beaten out of them, literally. How do you recover from that, you know? It hasn't gotten any better since. It's now -- Sékou Touré's been dead for 28 years, you know, and, and it's just not getting any better. So I don't know. It's sad. It's just -- I went back -- I, I went back as a WAE (When Actually Employed) retired annuitant and did Consular work for a month just to see what it was like -- when I got an opportunity back in 2006. And it was -- and had dinner with this old contact of mine, you know -- still had his law office that was mainly run by his daughter. He's probably 75 by now. And I said well -- his nickname was Porthos, like the Musketeer, Porthos Diallo. So I said, "Well Porthos, what, what do you think about this?" And Sékou Touré was still in power back then. And I said well, I said, "What do you think about the situation now?"

And he said, "Well, I'll tell you." They actually had newspapers then, which they didn't have when I was there, you know. "So if I want to write something critical of the government I can do that and nothing will happen to me. It'll be published, you know, in one of these little newspapers we have now. And if I want to drive to Sierra Leone for the weekend, you know, I can do that too and I won't be followed and nothing will happen to me, you know. And, and that's a good thing, you know," (*laughs*). But there were still no politics to speak of, you know, and still a dictatorship, you know, by Lansana Conté.

You know, and then, then I was either -- I was talking -- I had a staff meeting one time when my collaborator was away so I was in charge of the Consular Section. So I had a staff meeting one time and I asked the Senior FSN, I said, "Well, OK, well what would happen if say you or maybe I or you and I or whoever would go down to this traffic circle down there, you know, a block away and, you know, hold up signs, "*A bas Conté!*" and start demonstrating and yelling against the government. What would happen say if it were you?"

And he said, "Well, I think that after a while the police would come. They would take me a .way and I'd disappear for a few days. And when I came back I wouldn't do that anymore," (*laughs*). You know, so, so I mean, you know, it wasn't -- it, it, it was still in this kind of, you know --

Q: It wasn't really benign.

FROST: Yeah, yeah. So it was just -- it was a very sad place.

Q: Did you have a -- was the educational system moving up?

FROST: It was -- no, it was completely dysfunctional, yeah. There were, there were, there was nothing really in the country that worked. Except for these mining companies really.

Q: Well, you left there when?

FROST: Well, the Econ Officer and I arrived the same day on the 31st of August, by the way, in '88. And Ambassador said, "I knew I was getting two pretty smart guys when the -- when your TEDs (Transfer Eligibility Dates) were "August" and both of you show up on the very *last* day of the month -- August 31 -- on different flights from Paris. (*laughs*). And that officer came to me a couple days after our arrival -- at our seedy old Embassy, which has now been replaced by a new one. You could see kind of the -- and there were literally blocks in that area -- such as where I guess they had demolished the old Sekou Toure palace and replaced it with nothing and stuff like that. And, and my subordinate, my Econ Officer, was a guy named Mark Rondon, whose father was Fred Rondon, who was ambassador a couple times, so he grew up as a Foreign Service kid, unlike me, you know.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And he knew his way around the block obviously. He comes into my office one morning after he'd been there about a week and said, "Gregg, you know, I was just looking down out of my window office, you know, and you know, my God, this place looks like war zone. *And there's never been a war!*"

Q: (laughs)

FROST: (*laughs*) He was the guy who came up with that description, "a country still reaching its natural -- struggling to reach its natural level of underdevelopment. We kind of got into it. Dane Smith, you know, he was a -- he was -- I think we were mainly different personality types, you know. And I'm not saying that I was even remotely ready then, or later, to be Ambassador to Guinea, but he definitely would have been better DCM than me. And I was more temperamentally suited to *his* role, I think. I think. He was a very "check-listy" guy, you know, and was always be super-organized. After we had finished the usual welcoming dinner at my house the first night, he got a little card out of his shirt pocket with all his burning questions on the first day at post, which I thought was kind of weird. But we got along fine, but, he and the USAID director where trying to really bloat up the level of aid we were giving to Guinea, which I guess was their main objective that would be sort of a feather in both their caps. The new Econ Officer that had come to replace Rondon and I were not too keen on that -- we were against that because their absorptive capacity was already greatly exceeded, you know, and all they were going to do was waste money, if not steal it, you know. And why do we need to have 26 million in aid when we're -- when we already had 13 and nothing was happening to show for it, you know. And of course the USAID Director of course was all for loading it up as much as he could, you know, and we didn't -- so there was kind of this -- there was the, you know, there was the powerless faction, the DCM and Econ Officer, then there's the powerful faction, the AID Director and the Ambassador. So we were going to lose, you know. But we kind of -- we kind of wanted to air it out a bit, debate assistance level issue a little bit..

So finally the Ambassador says, "Gregg, let's look at it this way. Now, if this money really could be used say to help people in East L.A., OK, you know, you might have a point. But if it doesn't go to us it's going to go to Togo, and are they really any better?" You know, "So, so I mean, you know. Stop it!" So we had to fold our hand, you know, and --

Q: Yeah.

FROST: -- and gave up. But anyway, and now I don't know what we're doing there now, probably more. I've lost track. But it was -- I mean we, we, you know, we were all trying, you know, doing our best to turn this sow's ear into a silk purse, you know. Did make you a bit cynical I guess in some ways.

Q: Well, what happened when you left? Where'd you go?

FROST: OK, when I left I decided I wanted to -- I had gotten promoted to FS-1 when I was there. And you're automatically considered for senior training when you make FS-1 apparently, War College and stuff. But I really wanted to do War College, you know, and, and not just sort of, you know -- so I actively, that was really what I wanted to do. Well, I also wanted to be Consul General of Bordeaux, but that went to somebody who was married to a wine merchant and had been working at the White House or something, so I didn't get it. And my CDO (Career Development Officer) called, he said, "Well, Gregg, you know, you were runner up for Bordeaux." But it's not like a golf tournament where you win \$70,000, it's like send us some more bids, you know." So anyway, that was really the only job I wanted, per se. So I just concentrated -- and I ended up going to the Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama, which is the least desirable of the war colleges only because it's in the middle of Alabama, I guess, and it's not as known, well known as Naval or particularly Army, and of course National is the big one.. So that was pretty much -- I had a choice between that and being the State Department person at the Heritage Foundation. And I thought, "Well gee, that's a right-wing think tank, that'd be kind of interesting, you know. I might make some good contacts there and stuff like that, but on the other hand, they hate the State Department. And I would be the resident whipping boy probably for the entire State Department and what's -- what's that going to get me, you know?" It would be interesting, but you know. But the War College, you know, sounded like something that was actually of some use. And you know, I'm a Midwestern guy, so you know, I thought in the middle of Alabama, you know, why not? And so, so that's, that's where I ended up.

TIBOR PETER NAGY, JR.
Ambassador
Guinea (1996-1999)

Ambassador Nagy was born in Hungary and came to the United States as Political Refugee in 1957, settling in the Washington, DC area. After graduating from Texas Tech University, he entered the Foreign Service in 1978. During his career he served in Lusaka, Victoria (Seychelles), Addis Ababa, Lomé, Yaoundé and Lagos, as well as in the State Department in Washington.. From 1996 to 1999 he served as US Ambassador to Guinea-Conakry and to Ethiopia from 1999 to 2002. Ambassador Nagy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: OK, so you went to -- was it Guinea-Bissau or --

NAGY: No, no, no, no. Guinea, Guinea-Conakry.

Q: And you went there in '96.

NAGY: Yeah, I was ambassador to Guinea-Conakry from '96 to '99.

Q: All right, what was the situation there? First the sort of political-economic before we go into relations.

NAGY: Well, Guinea is endowed with some of the most bountiful natural resources anywhere, but they had a very sad history, first the dictatorship of Sékou Touré who totally bankrupted and terrorized his own people. And then there was the long somewhat benign dictatorship of Lansana Conté, who took over when Sékou Touré died. But it -- it was venal. It was -- he was surrounded -- even though he himself was, was the honest sort, he was surrounded by kleptocrats and cronies. So it was -- the country stank of corruption and the United States was quite tough on Conté because he was an authoritarian -- I don't want to say the word dictator -- but he was an authoritarian president who certainly was not a democrat and had human rights issues, although again, not -- you know, looking at the neighborhood it was by no means the worst place.

Q: Well, what were American interests there?

NAGY: Couple of -- most of them were humanitarian because Guinea served as a point of refuge for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees. At that time both Liberia was undergoing the scourge of civil war, and Sierra Leone had the Revolutionary United Front running around and chopping off people's arms and hands. So Guinea was the, was the point of hundreds of thousands of refugees from those countries. Then at the same time, we very much wanted to see Guinea become more democratic. And there were American companies who were there to tap into the natural resources, so we had to look after them. Guinea has about the world's -- half the world's known deposits of bauxite. So there was a Pittsburgh company at the time and another American company involved in bauxite.

Q: How were they spending the money that they would get from --

NAGY: Oh, the country was highly corrupt. Cronies of the president were basically pocketing the money. Nothing was straight in Guinea. And when I got there relations between the U.S. and Guinea were extremely strained. My predecessor had taken it all very, you know, personally and he was quite -- how do we say in diplomate -- frank in his conversations with his Guinean interlocutors.

Q: Well, did you see this as a place maybe to have a different approach?

NAGY: Yeah. My approach -- I'm not an in your face kind of person as much as, you know, I like to turn the battleship. I know you have to do it slowly. And I'm much, much better at charm than I am at, you know, at wagging my finger. Not that I'm saying the other approach is wrong. It's just that my tactic is direction.

Q: Well --

NAGY: So I went out of my way to engage people, you know, to spend a lot of time talking to government folks. I made as good a friend as I could with the president, which really turned out - - also, I did something which turned out really, really well. I traveled all over Guinea, and we paid to take a television crew with us so whenever I got back from one of those trips the news for the next week would be filled with the American ambassador, you know, traveling to various parts of the country, attending village ceremonies, meeting with local officials. And there were two points I -- every speech I made -- I started doing this in Guinea -- every speech I made I would include two points: one, fathers keep your daughters in school because they'll make much better wives and they'll be much more valuable to you that way, and number two, please take HIV/AIDS seriously because it's going to kill you.

Q: How bad was it there?

NAGY: It was starting to get bad. It wasn't nearly as bad as in Southern Africa. I mean Guinea was a much more traditionalist society, heavily Islamic. But I found in visiting the various parts of Guinea the Muslim clergy to be extremely sympathetic. They didn't want their adherence being killed off by HIV/AIDS, and as a matter fact, northern part of Guinea, the most traditional part, we had Peace Corps volunteers, mostly young women, doing condom demonstrations with the full support of the local Imams.

Q: Oh!

NAGY: So it was -- it was quite a paradox. And I loved my time in Guinea. Like I said, I made very good friends with the opposition, with the -- with the pres -- I mean the guy who this week was inaugurated as President of Guinea (Alpha Conde), he was an opposition leader at the time when I was there, and he was arrested. And I organized the diplomatic core to ask the government to allow us to pay him a visit. And we went and visited him under house arrest and found out that he did not have even a pad of paper or a pencil. You know, he just sat there. So after our visit he was given paper, he was given pencils, he was given a radio to listen to, you know, BBC and whatever, and books to read. So I felt very good about that. Actually I think during my time we advanced the cause of democratization. And also one of the things I was very pleased with was I helped -- during my time I was able to resolve like a 20-year dispute between Guinea and Mobile Oil.

Q: What was the problem?

NAGY: The former Guinean Government I think had kicked them out of the country and I went and, you know, made pitches and they let Mobile back in and I was able to bring internet into the country through the Leland Initiative, got some codeshare agreements for some American air carriers. You know, I found the positive engagement approach worked really, really well.

Q: What was the Leland Initiative?

NAGY: It was under -- in honor of former U.S. Congressman, Mickey Leland, who was killed in Ethiopia visiting refugee camps. USAID helped African countries introduce internet.

Q: Well, were you there long enough to see any --

NAGY: Absolutely.

Q: -- affect?

NAGY: We flipped the switch. Yeah. No, this is 1998, I think we flipped the switch. I was very, very pleased with that. And we even got it out to some of the provinces.

Q: Well, was the country like so many countries in that part, the northern part was Islamic and the southern part was --

NAGY: In Guinea most of the country was Islamic. There was a small part in the forest area which was predominantly Christian, but I would say that easily 85 to 90% of the population was Muslim. And you had three -- you had basically three major ethnic groups and then a collection of smaller ethnic groups in the forest. But you know, in that part of Africa the Malinke, as they call them in Guinea, or the Mandingo, as they call them I think in, in Mali and Niger and they also are into Sierra Leone, parts of Liberia, and then across, you know, parts of Senegal, that ethnic group is there. And then the Fulani are also in the northern part of Guinea. There are quite a lot of Fulani. They call them the Peul. And then there's coastal -- there's a coastal group, the Susu, who were the last to be Islamatized. And politics there was extremely ethnic, probably the most ethnic politics I've ever had to deal with.

Q: Well, how did this translate?

NAGY: Well, it translated with a lot of ethnic jealousies and it continued to this day, because the president, who was just elected, represents the Malinke and the president -- and the candidate who was defeated represented the Fulani, the Peul. So unfortunately, you know, this has continued to this day.

Q: Well, could they get together?

NAGY: They did to a certain extent. I mean the armed forces, it was interesting because what the president did was in addition to his own ethnics in the armed forces he used a lot of the forest people who were mostly, like I said, Christian, because he didn't trust the two large Islamic groups. So there was a lot of jockeying back and forth and different ministries represented by different ethnic groups.

Q: Well, how good access did you have?

NAGY: I had any access that I wanted. His second wife was my neighbor and whenever I needed to see the president I could always see him. The nice thing was when I left there they gave me a knighthood.

Q: Well, Sir Nagy (laughs).

NAGY: I was really pleased. I felt like I really accomplished my mission there.

Q: Well, what about the Peace Corps. I have pictures of these young Peace Corps girls with bananas explaining the use of condoms.

NAGY: Well, they actually had wooden models that were appropriate. That's what they used for the demonstration. But the Peace Corps was scattered throughout the country and I did my best to visit every single volunteer on site. I was very pleased because I got an award from Peace Corps, the Peace Corps director for the support that I gave the volunteers. And also, we started a new program in Guinea, which has gone on. We called it at the time Crisis Corps, which was, you know Peace Corps volunteers finish after two years but Peace Corps selected a very select group of very knowledgeable advanced volunteers for a third year in a crisis area. And in Guinea they would serve in the refugee camp doing things like counseling people who'd been traumatized and, you know, those types of things. And Peace Corps -- they call it crisis Corps or by some other name, but it's a program that went on.

Q: Well, you talked about these refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Then what happened to them?

NAGY: Well, you know those three countries -- Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia -- they, they seem to alternate having crises. And at any one point you can have refugees from two of the countries in a third country. So that's how -- those refugees -- Liberia was kind of settling down, so they were on the way back. Sierra Leone near the end of my time had gotten some modicum of peace. So they were starting to slowly going back into Sierra Leone. And then of course after I left Guinea itself blew up and then there was Guineans going other places. And right now all three countries are fairly settled down.

Q: How did Guinea blow up?

NAGY: Guinea was receiving -- was actually being attacked by groups and the President of Liberia was supporting people who wanted to overthrow the government of Guinea. So then the government of Guinea armed a group of Liberians, who actually went in and overthrew Charles Taylor. Also rebels came across in Sierra Leone and basically destroyed one of Guinea's larger towns.

Q: Good God.

NAGY: So yeah, that was after I left.

Q: Well, would a Muslim country -- were there influence I think of obviously Libya or of Saudi Arabia? Were they pumping money or --

NAGY: Not to such an extent because the president of Guinea was extremely sensitive to being

told how to be a good Muslim. He even made public pronouncements about that. He was not going to have Arabs tell Africans how to be good Muslims.

Q: Did Guinea have much influence in sort of the greater African sphere or at least south -- I mean --

NAGY: In ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States)?

Q: Yeah.

NAGY: ECOWAS? Not really. The -- I think the Secretary General of ECOWAS was a Guinean so to that extent, yes, and also Guineans have served quite well in international peacekeeping. So in that regard the country more than pulled its weight. But the largest sphere for Guinea truly, and West Africa truly is the economic. And if they could realize their potential of the treasure house that they're sitting on it could be quite significant, including I think eight -- if I remember -- eight West African rivers have their source in the upland of Guineas. So they have tremendous potential for hydro.

Q: Were we trying to sort of pilot farming projects or anything there?

NAGY: We had -- we had actually forest and road projects. I'm a true believer in rural roads, even though USAID, you know, went out of that business. And we were -- when I first got there we were still doing rural roads, which I -- which I absolutely loved. Also, we were doing some fairly innovative forest technique, as in proving that if a community owns a forest then they'll take care of it.

Q: How did you find your embassy?

NAGY: Well, OK, here's another part where I'm going to do a little bragging. When I got there we had the highest rate of curtailments of any embassy in the world and by the time I left we had the highest rate of extensions.

Q: OK, what was causing the curtailment?

NAGY: In addition to the very, very difficult operating environment I don't think it was a happy mission.

Q: How did you remedy this?

NAGY: Well, like I said I think one of my gifts -- I spend my whole life trying to motivate people and improving morale and trying to make lemonade out of lemons. I started out as a GSO and then I was an admin officer the bread and butter issues are what matter to people, and if you supply them with electricity, get generators if the country doesn't supply, make sure there's a good health unit, make sure they take their vacations, get them furniture and furnishings, you know, consult with them on important decisions, make them feel like a family. Then you can overcome the environment.

Q: How were living conditions there?

NAGY: They were piss poor, to characterize it. I mean totally dilapidated infrastructure, horrendous local health conditions, 80 inches of rain a year, you know, over four months, electricity continuously going off, I mean continuously going off, you know, and on and on and on. It was a gorgeous country, especially if you got out of the city. The people were very, very nice. Lot of outdoor opportunities. We -- the embassy, we ended up getting a boat from -- that was seized by the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) from a major narcotics figure in Miami. So we could use the boat to go out to the islands and do fishing and do beach excursions.

Q: Well, the president when you were there was whom?

NAGY: Lansana Conté.

Q: What was he like?

NAGY: Well, he was -- basically -- he was a farmer who ended up being a soldier who ended up being president. He was gruff, he was no nonsense. He didn't participate in chitchat. He -- a lot of the diplomats sneered at him because he was not sophisticated and refined and he was one of the few people I think whose French was as bad as mine was, even though it was a Francophone country, so. So I enjoyed him. I enjoyed dealing with him and he really -- one of the reasons I think that he liked me was because of my wife. My wife grew up on a farm. So she was a farmer's daughter so they actually had an instant connection. As a matter fact, he helicoptered me only if my wife was along and he made us stop at his farm when we were going off somewhere else, and he let me use one of his helicopters with him. So he -- like I said, I got along well with him knowing full well of course that, you know, he had very serious issues on the democracy and the human rights side and a lot of his cohorts were corrupt. But I definitely could do business with him. When I needed to get something done I could call on him.

Q: On the human rights side, you'd mentioned that you were able to make conditions a little bit better for his political rival, but what other things could -- were we concerned about in human rights and what was being done?

NAGY: Our biggest concern, and they were not -- you know, I think every one of my countries have horrendous human rights issues. Guinea was probably more than benign, but that was because his predecessor had been one of the worst African human rights abusers anywhere at any time, Sékou Touré. So they were more sensitive to that. It was much more -- it wasn't arresting people and pulling out their fingernails and lopping off their heads in the middle of the night. It was just that the environment was unfair to the pursuit of justice. I took -- I took a number of cases, mostly having to do with the presidential guard. Because the presidential guard, also known as the, the beret rouge, the red berets, you know would run around town and arrest people and beat them up basically with impunity and I think during my time there they put a, you know, certain amount of kibosh on that. And then of course I was there during a periods of political evolution when the opposition was trying to raise its head and we had some demonstrations, we had some street violence. And there again, the -- the opposition figures were allowed a certain

amount of freedom. You know, they were -- after elections they were not stashed and beaten up. And we got the current president, Alpha Condé, you know, out of house arrest after a fairly short period of time. So it was -- it was a situation that was gradually improving and you could actually look down the line and see that sooner or later they would end up with largely fair and free elections, which the current round of election seems to have been.

Q: Was there -- I mean were there Libyans mucking around there or not or --

NAGY: Not really. There was a fairly large and influential Lebanese community, and with all Lebanese communities they were split in their loyalties, and no doubt some of them were fundamentalists. But this was pre-9/11 so it was still a totally different environment. I mean we had terrorist concerns, but not to the extent that we get after 9/11.

Q: Now what about the military there?

NAGY: We had excellent contacts with the military. As a matter of fact, I brought in a JSET (special forces training) group to train some of their central forces on, on aggressive tactic because these guys, these poor military guys were kind of sitting in place and having the, the Sierra Leonean rebels come across the border and attack them. So you know, I'm not a military strategist, but I thought wouldn't it make more sense for the Guineans to be trained to go after the Sierra Leonean bad guys? So we brought in some Special Forces folk, and they had a phenomenal training experience. They even ended up doing a live fire final exercise, which scared me to death because I got to observe it and I stood with the Guinean High Command kind of overlooking the exercise area and I was really hoping that none of those soldiers wanted to shoot their milit -- you know, their high command officer. Because I would have been dead.

Q: Well, did you get any visits from higher ups in Washington?

NAGY: Guinea wasn't on the list that much and it wasn't really that high on the assistant secretary's list. Our deputy assistant secretary was phenomenal. It was Vicki Huddleston. And you know, Vicki came out a number of times. We were -- one of -- one of her concern was our embassy at that point was extremely vulnerable to a terrorist attack because, you know, it was just as bad as the embassy in Nairobi that got blown up. But we were in a much better situation because the Guinean security and intelligence services were fairly efficient and effective in keeping tabs on the bad guys. But aside from that, I really didn't have any high level visitors, unlike my next tour, Ethiopia, where I had them nonstop.

Q: Well then, you left there in what, '90 --

NAGY: I left there in '99, July of '99. And I was -- and I was nominated to become ambassador to Ethiopia from there.

JOYCE E. LEADER
Ambassador

Guinea (1999-2000)

Ambassador Leader was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Ohio. He was educated at Dennison University, the University of Chicago, and the Columbia University School of Journalism. After work in the private sector and with the US Department of Education, he joined the Peace Corps, serving in Kinshasa and at headquarters in Washington. Joining the State Department in 1982 he began his career in which he was to deal primarily with African concerns, both in Washington and abroad. His foreign postings include Kinshasa, Ouagadougou, Lagos and Marseilles. In 1999 he was appointed Ambassador to Guinea, where he served until 2000. Ambassador Leader was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003

LEADER: Do you want to talk about Guinea?

Q: Yes, let's talk about Guinea. What was going on there?

LEADER: Our principal interest in Guinea at the time was regional security. We had had the war in Liberia and the war in Sierra Leone and we were trying to come out of both of those situations. The only way to get into Sierra Leone was to come to Guinea.

Q: What is the capital?

LEADER: Conakry. To get to Sierra Leone you come to Conakry, and then flew in a helicopter that was run by the UN for about a half an hour. I never got to do it myself. Most of our visitors came for that purpose. Our visitors included three weeks after I arrived Madeleine Albright, who was Secretary of State, and we had congressmen come. Tony Hall, who was from Ohio, and his Virginia congressman friend, Frank Wolf, came together. They were very interested in the humanitarian situation and we got them out to see refugee camps. Regional stability was the overlay of our concerns. We were particularly concerned about the refugee camps. It also meant that we were working to develop a military to military relationship with the Guinean military. This took the form primarily of training. There were lots of training exercises that we did even in the short time that I was there. The goal was to strengthen their capability to defend themselves and keep instability from being a domino effect that would spill over to Guinea. I'm not sure that we totally succeeded. I don't think that they're out of the woods yet. Those were important issues. The other thing we were doing was trying to promote democratization and political parties. There were several opposition political parties and they were all fairly weak. Through USIA and AID we were trying to support these political parties and help them strengthen their ability to play a role, to have an impact. In this regard, they had just had a presidential election but they were going to have some legislative elections. So we were trying to work with the government to have an independent electoral commission. In so many of these Francophone countries in particular it's the Ministry of the Interior that usually manages elections through the elected officials in the various parts of the country. So we were trying to do this. It was a good example of collaboration with our allies because the diplomatic community came together around this issue. We would try to coordinate our interventions with the government and our support for this initiative. It didn't get very far. The elections were held while I was out of the

country. They were won overwhelmingly by the president's party. I think there is probably some evidence that a number of the elections may have been stolen. For example, there was one precinct in Conakry itself where a key opposition figure voted and the results showed no votes for his party in that precinct but he had voted for himself. So there were a lot of little shenanigans going on there.

Q: How about AIDS? Was that a problem?

LEADER: AIDS was not high on the radar screen or the priorities of the government. The prevalence rate in Guinea was very low, in the three to five percent range, which was very low for Africa. In comparison, Rwanda was at one-third, 33%. In Guinea there was a very low incidence. I think we had some programs for information dissemination and condom distribution but at that time it hadn't become a huge issue. And the government was still a bit in denial. I think they still retain that position.

Q: How about the role of the French there?

LEADER: It was a very strange situation because the French had left so precipitously after Guinea opted out of the French empire. They always say they took everything. Certainly the French ambassador who came shortly after I got there, he was very young and very energetic and very aggressive, and was certainly not an apologist for the French position. He seemed to have a great deal of access to the government and to the officials in the government and possibly there were some military relationships there where they had maybe military trainers in the Guinean army. I'm not sure about that. The French were very visible and very present. They seemed to have a fair amount of clout with the government and with the people. There was a connection there that had never really been broken.

Q: How did you find you were received by the government?

LEADER: I found the government people there rather difficult to get through to. I felt that they would listen to what we had to say but there was nothing coming back. There was no real dialogue. I personally attributed this to a kind of hangover effect from the Sékou Touré era when everybody had to be very wary of what they said and to whom. I felt that there was still a cloud over the politics and the interactions among people that was still a residue from the very harsh and brutal regime of Sékou Touré even though he had died in 1984. So it was 15 years that Lansana Conté, the then president and still president, and about to run again president, has been in power. But he hasn't done a lot to open up politics, economics or trade. All of those things are still very closed.

I did want to mention something about human rights. That's what I had on my mind a few minutes ago. This was an issue that we were pushing, including the humane treatment of a high profile detainee who was a leader of an opposition political party. He had been detained and in jail for several years since the presidential election and then was going on trial just shortly before I had to leave the country. I had sat in on part of the trial. We were trying to ensure that he would receive a fair and humane trial. He did get acquitted finally about six months later. But it was probably a political decision as much as anything. They had to figure out how to get out from

under this issue, so that was how they finally did it. Human rights were still not that good.

End of reader