

Interview with Olcott H. Deming

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

AMBASSADOR OLCOTT H. DEMING

Interviewed by: Horace G. Torbert

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Q: This is a Foreign Service Oral History interview made under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies with Ambassador Olcott Deming. The interview took place on Wednesday, April 20, 1988, at Ambassador Deming's house. The interviewer was Horace G. Torbert.

Ambassador Deming, I wonder if you will start out by telling me generally how your interest in and connection with the field of foreign relations originally developed and how you got into the Foreign Service. And then perhaps give a quick synopsis of the various positions you have held during your service.

DEMING: Thank you, Ambassador Torbert. I welcome this opportunity to recall the past as best I can and those aspects of my career which might be of interest to people in the future.

As to how one becomes involved in the Foreign Service, I suppose we all take different paths. But I just as an individual had an early interest in faraway places with strange sounding names. I was brought up in the country in Connecticut with four brothers and

Library of Congress

sisters. They have all spent the rest of their life happily in Connecticut while I have wandered the world.

My interest in faraway places and international relations, other countries, other people, was encouraged and whetted by my college career. I came under the influence of Hamilton Hope who was then president of Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. He had served with Woodrow Wilson at the Armistice Peace Talks in Paris and had become himself a confirmed internationalist and was the editor of the Brooklyn Eagle before he decided to try a career as a college president. In my opinion he was very successful at the latter. He encouraged foreign students from, countries of Europe, Asia, to come to that little college. And we had rather an intimate relationship with the outside world or the international world, which again encouraged my interest in foreign affairs.

After my junior year at the college I and my roommate worked out way to Europe on a steamship, on what they call a tramp ship probably, carrying coal and goods to Rotterdam and Antwerp. That was my first overseas trip. I worked very hard for the experience and was paid (one cent) 1# for my pains when I arrived back in New York.

That might discourage some people from going into foreign affairs but it did not me. I was fortunate also while at Rollins to meet a woman who was very interested in foreign relations and people of other cultures, Louise MacPherson, who during my last two years at college went to Europe with the Experiment in International Living, with its headquarters in Brattleboro, Vermont. I was working during the summers and could not go.

When she graduated from college we were married and that same year became leaders of Experiment student groups to Europe in 1938, 1939 and 1940. We took student groups to England and to Germany and to Canada and Nova Scotia, the latter when the war had broken out and we could no longer go to Europe. Actually we were in the South of France in September of 1939 when the Germans moved into Poland, with a group of American

Library of Congress

students. There was quite a saga getting back to Paris and getting back to the boat and getting back to America.

At that time I was teaching school in Fairfield, Connecticut; among other subjects such as fencing, football, I was teaching Spanish and French, which was also an introduction to foreign cultures, of course. I taught for four years at school there and in Greenwich, Connecticut. Then because of my interest in Spanish and particularly in Latin American writers and literature, I attended a conference in Ann Arbor in 1941, I believe it was, which encouraged the teaching of Latin American Spanish, somewhat different than Spanish Spanish, and Latin American literature.

While I was teaching there I had a call from someone who knew me in Washington to come and work with Nelson Rockefeller, who was then the Coordinator of InterAmerican Affairs in Washington. He had set up a Bureau of Scientific and Educational Cooperation with Latin American countries. After my school year was over I went to Washington. This was of course a step into international affairs, with a Latin American specialty. I got a good background in that area of the world with the Coordinator's office.

I took two trips to Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Columbia, Costa Rica, with representatives of Nelson Rockefeller's office to see the need for change in the programs of cultural and scientific cooperation which were carried out under this office and with of course the enthusiastic support of President Roosevelt.

After two years in the Coordinator's office, I had a call from the State Department. We had to work naturally very closely with the Department of State on all matters impinging on foreign policy and economic policy. Laurence (Larry) Duggan was then the head of the Latin American, InterAmerican Bureau in the Department of State. A young man who had been his assistant went off to war in the Navy when I still had not been called. They asked if I could come over and work there since I had some background through my work with the Coordinator. So I transferred to the Department of State as assistant to Larry

Library of Congress

Duggan. He was a wonderful man who later died under mysterious circumstances during the McCarthy investigative period.

I stayed there for a year and then, under his wing, was created an office called the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation with Latin America. It's quite a mouthful. It was under the umbrella of CU, the Bureau of Cultural Relations in the Department. But it was an interdepartmental group and it went with the Department of State to the Congress with a separate budget which, when granted, was divided up among the Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, Library of Congress, etc., to carry out specific projects in various Latin American countries by these agencies of government who were particularly qualified. It was in a way a precursor to what shortly followed, President Truman's Point Four program. The Point Four program emphasized that in addition to normal diplomatic relations we must start to increase our information, cultural, scientific cooperation with countries all over the world. The committee that I just described was in a way a laboratory for what later became ICA, (International Cooperation Administration) and down to the present day Agency For International Development (AID). This was another expansion of my contacts with the inter-American field.

Shortly after that, (I had been with the Interdepartmental Committee for two years), in 1947 the Department of State established a program called the Manpower Act. The Department by 1947 had found that having not recruited Foreign Service Officers for several years and looking ahead, now that war was over, to manning our posts overseas, they were very shorthanded and they needed to do something to start filling the pipeline. So I applied to take—the written exam which was not nearly as complicated as the ones taken by my colleagues who went into the Service much earlier. But the oral exam was quite extensive and you had to have reached a certain level in government or in the professions or in private practice before you could be considered as an applicant. If that was satisfactory, and you wrote your reasons for entering the Service, your background for being useful, and took an oral examination including two foreign languages—(this is where my Spanish

Library of Congress

and French teaching stood me in good stead)—you could be lateraled into the Foreign Service as an FSO of the equivalent rank to what you were in the Civil Service. I passed that exam.

After three months indoctrinational training, I entered the Foreign Service with colleagues and friends who still are close to me, Milton Barral, John Steeves, Andy Kerr, all of whom rose to be very senior officers, two of them Ambassadors. I remember in the farewell speech before we were given assignments as fledgling diplomats, George Kennan described some of the difficulties of living and working in Moscow in that environment. But he said he wanted to impress on all of us that there was no such thing as a bad foreign service post. He said: wherever you go, you are with people, and people are what make your post and your contacts and your job interesting. Later on I never forgot that.

That's the introduction of how I went into the Service.

Q: Very solid introduction. Now I think maybe if you wouldn't mind going ahead and just hitting the high spots of your career from then on, then we can go back and pick up—lists of posts, I'd like to know what you were doing generally and who was running the post if it was somebody memorable, and that sort of thing; then we can pick out specific questions from there.

DEMING: Very good.

Q: I noticed, by the way, that you've never served in a Spanish-speaking post. You started in the Far East, which is fairly typical!

DEMING: That's quite classic, isn't it?

Q: So, any comments on that you might have would be interesting.

DEMING: Having said earlier that I was always interested in faraway places, when they read out the assignments: "Olcott Deming, Bangkok, Siam," you couldn't be much further

Library of Congress

away than that! I did ask why, with my Latin American background and all and learned the term familiar to all of us in the Foreign Service: "The exigencies of the Service come first, the officer's interest and background, second." So for the exigency of the Service I was sent to Siam. The post had only been open for about a year and Edwin Stanton was the Ambassador. He was a China hand, a gentleman of the old school, knowledgeable in the Chinese language, and a diligent student of Siamese while he was there. I admired him very much. I was sent there as First Secretary and Public Affairs Officer at the time when the USIA, (US Information Agency), was within the Department of State. One could have assignments there as you would to any other type of function in an embassy.

I was there for two years and it was a new window on the world for me seeing, or trying to see, things through Oriental, Asian, Buddhist eyes and minds. I wouldn't give anything for that experience, both for my later posts and also for a personal realization of different attitudes, different concepts, different values, which were useful to me. I thought they should be known among people in Asian affairs because there was an extraordinary kind of religious and intellectual tolerance which was different from what I had been used to in the Western world. Perhaps being a New Englander, those attitudes were borne in on me particularly. In my position as Public Affairs Officer I met with a number of American Journalists and others who came through to get a story on the country that I was accredited to. I remember particularly Stewart Alsop, Joe Alsop's brother who came out and stayed in our house in Bangkok. And after two or three days he expressed great frustration. He said, "there's nothing happening here." I said, "well, isn't that useful, isn't it interesting? Why not write about a peaceful country, its long history of peace?" He said, "that's not a story, just after the war, the difficult times." "Well," I said, "if you can't write about the unique qualities of Buddhism in this country, the peace and the young King who has just been welcomed back from his long studies in Europe, I don't know if I can help you."

A day or two later he came in and his eyes were shining. He said, "I got my story." He had seen the Thai, foreign minister and had asked him, since Siam was geographically located

Library of Congress

really far down on the peninsula appended to the mainland of China and there was great turmoil in China at that time, what would happen and what would the Thai reaction be if the Chinese moved into Burma and Thailand, the rice basket of South Asia. The foreign minister said, "well, if that happened, we'd cave in." Alsop, asked, "Your policy would be to cave in?" The Minister replied, "Yes, we're a small country. You know, bend with the bamboo. We'd cave in at the time. Naturally we'd survive."

Alsop may not have realized that that's exactly what the Siamese did when the Japanese came down the Malay peninsula and into Siam. There was not a shot fired. The Siamese saw the "wind of the future," whatever you want to call it, and they quietly admitted the Japanese, moved out of enough houses to let them stay. When the war ended, thanks of course to the great effort by the United States, which he didn't mention, the Japanese went away and things went on much as they had in the past.

So Stewart Alsop got his story, the cave-in policy, and he got well printed in American newspapers.

I remember at the same time that Time magazine while I was there came out with a fanciful picture of a stylized Siamese king. He had the wrong headdress, which was a courtesan's headdress, and pesin, silk trousers which were more or less authentic, and shoes turned up at the end which were more Turkish than Siamese. I had by then some very good friends who were Thais. They came to me and put their hands on this picture as though it was my fault, and said, "how can they print something like that?" A picture which is ridiculing our king and putting him in a disgraceful uniform? I said, this just reflects the ignorance of some of our media about this part of the world which we are not familiar with, as are the British and the French and others who have had long connections with Asia. I hope that we become more aware, more sophisticated, as time goes on.

Those were two interesting notes about Public Affairs and serving your country in that capacity in an Asian land. Another was the film "Anna and the King of Siam," which was a

Library of Congress

dandy movie—if you did not relate it to anything that actually existed in Siam at the present time or then. But I had been instructed to ask the Siamese government if they would put on a special event at the opening of the movie in Bangkok. I was referred to Prince Dhani Nivat, the grandson of King Chulalongkorn, who was the subject of the book, in “Anna and the King of Siam.” Anna was the English teacher who taught him English, and Western manners and customs. The Prince, who was my friend, looked at me in shock. He said, “you want me to arrange for some celebration for a film that insults my great-grandfather?” All of us have probably seen the picture with Yul Brynner as the King. Yul Brynner, with a completely bald pate! He was an excellent actor. But I have never in my life seen a Siamese who was bald, unless they cut their hair off on purpose. These were some of the things that happened that to me represented “a window on the world” of learning about new attitudes and cultures. It was also a learning process for me about my own country, my countrymen, and the basis of understanding and hopefully cultural enrichment of Americans by this old and different culture. I still call it Siam although it's name is Thailand, but that is a foreign name—Thai meaning free and land being land. The British coined the phrase and the Siamese adopted it.

Q: What particular programs that you planned in the public affairs field did you think were useful in this particular context? Do you remember any that were good? Which you considered effective and accomplished something?

DEMING: We concentrated a good deal on putting out releases and periodic pamphlets. One was called “Behind the News.” It was a Thai language analysis of news then breaking in different parts of the world which were very sketchily covered in the one English language paper in Bangkok and hardly at all in the Thai newspapers. We concentrated also on providing to the very influential Buddhist priests, and their organizations throughout the country, information about the United States, its culture, literature, and education. We avoided anything that might look like proselyting. We provided a large USIS library which was avidly used, partly because of interest in and friendship for America, and partly

Library of Congress

because the library was the most pleasant place to study in Bangkok! We also sent a small floating library on weekly visits to the villages along the canals near Bangkok.

While I was there we negotiated the first Fulbright Exchange Commission with the Thai government, one of the fairly early Fulbright agreements. I had the happy experience of seeing the first Fulbright scholars go off to America. Ambassador Edwin Stanton knew how to use the Information Service, which not all ambassadors did. Sometimes they're suspicious of it as a competing arm with the Embassy. He had a very sophisticated view and used to furnish USIS materials to Buddhist groups and others. He had enough proficiency in the Siamese language to do that himself.

John Holdridge, who has recently retired as Ambassador in Indonesia, came as a young trainee Officer to USIA, Bangkok in 1949. He had just finished his Chinese language course in Taichung, Taiwan. When young John arrived full of Chinese and enthusiasm, he asked what we wanted him to do. After consulting with the Ambassador we agreed that John should prepare a Chinese version of our press & news release. There was a large overseas Chinese minority in Thailand that we wanted to reach. Because of the pressure being put on them regarding the dramatic events in mainland China, Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist insurgents. Holdridge gave us an entr# to those people for the first time.

Q: Maybe we'd better move on, but this is all fascinating and we can come back to it later. But in the interest of meeting your schedule, perhaps we ought to move on, unless you have any summary things you wants to say, move on to the Japanese and other assignments.

DEMING: I'd like to move right on, because my two years spent there was my eye-opening experience with Asia. In 1950, I was transferred home, for leave, without confirmation of my next assignment. As it turned out, my family and I went back by boat all the way from the river port in Bangkok to California. It was a long and most pleasant voyage after two rather arduous years in that beautiful but terribly hot country of Thailand.

Library of Congress

Q: Those were the days of ocean travel.

DEMING: Those were wonderful days of ocean travel, on the American President line with two or three day stops in Japan and Hawaii on the way.

When I got back to Washington they said, what are you doing here? We thought you were still in Thailand. I said that I had come back by boat and it took such a long time I was afraid I would get here and find I was fired. Actually they were still working on my next assignment. Well, we had home leave and I was then posted directly back to the Far East, to Tokyo. It was interesting that all my effects had come from Bangkok, through Tokyo, to Hawaii, to Baltimore and then back the same way to Tokyo. We were a long time without the things we had been living with the past years.

I was sent to Tokyo as Deputy to Saxton Bradford, who was Counselor of Embassy for Public Affairs. At the time we had a Political Advisor, Mr. Sebald there, because a peace treaty had not yet been made with Japan. Sebald, was a Foreign Service Officer assigned to General MacArthur's staff as Political Advisor with the rank of Ambassador. Actually, Saxton Bradford, the Counselor for Public Affairs, was Counselor to the Political Advisor. As his assistant, I was there to see the transition of Japan, from an occupied country to independence under the peace treaty worked out by John Foster Dulles.

On the day the peace treaty came into force the Department sent Ambassador Robert Murphy to Tokyo to replace Gen. Mark Clark as the principal representative of the United States. He was a very strong Ambassador. As assistant to the Counselor for Public Affairs I accompanied Ambassador Murphy around Tokyo and nearby cities on speaking tours. He said, "I am going to impress upon the Japanese that they are now an independent sovereign country and the occupation is over." There will be no more military processions when I go out. The Japanese had become accustomed to, and no doubt impressed by, MacArthur and the military presence. Any high ranking officer drove out with a procession fore and aft, with sirens. People would turn out on the streets in flocks. Ambassador

Library of Congress

Murphy said that period had passed and we must do everything to show that Japan is now sovereign, equal. We want to help them but they're free to help themselves and they're no longer an occupied land. Not literally quite true because we had then and still have large bases in Yokosuka, Yokohama and on practically all islands as a defense umbrella for Japan and for us.

I much admired Robert Murphy and his determination to demonstrate the difference between a sovereign country and a military occupied country. Relatively benign as that occupation was and creative as it was under MacArthur in reorganizing the agriculture system, the labor system, and its great economic influence on the recovery of Japan.

Q: You think there was any downside to this at all? Did it create problems in keeping forward momentum in the improvement of Japan and US relations?

DEMING: I think it came at about the right time. Let's see, 1945 I believe was VJ day? And I was there from '51 to '53. It was a fairly fast rapprochement after the bitterness and the terrible toil on both sides of that war to hand over independence although under very strict protocols. We retained continued rights to military bases, navy bases, air bases and support assistance. I think it came at a very good time, but probably frightened and startled the Japanese a bit. "You mean, you're leaving us alone? You're casting us out?" Japan was still a pretty crippled country at that time. Tokyo was still very much of a mess from the bombings and it had not recovered economically or from the cultural and emotional wounds of war. There was a pundit who absolved that if you are a developing country and really want to get ahead fast, you should go to war with America. They will destroy you and then rebuild you. However, I do believe that Japan was ready to take off.

Q: There is some evidence in that direction. What was your particular function then? Was it entirely in the Public Affairs field, or were you—?

DEMING: My entire assignment was in the Public Affairs field. Actually, the Counselor for Public Affairs, a very able man who is now deceased, had his office over in the Embassy

Library of Congress

very close to the Ambassador as his advisor. He did not wish to get involved in operations we had inherited from the military 23 libraries which were set up all over Japan. The State Department-USIA took over the administration and running of those 23 libraries. And I in effect was administering a very large USIA operation practically without interference. The most interesting or difficult decision was whether to reduce these libraries, or cut them out completely. I traveled around Japan with a bilingual American and we visited about ten of these libraries. I was handed many petitions in Japanese and in English not to close the libraries because they were the principal places for learning about America, and because they were the cultural centers for their impoverished districts. When I came back to Tokyo I talked to Ambassador Murphy. He said that the Embassy was under a great deal of pressure to close the libraries to save money. I said, I thought there were about five that could be eliminated because they're near enough to another library. So we agreed to cut them down to 18. Even so, 18 USIA libraries in one country was an unprecedented intellectual and information presence. I felt that that was the right thing to do. The time would come when the Japanese would indicate that they no longer needed them.

USIA also administered a large Japan-American cultural exchange program. We brought in such literary stars as Hemingway and Faulkner. The Japanese were so anxious to reeducate themselves on Western culture. They would turn out by the hundreds to listen to Faulkner or any American speaker or musician. It was very stimulating to see the cultural enthusiasm of Japan for the country that had been their bitter enemy.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, we've given Japan a lick and a promise. I wonder if you want to go on to what you did after that and get into your next assignments and the important problems that you dealt with.

DEMING: Yes. At the end of my tour of duty in Tokyo I was sent back on home leave and reassignment to IO, the Bureau of United Nations Affairs, where I stayed for over four years. I came in as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs,

Library of Congress

David Wainhouse. He was soon succeeded by Francis Wilcox, Chief of Staff of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Q: Great man, as I remember him.

DEMING: Yes, an urbane and cultured man, broad-ranging mind and highly educated and a pleasure to work for. He loved to give speeches and if you were his Special Assistant it meant that you were going to spend a great deal of time writing speeches!

David Wainhouse, by contrast, thought an acknowledged scholar in the field of the United Nations and the League of Nations did not like to give speeches. But when Wilcox came on he liked to give speeches and he gave them about once a week, or so it seemed to me! I enjoyed working with him. He would send back the script I had written and every two or three pages he'd write in the margin, "joke." And I would sit down and think one up. One that I gave him that he used often was a quote from the American humorist Josh Billings. It was very applicable to the attitude towards the United Nations in many parts of the country. This was it: "It ain't people's ignorance that causes all the trouble, it's their knowing so danged much that ain't so." He loved that and used it often.

I also served at the United Nations from time to time during the General Assembly. I was sent up to New York as a consultant to the US Mission. Part of the time I was there Henry Cabot Lodge was the US Ambassador to the United Nations. A very positive man, and not everyone's favorite Ambassador. I found him, a pretty tough and autocratic type of person. He expected all his staff to stand as soon as he came into the room, which I thought was, if nothing else, undemocratic. He was a forceful Ambassador and he realized that he was there for political reasons.

He prided himself on getting a headline. If the Soviets, particularly, or a Communist state or representative at the UN said anything that caught the headlines, Lodge would get his press people to try to anticipate that or he would "scoop the news" by coming out with

Library of Congress

something even more dramatic, although he sometimes had to stretch facts to get the headline. But that usually pleased President Eisenhower.

Dulles was then Secretary of State. Ambassador Lodge's style pleased Dulles very much. He was vitriolic, almost paranoid, about the Soviets' taking advantage of their presence in New York at the United Nations to spread what he considered their propaganda. This was during the time when Dulles was developing the policy of "brinkmanship" the art of getting to the edge "without falling over!" It was a very tense time.

The UN Bureau was an interesting assignment for me. I myself did quite a bit of speaking at conventions or organizations whose leaders who were anxious to inform their community about the United Nations. Frequent questions were: "Was it effective?" "Was it necessary?" "Did we get anything out of our membership?" "Why did we pay such a large share of the expenses?" The general skepticism persists until this day about the utility of the United Nations and whether it works for our interests. I had several years of practice trying to answer those questions. Basically my position was that if we didn't have a United Nations, call it what you will, we'd have to create one because the world is too close in communication, too complex, not to have some common meeting place where nations may repair to find solutions. Or if not solutions, methods of solving or ameliorating problems before they become confrontations of a military nature. There was never a doubt in my mind at the time or since that the United Nations performs an essential service. But it is not a legislator of the world, and probably never will be. No country will give up the necessary degree of sovereignty to let such a legislator work.

Q: Let's see. We have just left the UN, or about to leave it. And where did you go after that?

DEMING: Let me just catch up with my history here in my mind.

After a long tour in the United Nations Bureau here and in New York, I was assigned, without much prior notice or expectation, to the post as Counselor of Embassy, Tokyo,

Library of Congress

and Consul General in Naha, Okinawa, which was still occupied by the American military and administered by the United States Army. At that time things were still very unsettled in China only 400 miles across the South China Sea from Okinawa. The military called Okinawa “the bastion of the Pacific.” While the war with Korea was on, Okinawa was a base for jet fighters that could make just two bombing runs over Korea and get back without running out of fuel.

So you can imagine that the priority of Okinawa as a Pacific base for not only the Seventh Fleet but for the Air Force and the Marines. I had never served with the Army or in the military. It probably would have helped me if I had. But I found the “military mind” not inscrutable but difficult to accommodate to.

Q: Channeled along somewhat different lines than you were yourself.

DEMING: Than the diplomatic service, you're absolutely right, Ambassador.

When problems came up I'd have to consult with the High Commissioner, who was a three-star general, and I was the equivalent of a one-star general. When on an Army base civilian officers have an assimilated rank. As a Class 3 Officer I was equivalent to a brigadier general. The brigadier general on the base with whom I served, said, “Olcott on this base, Consul Generals rank with but after Brigadiers.” So when meeting VIPs at the airport, I stood at the left of the brigadier general.

Q: Respectfully one pace to the rear.

DEMING: Respectfully.

When ran into a political matter, because I was really a political advisor although they didn't call it POLAD at that time, I would consult with the brigadier or the lieutenant general who were my superiors. The High Commissioner on occasion would point out to me that Okinawa is not a democracy, it is not a sovereign country, it is an occupied island and

Library of Congress

we go “by the book.” Don't you have a book to go by in the diplomatic field? I would say, no, we don't have a book. We improvise. It's the art of the possible, diplomacy is, within accepted limits.

The Commissioner might shake his head and repeat that the book tells us how to behave when you're on Okinawa. This is an occupied island, we are surrounded by the enemy. We do not fraternize with the enemy. At one meeting I noted that the army had a cultural program here that sends a great many Okinawans to the United States for education. The returned students called themselves “The Golden Gate Club.” As a ranking civilian officer here, I give them receptions or parties from time to time. I said I'd like to have the High Commissioner come and talk to them.

That apparently was very difficult for him. He said, “we're still an occupied island and it must be perfectly clear to them that we are the conqueror. We do not fraternize.”

I had a leading Okinawan up to my house one evening. He had to come through a check-point, naturally, before coming onto the military base. An incredulous Non Com phoned me up and said “this man says that he's invited to come to your house; is that right?” I said that it was.

As you can see I had some difficulty at first with “the military mind.” I had a book by that title which I read assiduously. It was quite impressive and helpful. I thought, wouldn't it be nice in the conduct of diplomacy if we had such a book of rules. I was reminded of an episode during the retreat from Yalu during the Korean War. A correspondent asked a Marine general, “are you retreating, sir?” He replied, “Hell, no, we're not retreating. We're advancing in another direction.”

The attitude of the military stemmed from their experience of the “Battle of Okinawa” and explained a lot of their longstanding feeling that this was the land of the enemy. I was told, it's hard to believe, that 153 ships of various sizes were sunk in the Battle of Okinawa. They had to advance from cave to cave, because the island is of volcanic formation.

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The caves were filled with Japanese with guns and hand grenades. It was a very bloody military operation, the first piece of Japanese territory that the American military had conquered. The Japanese fought to the last man to defend Okinawa. It was on a little island right off the main island that Ernie Pyle, as we may remember, was killed when he stuck his head up to see what was going on and they got him.

So it was a very learning experience for me. I tried to strike a balance. I had separate communications with the Department, which was always a sore point with the military. They got copies of my telegrams of course. The brigadier would often call me over to see him. He'd say, "I don't understand a paragraph here that looks like you're talking on behalf of the Okinawans instead of the High Commissioner." So we had quite a few run-ins of that kind. And it was difficult for them to have a diplomatic/civilian observer to some of their operations on Okinawa, which were often heavy-handed, and not sensitive to the feelings of the Okinawans who, after all, wanted to return to Japanese rule & were destined to do so.

It was significant that the Japanese had a representative on Okinawa who did not come from the foreign ministry or the Japanese foreign service. He came from the office of the Emperor. Had he come from the foreign office it would indicate that Okinawa was a foreign country. This was a way of saying that Japan held ultimate sovereignty over Okinawa.

I was not there to see the treaty returning Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty.

Q: What year was that?

DEMING: That happened several years later, I think not until about 1970. And it was an occupied area all the time that I was there.

There was much linguistic misunderstanding. I used to follow the translation of the Okinawan daily press. Editorials often expressed the need for having a "confrontation" with the High Commissioner and the military government. This was due to poor translation.

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What it really meant was a “dialogue.” The translators continued to use the term “confrontation” and this irritated the military highly. My Brigadier told me “if they want confrontation, we'll give it to them.” I would try to explain that they felt the need for a give and take, a discussion of problems, frankly.

Q: Face to face.

DEMING: Face to face.

One of the interesting episodes of my stay on Okinawa was when John Foster Dulles and his wife flew in on his way back from Japan for an overnight stay. I gave a dinner for him at the officers' club. The Secretary was his usual cantankerous self. He at that time was suffering from rather advanced stages of abdominal cancer which later proved fatal. But he was still in a combative and energetic mood and wanted to know what my problems were as Consul General on Okinawa. I said that one of the problems is that the Okinawans want to know when they're going to return to Japanese rule. They did not understand what the term “residual sovereignty” meant. Trying to put a little humor into the situation, I observed that “residual sovereignty,” with the Japanese difficulty with the letters 'r' and 'l', is almost impossible to pronounce. The Secretary said, “It's perfectly clear what I meant by 'residual sovereignty.' It means when we've finished with Okinawa the Japanese get it back. Any other problems?”

So that was that! (I found Dulles a man of extraordinary intelligence with a terrific bark but a rather gentle bite. He liked to drive you into a corner and make you stand up for what you think).

Continuing to make light conversation at the dinner, I mentioned that I had served under Ambassador Robert Murphy in Tokyo and that now he is Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs. Mr. Dulles barked, “my Robert Murphy! My Robert Murphy! He never served in the UN Bureau!” on that cheerful note the dinner ended. About 10 days later, I got a handwritten note from the Secretary: “Dear Mr. Deming. Robert Murphy

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was Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs for three weeks and one day. Sincerely. John Foster Dulles.”

End of First Day of Interview

Q: Ambassador Deming, it's now April 21st, I believe. Anyway, it's the next day that we left off from. I guess it's time to go on to your African life, except that I understand you have something you wanted to add on Okinawa. So do you want to go ahead with that?

DEMING: Yes, Mr. Ambassador, thank you. I do have a footnote on Okinawa which illustrates rather dramatically the differing duties and priorities of the military in an occupation situation such as Okinawa, and the historic diplomatic reporting duties of a Foreign Service Officer.

In 1959 for the first time the High Commissioner agreed that there should be an election for the mayor of Naha, Okinawa, the capitol city. The Okinawans had been pressing for this. There were two candidates running for mayor. One, a Mr. Sanaga, who professed to be a Communist, was attracting more support than the other candidate. This presented a rather serious situation. Very shortly, the High Commissioner got in touch with me and said that we cannot tolerate having a Communist as mayor of the “Bastion of the Pacific” and I am changing the regulations under which candidates are qualified for mayor so that he will not be able to run. I said that this is going to be taken very seriously and with some alarm in Washington. He said, “yes, I know. That's why I wish you not to report what I plan to do.” I said that this puts me in a very difficult position with my department. He said that yes, he knew that.

Then he took out the Executive Order establishing the authority of the High Commissioner of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands. A paragraph made it perfectly clear that the High Commissioner without consulting Washington could take any steps, military or political,

Library of Congress

which he deemed necessary to the security of the base, and to America's position on the base.

I suggested that we send a limited distribution or an "Eye's Only" telegram to the Department and the pentagon so that they would be apprized ahead of time and be prepared. The High Commissioner said that I knew as well as he that, in effect, there is no "limited distribution" or "Eye's Only." That means it will still go to top policy officers in several agencies. It would become a public matter very rapidly or difficult instructions will be issued to him, tying his hands. I said, "this may be very damaging to my position and career, but I understand your position and authority so I will not report in advance." He said, "I will help you any way I can if you get into difficulties."

The High Commissioner then issued a order abrogating or changing the rules for candidates for mayor of Naha, to this effect: That no one who had been arrested for a civil or criminal offense could run for mayor. It turned out that Sanaga, the Communist candidate, had one or more civil infractions of a rather minor nature, traffic or otherwise, but enough to come under the order. So the order went into effect. There was a great outcry in the Okinawa paper about "the failure of democracy, etc.," The election was held, Sanaga did not run, his opponent of course did win. A day later I got a short but hot telegram from the Department; it said, "Your failure to report has been taken to the highest levels. Please report. Dulles."

Of course I was prepared for this. And I reported, quoting from the Executive Order giving complete authority in such matters to the High Commissioner. And I said, if such episodes were not to happen again, the Executive Order should be amended. Then I went on to explain the origin of the crisis and ended by pointing out, as the High Commissioner had to me, that if I had reported and news had got to Washington first and Washington had directed that Sanaga not been ruled out for election and had been elected, the headlines in American papers would be "State Department Supports Communist Mayor of military base, or stories to that effect." That apparently got them thinking a little bit.

Library of Congress

Fortunately that blew over. But for whatever reason, after that John Foster Dulles was warmer towards me than he had been before. Whether it was because it gave him a chance to amend the Executive Order which had given such authority to the High Commissioner in an outlying province of Japan, with whom we had restored normal relations, and which was going to return to the sovereignty of Japan, or that he understood the position I had been put in under the military and the reasons therefore. I do not know. Changes were made in the Executive Order. I thought I would mention that because it shows the stresses that can develop between the diplomats and the military, each trying to carry out their obligations and responsibilities, as they see appropriate, to support American interests abroad.

Q: I think that's a very pertinent example of some of the problems that you do run into. And perhaps we can talk about this a little more later on.

Now, are we ready to go to Africa?

DEMING: Yes, we are.

Q: Fine. Go right ahead.

DEMING: After two years at my post in Okinawa I was assigned back to Washington to the Bureau of African Affairs. I had had an interest in Africa and expressed a preference for the African Bureau. In view of the fact that so many new countries were coming up towards independence, it seemed to be a rather exciting area to be associated with. Joseph Satterthwaite was then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. I knew him and I joined his staff as a Public Affairs Advisor to the Bureau.

This was a time when the British were concerned about, responsibly bringing the countries under their jurisdiction as colonies or protectorates towards independence. But they didn't wish to move to fast. And they let our government know that it would not be helpful if we

Library of Congress

were urging early independence to countries such as Rhodesia, Uganda, Kenya and so forth. Britain had its own timetable.

In 1959, late 1959, three potential leaders of East Africa came to Washington for talks. One was Julius Nyerere, the second was Joshua Nkomo, and the third was Kenneth Kaunda.

Q: And Nyerere is N-y-e-r-e-r-e

DEMING: No. Excuse me, Nyerere. Joe Satterthwaite said that in deference to the British concern he was not going to meet with any of these gentlemen at the assistant secretary level because it might be interpreted as encouraging them to pressure the British for earlier independence. So I was assigned, as Public Affairs Advisor to meet with them in a remote room in the bottom of the Department of State which would not attract attention. I had a most pleasant discussion, for over an hour with Julius Nyerere, future prime minister of Tanzania, Joshua Nkomo, one of the leading contenders to lead Northern Rhodesia, into independence, and with Kenneth Kaunda, who became prime minister of Zambia, which used to be Southern Rhodesia.

After the meeting I wrote a memorandum to the Assistant Secretary saying that if these three men are “dangerous revolutionaries,” they are the kind we should stick close to because I found them reasonable, intelligent and most understanding of their situation, ours and Great Britain's.

Shortly after this I was made Director of the Bureau of East and Southern African Affairs. My office included Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. It would be ridiculous now to have one office director for such a galaxy of countries, but in those days we had an Ambassador only in South Africa. In the rest of the countries we were represented by Consular officers.

Library of Congress

Q: And I suppose that the Consul in those days reported only partly to you and partly to the—

DEMING: Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: Or to the Office of British Affairs, probably yes.

DEMING: They were accredited to Her Majesty's Government, not to the colony. Of course they reported to the Department.

For a some time, several days would go by without any communications from my posts, since the only diplomatic post was South Africa. The rest were in various stages of evolution toward home rule, self rule, self governance and independence.

I'm moving on now to 1961 when the administration changed, under President Kennedy. President Kennedy's first appointment, made from the steps of his house in Georgetown, was G. Mennen Williams of Michigan, past three-time governor of Michigan, to be Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Asked why by reporters, the President said he couldn't think of any area of the world more important than Africa. Whatever the reasons, it indicates the President's great intellectual, political and romantic interest in Africa south of the Sahara where all those colonial countries were moving towards independence.

In 1961 Tanzania became the first East African country to be granted independence by the British. Ugandan independence was scheduled for 1962 and Kenya for 1963. These countries had been administered by the British as a louse East African Federation.

President Kennedy designated Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. as his Representative to the Tanzanian Independence ceremony. I was selected as the Department's Representative and flew out with the rest of the party on Air Force 2. We enjoyed that gala independence ceremony. At midnight at the sound of a cannon the lights went out, the British flag was

Library of Congress

hailed down and when the lights came on the Tanzanian flag, brand new, was flying from the flagpole.

After that assignment I went on around Africa to visit the other countries that came under my jurisdiction as director of East and Southern African Affairs. During the rest of 1961 I did my best to become familiar with the many aspects of the African independence movement and visited a number of countries on the west coast of Africa.

Q: All right, Ambassador Deming. We've gotten you on your first and second orientation trip around Africa. Do you want to go on from there?

DEMING: Yes, this is now an area and a time very familiar to you, Ambassador Torbert, since you were posted somewhat later as Ambassador to Somalia. Countries were becoming independent so rapidly that Governor Williams (Assistant Secretary Williams) was hard-put to fill his posts, at least that may be a modest way to tell you of my forthcoming appointment!

Q: I would say that was not apt to be the case in view of what you'd been doing, but go ahead.

DEMING: During his first months in office Williams had some suspicion of the career Foreign Service. But he became increasingly confident of the knowledge and sense of service that the career people had. He did select some Ambassadors who were non-career, but they were very able people. In 1962 he appointed Robinson McIlvaine Ambassador to Guinea in West African, William Leonhart, my friend and colleague, to Tanzania, and William Attwood, an able correspondent and man familiar with Africa, to Kenya. One morning Henry Tasca, Dept. Assistant Secretary and subsequently our Ambassador to Greece, called me in and said, "We're going to make an Ambassador out of you!" I expressed my appreciation and Tasca added that he didn't know where or when this would take place but suggested Mauritania. I noted that it didn't have a capital yet. Tasca said the Department was going to put the Embassy in a trailer. I said I wasn't terribly

Library of Congress

attracted by that. I didn't want to be an Ambassador so badly that I'd live in a trailer in a country with no capital. He laughed.

Shortly after that Tasca told me that Assist. Sec. Williams wanted me to go to Uganda three months before independence and take over there from the present consul. He did not want any present representatives of the United States who had served under the British in Africa, to stay on after the date of independence. It would look as though there had been no change in our point of view between colonies and independent states.

So in August 1962 I was sent out to take over as Consul General in Uganda until independence came in October when I would become Charg# d'Affaires Ad Interim. This left the Department free to appoint somebody else as Ambassador or to later confirm me as Ambassador.

I proceeded to Uganda which I had visited before. I always thought it was one of the most beautiful places in East Africa. At 4,500 feet on Lake Victoria, the country high plateau, rich and fertile, stretched from the Mountains of the Moon on the west to the Kenya Mountains on the East.

I arrived amid a period of great political activity preparing for the election of the first Prime Minister of Uganda. He would serve under a British Governor general for a year and then would become Prime Minister a fully sovereign country within the British Commonwealth. An ambitious Uganda politician, Apollo Milton Obote, was elected in September the first Prime Minister. He told me later that he preferred to be called Milton, "Because beautiful I am not, but I think I am wise." (He turned out to be neither). Obote was from a northern district of Uganda called Lango, a cattle raising and nomadic tribe. He was a bright man who had been educated at the local university in Uganda, which was run by the British, Makerere University. His ambition was to go on from there to England to the University of London to study. The British were ambivalent about Obote. They felt that he was something of a revolutionary and they did not wish to aid and abet his winning the election

Library of Congress

by giving him further prepayment. Of course he won the election anyway, at the first and last free and honest election that Uganda was to have.

President Kennedy sent a delegation to Uganda's independence headed by Sen. Smith of Massachusetts who had served out Kennedy's term after he became President. There was the usual gala independence ceremony, the lowering of the British flag and the raising of the Ugandan flag.

Obote had a difficult job ahead of him. Uganda was a strange country made up of districts, principalities, and "kingdoms." There were five main districts when the British took over Uganda in the 19th century, as a protectorate. They found that several districts had strong hereditary chiefs or "kings." Not adverse to royalty the British let them keep their titles and perquisites which naturally pleased these leaders.

Q: As I recall it, they all had local titles, didn't they, local names, that were a little different?

DEMING: Yes, strange and wonderful titles. The Omukama of Toro, the Omugabe of Bunyoro, and the Kyabazinga of Busoga, to name three. One province didn't have a chief with a title so at independence the authorities gave him one: the King of Sebei.

In preparation for independence things went forward under the British in a very orderly manner. Her Majesty's Government had built a really beautiful parliament building with a "strangely carved table" and dais very much like a small edition of the British parliament. They had also provided a flag with the crested crane, the national bird of Uganda, rampant on a field of red and yellow and the motto "God and my country." The official national language is English.

The fact that Ugandans had little to do with creating their own flag, building their own parliament, or choosing their own form of government may have been some of the causes of difficulties later on.

Library of Congress

In 1963 Uganda came into full independence and things seemed to be going smoothly. By invitation there were still British officers in the police force, the army and the civil service. I was confirmed as Ambassador in January, 1963.

Prime Minister Obote faced tribal problems from the beginning. He was from the Lango tribe in the north. The King, or Kabaka of Buganda, Frederick Mutesa II, was from the south. He came from a long line of hereditary rulers and became head of state, or President, while Obote was Prime Minister. When I presented my credentials, I presented them to the President not to the Prime Minister. This situation caused strong tensions from the beginning.

In January, 1964 there was a mutiny in the Tanzanian army followed shortly by a mutiny in the Uganda army. They closed themselves up in their barracks in Jinja about 40 miles from the capital, and refused to take orders. This presented a crisis to Prime Minister Obote. Obote took a very courageous but difficult step. He went to the British High Commissioner (Ambassador), and asked for immediate military intervention by the British. The High Commissioner later told me that he had said to Obote, that this must be very difficult for you to call for outside military help from us so soon after independence. Obote acknowledged that it was and then said, "How soon can your troops arrive?"

A Highland regiment was stationed in Kenya at the time. Within 24 hours the whole regiment was flown in from Kenya, landed at Entebbe airport and took the 40-mile trip by truck to the barracks in Jinja. They took over without a shot being fired.

After three months it was agreed that the British could leave because things were in an orderly state. By July, 1964 Obote had removed all British officers from his army. He then appointed a military man from his district by the name of Idi Amin. He was promoted from sergeant major to general of the Army! Idi Amin was 6'6", the heavyweight boxing champion of Uganda, and had served with the East Africans rifles under British command

Library of Congress

in North Africa during the Second World War. His former commanding general later said of him that, he was a natural born soldier but very rough on prisoners.

At this point Obote's relations with the Kabaka and the people deteriorated badly and really a little civil war or struggle for power began. Obote had a deep hatred of the Buganda people who had been favored by the British during the protectorate period. They were better educated, they lived around Lake Victoria, the most productive land, and their capital, Kampala, was now also the capital of the nation.

I might say at this point, Ambassador Torbert, from late 1964 on everything went downhill in Uganda. Civil war breeds civil war. The people of Buganda were withholding their cooperation from the central government and showing their loyalty to the Kabaka, the President. This infuriated Obote. And Obote consolidated his military rule of Uganda and continued his military and civil and political action against the Buganda people in particular. The economy of course went down, badly; tourism ceased. This was a very difficult time for all the Ambassadors accredited to Uganda. The capital was frequently under the curfew and their movements were very restricted. There were roadblocks around the country and a little military state had been inflicted on what could have been a pleasant and happy land.

Foreign aid continued, but in diminishing quantities because it was very difficult for donor countries to persuade people to come and go out into the hinterland and administer the various projects.

Q: Now, about that time, am I right in remembering that Uganda started to destroy the East Africa Common Services Organization which had been the British hope for keeping those three countries, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, more or less solid.

DEMING: You're absolutely right, Ambassador Torbert.

Q: Maybe I'm preceding something you—

Library of Congress

DEMING: No. It was during this period, between 1962 and 1966. The British had taken measures to tie Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania together into an East African Federation. They had built a railway line which ran from Mombasa on the Indian Ocean up over the Kenya Mountains to Kampala. The purpose was to make the colonies self supporting or profitable. Coffee, tea, cotton, industrial diamonds and other products were shipped out of Uganda and British goods in. The Federation also had common postal, telegraph, monetary systems. The British and we were hopeful that this cooperation would be continued after independence.

I was under some pressure from the Department to do what I could as the representative of the United States to encourage the continuation of this federation. I was instructed Averell Harriman, then Under Secretary in charge of African Affairs, to go to the Prime Minister and urge him he take steps strengthening or continuing the federation. I was to tell him that if he could do that the United States could see its way to providing larger economic assistance to a federation of states than it could to individual ones trying to go on its own. I recall informing the Department that I expected to have a negative reaction because Obote and the Ugandans had always felt inferior to Tanzania and Kenya because they were both on the Indian Ocean and Uganda was landlocked. Also the British base of operations and policy for East Africa was in Nairobi, Kenya.

So I carried out my mission and the Prime Minister heard me out. Then he said, "Is your government trying to bribe me?" I said, "No, we're talking economics and we're talking about steps which we would be willing to take which we think would be helpful to all three of your countries." Obote replied, "I am not interested in strengthening the Federation." I asked him if this was for political, economic or psychological reasons? He looked at me and said, "Mostly psychological. You know, in a Federation before long there will be only one representative at the United Nations for the East African Federation; he will not come from Uganda."

Library of Congress

Q: That's very acute of you to get the reason, I think, which was basically emotional.

DEMING: I know it has happened to you too. Mr. Ambassador. You are sent to the Prime Minister with a bucket full of holes and you know you're going to come back with no water in it. You are right that Obote's reaction was emotional, not pragmatic. After all, common services for the three countries served Uganda's economic and development interests as well as the others.

I would like to give some views and get yours on the reasons for this type of thing happening in some African countries after they came into independence. The history of colonialism I suppose gave them a feeling of dependency or inferiority. The history of tribalism before they came under European domination also reasserted itself. The minister of Interior of Uganda, all of 28 years old, said to me once that the Africans understood the western system of government much better than we understood theirs. I said, what is the difference? He said we do not believe in a multi-party system in democracy. We are accustomed to choosing a chief and when he's chief nobody disputes his power. Opposition to the chief is regarded as subversion or treason. I said I thought Uganda would have a very difficult time not having a multi-party system to unify the many districts of Uganda. He said he wanted me to understand our difference of views on government. I believe he was telling me something very fundamental; that any challenge to whoever was elected prime minister in Africa was not a normal democratic practice but was subversion. You probably didn't find that in Somalia because it had an utterly the different history. It was mostly a Muslim country, was it not?

Q: Ninety-nine percent Muslim, more or less. And it was a somewhat different history, and yet you found some of the same problems, tribalism, certainly. But there was a democratic tradition in Somalia which was fairly unique among other African countries, although it didn't last long when the crunch came after I left there.

Library of Congress

DEMING: Kennedy's New Frontier philosophy gave an enthusiastic welcome to these countries coming into independence. There was a feeling that everything was going to turn out fine now that they were free and democratic. You remember the term, "revolution of rising expectations?" Now that colonialism was gone, all the riches that once went to foreign government would now accrue to the people!

This "expectation" was epitomized in the Uganda Prime Minister's peculiar attitude towards AID from foreign countries. And a lot of aid poured into Uganda, from Canada, from the United States, from Scandinavian countries, from the British and from the UN. But the Prime Minister stressed that he wanted aid with "no string attached." I think he was expecting large infusions of cash! It so happened that at some convention outside Kampala, the Prime Minister was going to talk and I had been invited to talk about foreign aid. The Prime Minister let me know that he wanted to see a copy of my speech before I made it. So I sent it to him. Of course, he didn't send me one of his. I had addressed the matter of aid with "no strings attached." In my talk I said that I represented a country which over many years had been providing assistance to countries coming into independence who were economically needy. I understood the attitude of Uganda that they didn't want "strings attached." But I emphasized that we do not regard them as strings, we regard them as lines of responsibilities.

Q: That's a very good phrase, I must say. I wish I had thought of it.

DEMING: I went on to say that aid to Uganda or any other country from the United States comes from American taxpayers. And the taxpayers, through their elected representatives, want to know what has been done with their tax money. I said as Uganda develops economically you may provide aid to neighboring countries and I am sure you will want to know exactly how that aid was spent in order to justify it to your people. The Prime Minister stuck to his thesis that he wanted aid with no strings attached. And there we were.

Library of Congress

During this period the UNDP, the United Nations Development Program, was planning assistance to Uganda.

Q: Based in Vienna now, anyway, perhaps not then.

DEMING: At that time, Hoffman was head of the agency at the headquarters in New York. Hoffman arrived for a conference in Kampala with representatives of several East African countries to talk about aid and development in general. Addressing the conference at the outset Hoffman made a point. He said, that when he went to Europe to administer the Marshall Plan, he made it clear that European recovery, the rebuilding of Europe, would be achieved by Europeans. And I say to you now in Africa, "That African development will be achieved by Africans."

I talked to the young Ugandan Foreign Minister after that and he was absolutely appalled. He said, "You're leaving us alone!" I said that no, Mr. Hoffman didn't say that. He said that your development depends on Africans to develop it. You can receive aid from other countries but you have to do the work yourself. Hoffman went on to say that one of Africa's economic problems, or one that could become a problem, was rapidly increasing population. This diminish the impact of the goods and services, food, available for distribution. Perhaps he was stepping on tender ground, but this was resented very much. I was told later that Africans believe that there must be more and more Africans because they must catch up with the white man, and when they breed more blacks then they will be dominant like the whites. There is an area of appalling economic ignorance here!

Q: Did anybody happen to point out India and China as good examples.

DEMING: I'm afraid I didn't. It's interesting that you mention India. Uganda had a large number of Indians, mostly of the lower middle class who had been brought in by the British to do the accounting, to supervise the construction, building and so on. At first they were encouraged by Obote to take out citizenship and decide whether they wanted

Library of Congress

to be Indians or Ugandans following independence. It was a very difficult decision. A number of them did opt to be Ugandan citizens. This was a bitter pill for them later when Idi Amin came to power. All Indians were expelled from the country whether they'd opted for citizenship or not. This meant that the small businessmen

Q: Tradesmen.

DEMING: Yes, tradesmen, bank clerks, the tailors, the shop keepers, disappeared and the Ugandans had no liking and no experience in that kind of work. They were basically subsistence farmers. This further destroyed the economy that hadn't been already crippled by the internal warfare. I don't know, Ambassador Torbert, whether you found in Somalia that there was an expatriate group of traders like Lebanese or Chinese or Indians who were an understructure for the economy?

Q: There was a mere handful of them there and it was such a totally different economy, mostly nomadic, that it was hardly a comparable situation. But I certainly was an observer of this problem not only in Uganda but all of East Africa had the problem to some extent—but Uganda was more ruthless about it than others.

DEMING: Yes they were. Nyerere did the same thing.

Q: A little later, yes.

DEMING: He didn't invite them to become citizens and then throw them out. And the economies of those countries have suffered, partly as a result of that.

I wonder also whether independence being more or less handed to most of these countries without an armed struggle, a political struggle, yes, and a waiting period, but nothing like our own war of independence; whether it didn't come too cheaply to them and they didn't have the pride of having won their independence, no ringing declaration. Do you think that had an effect?

Library of Congress

Q: I think this might be an effect. And it has always interested me to speculate on why it was, although we thought at the time that the British did such a great job of preparing their colonies for independence and the French and the Italians did nothing at all, that by and large that short term results, or medium term results have shown that democracy and self government and all that sort of thing had a more difficult time taking hold in a way in many of the British, not all but many of the British colonies, than it did in the French and Italian. Particularly the French, of course, had many more. And the French were able, it seems to me, to retain influence in their colonies, guidance without a great dissatisfaction on the part of the local people better than the British do.

I made a much longer digression than any interviewer should in this subject, but we're interviewing you and not me so let's—

DEMING: There are subjects which is interesting to ruminate on.

Q: Exactly.

DEMING: It's their problem, the solution is up to Africans. We've seen with few exceptions the handing over of incipiently democratic forms of government and not long before they are one-party states. Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, all independent now and all of the power has been taken in the hands of one man. And it doesn't seem to make the African electorate terribly uncomfortable. If it does they haven't found out how to bring their pressure to bear to change it.

Q: But a very closely allied subject, I think, is whether the efforts that both the colonial parties and we in the United Nations organization have made to provide economic development have been directed in a constructive manner and whether they really help the countries or whether they are too sudden a wrench from their original way of life without replacing it rapidly enough with anything good. Do you have any particular views on that? That is, economic aid as a partial solution to this and how it's been administered?

Library of Congress

DEMING: My observation in Uganda may not be typical, but we had an active aid program worked out by the World Bank. It was concentrated on agricultural productivity and secondary education. What appeared to me after nearly four years there was that the transfer of technology was easier said than done. We had a hybrid corn program established under the directions of an Agricultural Extension Agent from the United States. It was expected that in a year or two the Ugandans would see the advantage of the greater yield and take off on their own. Long after I left Uganda aid was cut off for several years during Idi Amin's despotic rule. When aid was resumed and the agronomists went back, they asked what had happened to the hybrid seed corn?" "well," they said, "we ate it." Obviously that technique, or idea or will had not been transferred from the Americans to the Ugandans.

Q: We were in the process of talking about the effectiveness of aid programs. I think we interrupted you in mid-thought on that.

DEMING: I was discussing the technique of the transfer or the ability to transfer technology from the mind of one to the mind of another, or the hands of one to the hands of another. Some recipients of aid are prone to say, "well, you do it so well, why don't you just keep doing it?" I think the American answer should be, "Look, I'll show you twice and then you do it." But different cultures have different capabilities. I think India has picked up very quickly on agricultural, green revolution techniques and improved their agriculture production tremendously. In East Africa generally, with independence people flocked to the capital city and settled there, waiting to share the abundance and wealth that was coming with independence. And the real wealth of the country, the agriculture, was left to wither. They would be better off to go back to their traditional ways of subsistence farming.

Q: I used to feel that the most important man on the AID staff was the consulting anthropologist that somebody was bright enough to bring in and whom, of course, they cut

Library of Congress

off as soon as they had to cut a budget. He didn't last very long. But he was the man who told me what the problems were more than anyone else.

DEMING: You need someone like that to tell the technician, who is an expert in some fields, what the attitude of the person receiving the knowledge and technology is and how it gets through to him.

Q: *Exactly.*

DEMING: I will wind up very shortly here.

I left Uganda in 1966 after nearly four years. When I went to the airport the government provided a man with a gun sitting next to the driver with his gun sticking out the window. I was informed of this in advance. I talked to the Foreign Minister, who by then was 31 years old. I said, "You know, you're not at war and this is very upsetting to have an Ambassador in his car have to have an armed guard, not of his own, but yours." The Foreign Minister said, "Well, I'm sorry about it but we have these roadblocks, he said, they stopped me the other day so I can't be sure they won't stop you." I hung up on that. So we went to the airport with a gun sticking out the window. It showed how far the government had deteriorated in its control of its own people and its own affairs.

It was I think four years later, two years after Idi Amin took power that the American Embassy was closed for five years. Idi Amin had threatened "to skin the Marine guards alive." The Marines left within 36 hours and the Ambassador followed. Although Amin assured the Ambassador that "I was just joking!" It was too late. The embassy was in the process of being closed. And everyone knows the tragedy of the Idi Amin years.

I came back to the Department in 1966 and was assigned as Diplomat in Residence at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. I won't go into that. Everyone knows that after four or five years in a faraway post with various difficulties, some health problems, that an assignment like that is extremely welcome. I did some lecturing on the developing

Library of Congress

countries and the technology of transferring aid to newly-independent people and diplomacy as it actually is in some of the developing countries. It was stimulating to me and I hope it was useful to the students. They tell me it was.

I was not finished, however, or the Department of State was not finished with me in Africa. In early June in Chapel Hill, I was just finishing up my assignment there, I got a telephone call from Joe Sisco, then Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs. He said we have to have someone right away to head up our US delegation with the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. We have to have an Ambassador and I want you to be chairman of our delegation. We'd be leaving in one week for the Congo, Tanzania and Zambia. So, like a good Foreign Service Officer, I said yes sir, packed up, got back, got oriented, and got shots! Fortunately for me, my aide who went with me was Don McHenry who was later our Ambassador to the United Nations. He was our representative on the committee on decolonization at the UN and so thoroughly knowledgeable.

Q: And a very able guy, I gather. I never knew him personally.

DEMING: He was my right hand man all the way through what I can only say was an ordeal. Most Committee members were all representatives from African countries that had recently achieved independence. At these meetings, which went on endlessly in the Congo and in Tanzania and in Zambia, the American representative was accused of being a colonialist. The general public audience, all black, would glare at me as though I were the enemy of their country. I repeatedly put it on the record that the United States is not a colonial country, that it has never had any colonies in Africa. They would reply that Angola and Mozambique were American colonies, in effect, because the Portuguese had given us concessions for our military base in the Azores Islands and in return we were helping Portugal subjugate the Angolans and the Mozambicans.

It was, I must say, the most unpleasant assignment I have ever had. You were surrounded by ignorant animosity. The chairman was a Tanzanian, Malacela by name, extremely anti-

Library of Congress

west and anti-white. There was very little order to the proceedings. It had the atmosphere of a black three ring circus.

When I came back from that mission I wrote a memorandum to Joe Sisco saying that it was counterproductive to send an American to the Decolonization Committee meetings in Africa because we had no colonies there, never had, and it gave the impression to many of the countries and the people who came to these meetings that we were somehow guilty, otherwise we wouldn't be there.

I rested for about 10 days and then I was called again. We're sending the UN Committee on South Africa to the Congo, Tanzania and Zambia. Since you're experienced with this, will you please go again as head of delegation. I protested, but to no avail. In sort: I did, however, hold the Department at ransom. I would not go except first class round trip. I was sick of going economy while all the blacks were living it up in first class. It was demeaning to the US. Again we were attacked as the friends of South Africa, therefore anti-black; that our economic aid (sic) was keeping apartheid alive. This was even more difficult because we had more or less normal private trade with South Africa at that time. Again I recommended that we not subject American diplomats to go to that kind of circus in Africa. I never had any reply, but I noted that the next year none of those committees had any Americans on them.

By the second trip the British had withdrawn from the committee, the British saying, "Her Majesty's government does not have to subject her civil service to such indignities." I quoted that, too.

Q: Exactly. Whether the United States government ever made such a defense of their civil service, I'm not quite sure.

DEMING: And the French had got off the committee two years earlier. They said it doesn't apply to us, we've given all our former colonies independence. So the French chair was empty, the British chair was empty, and only the US chair full. And I longed that those

Library of Congress

other chairs would have somebody in them to share the flak. The USSR chair was next to mine but no barbs were ever directed to them.

So that about ends it, not my career necessarily but the overseas side of it. When I came back I was appointed Coordinator of the National Interdepartmental Seminar until 1969 when I retired. The Interdepartmental Seminar was better known as the Counter-Insurgency Course. It was training on how to conduct yourself psychologically, militarily, sociologically, to overcome the terrible difficulties we were having in Vietnam.

Q: This had originally been strongly supported by Bobby Kennedy, as I remember.

DEMING: Yes it had. It was attended by senior representatives of the military, the CIA, the Department of State, USIA, etc. They had month-long sessions throughout the year, at intervals of two weeks. That was a difficult time, too, because the popular mood in America, as you know, was increasingly to get out of Vietnam.

Q: I'm fully aware.

DEMING: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you immensely. You've done a wonderful job. Before we stop this, I would like to have you mention, because I know you participated in a number of things after you retired, but very particularly there was at least one that I know of that had a lot to do with the international relations field. Do you want to give us just a very brief statement on the international things you did after retirement on a volunteer basis, I understand.

DEMING: As I said at the beginning, I have had a great interest in foreign people, foreign places, international affairs. When I retired from the service that interest continued. I was asked very shortly by Burk Wilkinson, who had been Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, to become Director of the Foreign Student Service Council, a non-profit service organization established to provide a communication bridge between

Library of Congress

the growing number of foreign students, many of them graduate students in America and Washington, with the community, the government and the press and hospitality throughout the year. I accepted and stayed as Director there for five years, I enjoyed it very much. It kept me in touch with the international field and with the fascination of students here from developing countries. It was our hope that they would return to their countries with a better understanding of our government and our people. I also served on the board of the Experiment in International Living headquartered in Vermont. As a youth I had led student groups to Europe for the Experiment. That was a satisfaction.

Other than that, I did get involved in local affairs. I was elected President of the Georgetown Citizens Association for two years. This had nothing to do with international affairs but a great deal to do with the quality of life in Georgetown.

Q: I think we all wanted to get into local community activities when we came back because we had been away so much and this was one way we used to get back in contact. I did a similar thing out in Cleveland Park, actually.

Just one or two sort of summary things that you may or may not want to give some views on. One of them has to do with the coordination and, in a way, creation of American foreign policy. The question is often raised: do we have a foreign policy? Connected closely with this is whether a post abroad gets proper foreign policy guidance or is most of it improvised? Do you have any particular thoughts on this subject? Whether when you were abroad you received adequate policy guidance from the Department and whether you felt that there was a foreign policy system in existence in the United States government. Perhaps this harks back a little bit to your statement on Okinawa that we didn't have a manual in the Foreign Service as to exactly how to proceed. But whether you have a manual or not, the question is one of coordination. Do you feel that was adequately handled? Or do you have any suggestions as to how it might have been handled better?

Library of Congress

DEMING: I thought it was adequately handled during my tours abroad and I think that's largely responsible to the nature of the administration at that time and the quality, character, expertise or special ability of the Secretary of State and particularly the Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries. Both Chester Bowles and Averell Harriman were very active in the Department most of my time in Africa and they left their stamp on it. They were listening and they were talking. They didn't always fit in with the Ambassador's or the person in the field's view of what should be done. I mentioned earlier Harriman's instruction to me to get the Prime Minister to support federation in East Africa. At least that showed an alertness and attention and interest in the area to which you were accredited which gave one a feeling of support or concern.

I think during the last eight years, Foreign Service Officers I have known have had the feeling that direct negotiation and direct operations by representatives of the administration and the Department of State have taken away, the sense of accountability and responsibility. I believe it has hurt morale. I went through periods when I felt that nobody was listening, and I'm sure you did, too. I don't mean disagreement, but no listening, no real response. Disagreement is fine. If you can't make your arguments stand up, then that's the way it goes.

Q: I must say, and you've had experience in the position so you know something about this, that I always felt that your Office Director back in the Department had a great deal to do with whether you received adequate instructions. Not that he would give them to you necessarily, but if he was good he could go around and find out something and get you an answer, find out how the land lay in the Department and in the government as a whole and get some instructions out.

DEMING: I completely agree with you, Ambassador Torbert. The Office Director is the basic heart of the Department of State, the one most directly and constantly in touch with the people in his countries. You can tell if you've got an active and alert Office Director

Library of Congress

by the quantity of instructions and comment you receive. I agree that a key thing is the strength of the Office Director, hopefully supported by his Assistant Secretary.

Q: Absolutely.

One other point which maybe is a little delicate and you may not wish to comment on it at all, but we've talked about your relations with military, at least in Okinawa, and your relations with the public affairs side, of which you were a part, and to some degree our relations with the economic. How about the CIA? Is there anything that you fee like saying on the unclassified record about any relations you may have had with them? Perhaps you didn't have so many in some of those posts. But were they generally satisfactory and do you have any comments on the relationship between the CIA and foreign policy?

DEMING: There's not a close enough relationship, in my opinion, between a Consul General or an Ambassador and the Chief of Station and I believe the relationship has deteriorated rather than got better. You are on a need-to-know basis with regard to CIA operations. This can be counterproductive in the long run. It's an ambivalent situation. If you know too much you have to share responsibility. If you don't know and something goes wrong with an operation you have "deniability" as they say. But that's not a very nice way of living.

The separate lines of communication to Washington can be a problem. You never know whether you're being second guessed or "done in" by a fellow agency in your government! I had close relations with my Chief of Station in Uganda. They were into some hanky-panky that I thought was expensive and questionable but I did not feel that I was being hoodwinked or that they were doing anything to undermine my mission or what the Department was trying to do. I don't know what a satisfactory solution is if you have an intelligence operation. It isn't intelligence reporting, it's the operation that is disturbing.

Q: It's obviously difficult, certainly. Our many problems. It's very close to 12:00. I want to thank you very much for an extremely well-organized presentation on your part. You

Library of Congress

anticipated most of the questions that I had listed down. I think this is going to make a very, very interesting record.

DEMING: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. You've been an excellent interviewer. I think the least the person being interviewed can do is organize his notes so he can make some coherence.

Q: It was very well done. Thank you.

End of interview