

Fraser Wilkins Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 2/23/1971
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Creator: Fraser Wilkins

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Wilkins, Fraser; Ambassador to Cyprus (1960-1964); Inspector General of the Department of State and the Foreign Service (1964-1971). Wilkins discusses the relationship between the United States and Cyprus, his role as the Ambassador to Cyprus, John F. Kennedy's [JFK] interest in foreign affairs, and Lyndon B. Johnson's involvement with Cyprus, among other issues.

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Fraser Wilkins

Fraser Wilkins

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Oral History Interview

with

FRASER WILKINS

February 23, 1971
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Ambassador, let me ask you, to begin with -- you said that you first met John Kennedy in India, is that correct? Would you describe that please for us?

WILKINS: Yes, that's correct. The first thing I want to say is that as a Foreign Service officer, I was a very small cog in a very large Department of State Foreign Service machine; naturally my relationship with a man like President Kennedy was rather brief and remote. But I remember that I went to India in 1950, when Low Henderson was ambassador, as political counselor. There was a change of ambassadors in 1951 when Chester Bowles took his place. If I remember correctly, President Kennedy, who was then a congressman, came on a visit with his brother [Robert F. Kennedy] and one of the sisters, later Mrs. Stephen Smith [Jean Kennedy Smith], a regular CODEL [Congressional Delegation].

[-1-]

Ambassador Bowles [Chester B. Bowles] was away. Loyd Steere was chargé, and he called me up that morning and said, "Fraser, are you free for lunch today? The reason I ask is I'm tied up and we've got this congressman coming with his relatives. Could you take care of them?" I said, "Well, I think we can do it." And so I talked to my wife, and we decided to

arrange a lunch with Indian food. I thought we should give them something Indian to eat, being in India. I hadn't realized it would be John Kennedy and Robert and his sister until they arrived. It turned out they were very much the worse for wear because they'd been traveling through the Near East and were having the usual tummy trouble. The last thing they wanted was an Indian lunch. We had an Indian curry, rice and papaya, and all during lunch both Jack and Robert Kennedy kept pushing pieces of the curried chicken and the papaya underneath the lettuce so they wouldn't have to eat it.

That morning President Kennedy had been to see Nehru [Jawaharlal Nehru]. His conversation about his talk with Nehru was interesting to me because Kennedy struck me as a person who was an accomplished politician, who was developing an interest in foreign affairs. I mean, he wasn't quite sure of his grasp, as I sensed what he was saying. He mispronounced names in talking about the Indians. I hope he didn't do that when he was talking with Nehru. But still his interest was genuine. We talked at length about the politics of India.

Robert was on the edge of his chair all the time. He looked like he'd just graduated from college. He had a crew cut and seemed a touch football type. You could see he was trying to get in on the conversation all the time and was competing with his brother.

MOSS: Do you remember anything of a substantive nature of the conversation?

[-2 -]

WILKINS: Not really very much. I think he was impressed by Nehru because he was a very impressive man and he did things in style there in his office. Nehru spoke at length about American assistance in wheat and also about Korea, the settlement of that problem. Kennedy was much impressed with Nehru's position on these matters. Also at that time, the United States was hoping that in return for wheat shipped to that country, India would release manganese ore, which was needed in defense production. And Nehru was reluctant to do this because he thought that this was contributing to the development of nuclear weapons.

MOSS: And was this a topic of conversation at the luncheon?

WILKINS: As far as I know. I've sort of forgotten the details. After all, this was twenty years ago.

MOSS: Yes, I understand how it is.

WILKINS: And I haven't thought much about it since then.

MOSS: Are there any other incidents from that visit that stand out?

WILKINS: Well, I do remember that after the Kennedy group left -- they went on to Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia; it was a round-the-world trip.

Later we got back newspaper reports saying how displeased Kennedy was with the level of representation throughout the Middle East. Everywhere he'd gone most of the ambassadors were absent. This was not unusual because most ambassadors went on home leave in the summer. I think Mr. Bowles himself was back in the United States on consultation. I remember saying to my wife, "No matter what you do you can't win," because here we'd had an interesting conversation and a very pleasant day -- in spite of the curry -- and still the Kennedys were critical about the Foreign Service and the State Department. It seemed like a bad break.

[-3 -]

MOSS: All right, let's move on then. You were appointed Ambassador to Cyprus in the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration, so you were there when Kennedy was elected and when he became President.

WILKINS: That's right. I ought to explain a little bit about Cyprus, just for the record. There had been trouble between the British, who had been in control of Cyprus since 1878, when it was taken over from the Turks. Conditions were quite peaceful on the island until 1955 when trouble broke out between the Greek Cypriot guerrillas and the British. This went on until about 1959 when agreements were reached in Zurich and London with regard to the future of Cyprus. This was a very difficult situation, because on the island 80 percent of the people are Greek Cypriots and the other 20 percent are Turkish Cypriots. They don't live in separate parts; they're all mixed up, although in some villages they have their own separate quarters, sections.

MOSS: You say it's 80:20 on population. That raises a curious question in my mind, and that is: Why were the Turks pushing for 30 percent representation in the government posts?

WILKINS: Well, this was part of the London-Zurich agreements. It stems back to the fact that under British rule, in order to help the Turks, who were generally at a lower economic, cultural, and sociological level than the Greek Cypriots, the British tried to compensate by giving them a higher percentage of jobs in the government. It was 30:70 on the political side and 40:60 in the police, because the Turkish Cypriots made good policemen. For example, the average per capita annual income among the Greek Cypriots is about five hundred dollars a year, and among the Turkish Cypriots, half that, say two hundred and fifty. Most of the Greek Cypriots are engaged in service industries in the towns, whereas the Turkish Cypriots are generally poor peasants on the land. Thus,

[-4 -]

throughout the structure of the government of Cyprus, both in the bureaucracy and in the police, the British tended to give the Turks a leg up.

The struggle between the Greek Cypriots and the British began many years ago, especially after 1955, and continued until 1959 when they reached agreement in London and

Zurich. There's a great deal of controversy about these agreements. Some claim they were concluded under duress, both on the Greek side and on the Turkish side. But it was considered the best way out, and after much hemming and hawing, it was decided that Cyprus would become independent in the early part of 1960. I was called back from Iran, where I was DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in the American embassy there, intending to go to Cyprus in February of '60, but there was one delay after another. I studied Greek all summer. Makarios kept arguing with the British about the size of the base which they would keep on the island. As a result, Cyprus didn't become independent until the end of August. So finally I was able to go out as Ambassador in September. This, as you said earlier, was by appointment of President Eisenhower.

MOSS: You have also the question coming up, I guess in the next year, of the Commonwealth relationship, too, don't you?

WILKINS: Cyprus decided to stay in the Commonwealth. In fact, they were still in the sterling area because most of the agricultural exports of Cyprus -- potatoes, citrus fruits, strawberries, and so on -- go to England. So they were very anxious to stay in the sterling area, and they were anxious to stay in the Commonwealth because of the status and position which it gave Cyprus in world affairs.

MOSS: Okay, let me ask you this: From your point of view as an ambassador in the Near East and then on Cyprus, how did the American political scene look to you? How did it look to see John Kennedy coming in as President?

[-5-]

WILKINS: This was a fascinating thing. First, I should say that American interests in Cyprus rested on several things. One was that we had a radio relay station there, a huge one, in fact, one of the largest in the world. All of the official traffic between the United States -- Washington primarily -- and the Middle Eastern countries went through Cyprus. It happens to be a good spot, atmospherically, for the transmission of radio signals. And this had grown up during the British days, and it was continued when Cyprus became independent. That was our first interest.

Another interest was the American copper mine there. These copper mines were originally Roman but their use was allowed to lapse in the Middle Ages. They were rediscovered about 1906 by two American geologists from California who had gone to former President Herbert Hoover for suggestions as to where they might find copper. You will recall that Hoover had been a mining engineer as a young man. He'd done a lot of research in ancient texts, and he said, "Well, I'd have a look at Cyprus. I think you'll find something there." So they did and rediscovered the old Roman mine. This is now the Cyprus Mines Corporation. In 1960 and thereafter, they were still mining the old Roman mine. Instead of going underground, they were leveling the hill in which the copper was, and the rate of extraction was quite high. Toward the end of my tour there, they began looking for additional sources, but they hadn't yet found them. In fact, the trouble between the Greeks and the Turks on the island broke up further exploration. That was the second interest.

The third interest was the Forest Oil Corporation of Pennsylvania. They had taken over the old Iraq Petroleum Company concession on the island. They didn't have to pay anything for it. There was not much chance of finding oil, but it was worth looking for as long as you didn't have to pay an initial tax to do so. Here again, their explorations were broken up by the troubles that broke out in the fall of 1963.

[-6-]

A fourth interest was the export of oil by American oil companies for the fuel consumption in the electric generators of Cyprus. Of course, another very important one would be our support for the continuance of the British bases on Cyprus, at Larnaca and Akrotiri, primarily the British air force.

So for all of these reasons we were very interested to see that Cyprus got off to a good start as an independent country. In fact, this is what I was told in the Department by Assistant Secretary Lewis Jones when I went out there in 1960.

This became even more true after Cyprus became independent in 1960. The Communist party of Cyprus became more important than it had been when the British were in control, especially because of their previous activities in Greece and their influence among Greek Cypriots in the guerrilla days from 1955 to 1959, and also because of the existence of a well-organized, well-developed labor party on Cyprus, a left wing labor party through which the Communist party could exert its influence. There was, I would say, between a 30 and a 40 percent chance that this labor party could dominate the election and elect a Communist government in Cyprus. Thus, as Cyprus became independent and the British left, the possibility became more real that this might happen, say, at the conclusion of Makarios' first term as President. Cyprus has a British parliamentary system where a party is in power for five years and then you have an election. So aside from our direct American interests in the island that I mentioned earlier, we became concerned that we might suddenly have a Communist island in the eastern Mediterranean by election.

MOSS: Did you get involved at all in the kind of thing Walter Reuther was trying to do in sort of exporting American labor....

[-7-]

WILKINS: Yes, we did, because in addition to this left wing labor group, there was a right wing labor group. It was very disorganized and ill-led. It happened to have a very articulate leader, but he was not able to organize his group as well as the other. So we had thought that perhaps this would be a counterforce to the other group, but it didn't develop quite that way.

MOSS: Why was that?

WILKINS: Just lack of talent and membership.

MOSS: On our part or theirs?

WILKINS: No, on their part. We did everything we could. But even aside from this, we thought -- for all the reasons that I mentioned -- that the United States should take a very positive stance toward the new government of Cyprus and do everything we could to help it.

Into this general situation was injected one of those natural disasters, a drought. They'd been having a drought there when I arrived for about two years and it continued for about another two. This led to our assistance in the form of PL 480 wheat. We provided this, and then we developed something new that had not been done anywhere before, to my knowledge, under PL48. This was under Title II. That's where the United States government gives the PL480 wheat to the government and they give it to the people. So the new aspect that we introduced into it was that, instead, we arranged with the government of Cyprus to sell the wheat as under Title I, and thereafter we used the money for the repair of roads and construction of schools. We thus had a triple effect in favor of the United States. One is we provided grain when they needed it. Secondly, we built roads and schools which had been needed for years. And thirdly, we soaked up excess money in circulation and cut down on inflation.

[-8-]

MOSS: Did you notice any change in the way the State Department was operating, your relationship with the State Department in the change of administrations?

WILKINS: Very definitely.

MOSS: What sort of...

WILKINS: Well, as I say, we were very anxious to keep the radio stations; we were very anxious to help Cyprus for political and economic and strategic reasons because of her general position in the eastern Mediterranean. Up until the change of administration, most of my messages and instructions had come from the State Department. But I discovered soon after the change of administration... (President Kennedy kept me on as ambassador there, I suppose, because it was a relatively small country and because I was a Foreign Service officer.) Because of our general interests, mainly the threat of Communists taking over the government, President Kennedy became personally interested in developments on the island. Just as I said before that his interest in India had seemed sort of offhand or he didn't quite have his hands on the situation, the same thing seemed true about Cyprus in the beginning.

One day I got a telegram saying that the State Department should do everything it possibly could with respect to supporting the government of Cyprus, both economically and politically, because of the interest of the President in the situation. Also, that summer he sent Gordon Gray out to have a look at the situation. This was a National Security Council Memorandum.

The thing that interested me about it -- I used to write to Phil Talbots [Phillips Talbot], who was Assistant Secretary in NEA [Near East Affairs] -- was that there had developed in

the White House a sort of a parallel State Department. I soon discovered that not only did I have to keep the State Department informed, but I had to keep Bob Komer [Robert W. Komer] informed in the White House. Otherwise, State and White House seemed not to be on the same wavelength.

[-9-]

MOSS: In what ways did you notice that they were not on the same wavelength?

WILKINS: Well, because I heard that the White House had been rather annoyed with the State Department because they weren't informed about what was going on in Cyprus. I got in touch with the desk officer who said, "We haven't been sending over any of the reports you've been sending in about the situation." I accordingly concluded that the best remedy would be to send similar information to the man who was handling Cyprus in the White House, and that was Bob Komer. I did that, and I had no trouble after that.

MOSS: What did you do? Simply make your cables info...

WILKINS: I continued to send all my telegrams and other reports to the Department. I also sent info copies to Komer. And I used to summarize my cables and my other reports in my letters to Phil Talbot. I sent similar letters to Bob Komer. As a result, from then the White House, and presumably President Kennedy, were up to date on what was going on in Cyprus.

MOSS: Certainly Bob Komer was.

WILKINS: Oh yes. Well, I know the President was, too, because they were very helpful about everything, especially on the economic front. At one point we had as much as forty million dollars a year for AID [Agency for International Development] assistance. Makarios blew the whole thing by dragging his feet on the details of projects. Cyprus received the PL 480, but they never got any of the substantial assistance that would have been available. And furthermore, there was the possibility of a VOA [Voice of America] station being set up there under USIA. That never came to pass either because the Cypriots were too greedy and wanted too much money. So in the end, Henry Loomis, who was then down at USIA, couldn't afford to pay the price that they were asking.

[-10-]

MOSS: That's Loomis?

WILKINS: Henry Loomis, who's now the number two man at USIA. He was in charge of VOA at that time. And I'd known him earlier; he'd come out to Iran when I was there about facilities in that country. But Cyprus, as I said earlier, is an excellent place atmospherically for any kind of radio transmission, both for official traffic of the State Department and also for VOA broadcasting. But no agreement was ever reached.

Another thing -- and this is in connection with my second direct contact with President Kennedy -- was that I arranged a semi-official visit for President Makarios to the United States in June 1962. This was all part of our support for him and the government of Cyprus, to get it started in its first years. Naturally, I came back, as other ambassadors do when there's an official visit of that sort. I came a few days ahead, and after I checked into the State Department, I got a call from the White House saying that President Kennedy wanted me to come over and see him. I went over, and I sat in -- they call it the fish bowl or the Fish Room -- and finally I went in to see him.

I could tell right away he'd done considerable background reading by the questions he asked. We went into all the various things: Communist influence on the island, aid, how the government was doing, the personality of Makarios, and so on. This lasted for twenty minutes or half an hour. Then Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] came in and said that the President had other engagements. The President -- he had a book -- jumped up and said, "I've got to talk to you some more about this before I see Makarios. I'll do more homework next time. Come back and continue tomorrow before the first meeting with Makarios."

[-11-]

As we were walking out the door, he said, "Did you hear my speech yesterday?" He had spoken at the American Foreign Service Association luncheon at which he talked about the future of the Foreign Service during which he quoted President Truman to the effect that "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." He wanted to know what I thought about all that. I hadn't known him very well, but he had the knack of talking to people as though they had been long-time friends. I asked him if he remembered his visit to India in 1952, and he actually corrected me on the date of it. He seemed to recall it quite well.

The next day, as it turned out, I didn't have a chance to talk to him alone as he had a luncheon in the White House for President Makarios, and we were asked to come up to the second floor where there was an exchange of gifts. Makarios gave him some ancient Greek pottery from 700 B.C. and so on. The thing I remember most about this luncheon was Vice President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] coming in and how everybody ignored him. And the President, most of the time before lunch, was on the telephone. There were no ladies present because Makarios is single, being a Greek Orthodox archbishop. The President was preoccupied most of the time, so Vice President Johnson picked up the conversation.

MOSS: Excuse me, I thought you said Johnson was ignored.

WILKINS: In the beginning, when he came into the room, they seemed to overlook him. But after the President got on the telephone, Johnson took charge as the next ranking guest.

[-12-]

The next day, Makarios gave a return luncheon at Blair House, where he was staying. And the thing I remember most about that was that Arthur Goldberg was one of the guests,

and the President, much to my surprise, became preoccupied in a discussion with Goldberg, almost ignoring Makarios completely -- possibly because they'd exhausted everything they had to say to each other.

WILKINS: But this is why I'd say that the President struck me as being a man who was just getting into foreign affairs. He was a first-class political leader. He was interested in these matters, and yet you had a feeling that these two interests were sort of vying for his attention mentally.

MOSS: Was Makarios annoyed?

WILKINS: No, I don't think so. Actually Makarios did what I suggested before leaving for the United States. I said, "The last thing you should do in talking to the President is ask him for more foreign assistance. If you don't, you'll be the first official visitor who's not done so." And he didn't, the whole time he was here. And I think it had a very good effect on the Administration, the fact that here was the chief of state of a small country coming and not asking for something.

MOSS: So what was the substance of their conversation, in general?

WILKINS: Well, all these things I've been talking about, about the radio stations, the PL 480 assistance, in finding water, and so forth.

[-13-]

And then another thing I noticed was that the morning of the first official conversation between President Makarios and President Kennedy in the Cabinet Room, they got along extremely well. And then they were to continue the discussion after lunch. Well, some hours elapsed. When the President came back he was in a foul humor. Something had obviously gone wrong in other fields. He'd changed his clothes, but he was just icy. This may be of no significance. But I only mention it to show how changeable he was. And then as we left the White House and went out to the courtyard where the cars came up to take Makarios back to Blair House....

MOSS: The Pennsylvania Avenue side?

WILKINS: The Pennsylvania Avenue side on the northwest corner. The President was courteously seeing Makarios into his car, and all the photographers were running around. Here's a picture. This happened to be taken at that moment.

MOSS: Oh yes.

WILKINS: This was just as Makarios was leaving and the President was seeing him into his car. And I remember after Makarios had gotten in, Kennedy was standing

there -- he was quite tall, you know -- and he was looking over the top of the car, and I just happened to be in his line of vision. He seemed light years away. He had this long, distant look.

MOSS: Thinking of someone else?

WILKINS: Yes, of something else. And yet he was in complete command of the situation. I would say that the visit went extremely well. Makarios was pleased, and I gathered from reports I had afterwards that President Kennedy was pleased. Our relations with Cyprus couldn't have been better. Later that year, Vice President Johnson included Cyprus on a tour of the Middle East. He stopped there for twenty-four hours in the usual great whirlwind of activities and so on.

[-14-]

MOSS: Was there anything notable about that visit, do you recall?

WILKINS: Oh yes, lots of things. You don't want me to go into all the details of Johnson's visit?

MOSS: Not entirely, but whatever might be significant to U.S.-Cypriot relations at that time.

WILKINS: Vice President Johnson was very sympathetic, and Makarios was quite pleased with this further recognition by the United States government of Cyprus as an independent state and of our willingness to help. President Johnson, of course, had his eccentricities about his visit, like keeping the swimming pool open all night and taking two floors of the local hotel and having all these people available for various types of services and so on. I remember that we were supposed to be at the Department of Labor where he was to make a speech at a certain time. When we started out through the Turkish quarter, the crowds were so thick that we couldn't get through. I was afraid that we would be late, so I sent word ahead that we might be delayed so that the Minister of Labor wouldn't be upset. Then we got to the Greek part of Cyprus, there wasn't a person on the street. We just went whizzing through there and arrived at the Department of Labor right on time. The reason there weren't any Greeks out was because they'd all come out the previous day as Johnson came in from the airport to town. But I was worried about this; actually I'd gotten advance warnings that there wouldn't be any Greeks down in the streets, so I delayed the start of the procession from the hotel. I said, "Mr. Vice President, let's talk a little before we set off. I don't think everything's quite ready." So I delayed for about an hour, just so there wouldn't be any foul up.

MOSS: There was some agitation, wasn't there, by the Communist union members to boycott the welcoming at the airport?

[-15-]

WILKINS: There were reports to that effect but it didn't happen, probably because Makarios, who was in pretty complete control of Cyprus, presented it. But to continue my story, after the delay in the Turkish quarter, I was saved by the bell, because there were no Greeks in the Greek quarter.

Later when Vice President Johnson went to call on Vice President Kutchuk [Fazil Kutchuk] in the Turkish quarter -- he was a Turkish Cypriot -- he was unexpectedly presented with a petition. A group of Turkish Cypriots who thought they were being unfairly dealt with by the Greek Cypriots took advantage of Johnson's courtesy call. No one knew what was in it, but Johnson received it and said he would read it with care later. It was clear Johnson was being handed a hot potato. Well, we eventually disposed of it by writing that it had been received and would be given consideration. In any event, both Makarios and Johnson were pleased with the visit.

From then on -- that was in the fall of '62 -- through most of '63 the situation was pretty good, but it rapidly began to deteriorate in the summer of 1963 because of a further conference which the British had arranged in London between the Greeks and the Turks and themselves with regard to changes in the constitution of Cyprus. And this culminated in the incidents in December 1963 and the outbreak of hostilities, mainly, I think, because President Makarios was convinced that the British would not change the constitution or arrange for it to be changed and the only way he could do it was to get the Cyprus question into the United Nations where some sort of a resolution would be passed that would have this effect.

MOSS: Was there any sustained U.S. attempt to head this off, to play a larger role in the thing?

WILKINS: Oh yes, we tried our best to do that, but we had to be very careful...

[-16-]

MOSS: Yes, I would think so.

WILKINS: ...because, you see, Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain were the primary powers guaranteeing the arrangement there which had been reached in 1959. United States policy was to support this arrangement rather than take an independent position of our own. But we tried our level best to make suggestions.

MOSS: At the same time we would have to seem to be the champion of Makarios, in a way.

WILKINS: Well, yes, but we had to be very careful, though, that we also did not alienate the Turkish Cypriots. This was always the problem. And I think we did very well. But we were overtaken by events.

MOSS: You had to back all horses.

WILKINS: Yes. We were overtaken by events. And unfortunately, that fall, also, President Kennedy was assassinated. But I must say that as an ambassador there, I was very much encouraged by his interest. In fact, anybody would be encouraged by such high-level interest in a relatively small part of the world.

MOSS: One more point perhaps we ought to cover just briefly, and that is the letter that he sent out to ambassadors making them, in effect, in charge of all U.S. activity in a given area -- over the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], over AID and over USIA and everything else. Did this materially help you? Did you have any problems with it?

[-17-]

WILKINS: Very definitely this letter helped. That was in May 1961. In August of that year I got a telegram from the State Department saying that Chester Bowles, who had been my ambassador in India, who was then Under Secretary of State, intended to have a regional conference in Cyprus and would be bringing about seventy people altogether.

MOSS: Excuse me, the date on that again?

WILKINS: '61. But the letter was in May. But I want to link the two. I telegraphed back and said, "Well, we could provide a hall, but we can't provide anything else for seventy people." The Department's answer was, "Hire the hall. We'll take care of everything else." By everything else I meant stenographers, typewriters, paper, cars, and so on -- because Cyprus is not a large island, and to have a conference for seventy people, it's incredible. This was a small embassy, relatively speaking. It was large in numbers of Americans however, but that was because of the radio relay station there. The embassy itself was only about thirty-five people. The radio station was, say, five hundred. And if you count all the dependents, we had two thousand Americans on the island out of a population of about six hundred thousand. Incredible. Anyway, in the end it turned out a hundred and forty people came including twenty-five chief of missions in the area and their wives and the principal members of their staffs. It was an inundation of ambassadors. We had to get rooms and everything for them.

But I remember very well that at that conference it became quite clear that chiefs of missions henceforth were to have real control of all activities overseas of all other agencies of the government. This was made apparent by what the CIA representative said at the conference and so on, because a lot of people came from Washington from the headquarters of agencies. But I'll add at the same time that even before the receipt of the President's letter in May we'd had somewhat similar instructions under President Eisenhower. Because of the small size of our staff in activities other than communications, we hadn't had any real difficulty, either with the army attache, the AID director or the PAO. But President Kennedy's interest

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in reinforcing the authority of the chief of mission was helpful, I've certainly seen that since. In my present job as Inspector General, I travel quite a lot myself, and as I go around this is quite clear.

MOSS: Okay, fine. Do you think you have anything else that you want to add?
Because I think that exhausts what I have.

WILKINS: Well, I'll just reinforce again that it's interesting to me that today Presidents of the United States have so great an interest in foreign affairs or can have so great an interest in foreign affairs, considering the problems internally that confront this country. If you look back, it's become more and more the case. Of course, President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] did because of the Second World War, but afterwards, President Truman [Harry S. Truman], able as he was, was not really a foreign affairs man. And neither was President Eisenhower until after Dulles' [John Foster Dulles] death. But certainly Kennedy was. They really were their own Secretaries of State. Someone said that President Nixon has more knowledge of foreign affairs than any President we've ever had. He's traveled more abroad than any president we've ever had. But I think this was also true about President Kennedy. In fact, it's very heartening to an ambassador or even a young, junior Foreign Service Officer to have the head of your country taking an interest in what you're doing.

MOSS: Fine. Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Ambassador.

[END OF INTERVIEW]