

**William E. Stevenson Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 5/4/1969**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** William E. Stevenson  
**Interviewer:** Dennis J. O'Brien  
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**Biographical Note**

William E. Stevenson (1900-1985) served as the President of Oberlin College between 1946 and 1959 and as Ambassador to the Philippines between 1961 and 1964. This interview focuses on Stevenson's role as Ambassador, the organizational structure and problems within the State Department, and tensions between the U.S. and the Philippines, among other issues.

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William E. Stevenson

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William E. Stevenson—JFK #1  
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First encounter between Stevenson and John F. Kennedy (JFK)
2	Friendship and support for Adlai Stevenson
3	1960 Democratic National Convention
4	Political strategy of the Kennedys
7	Stevenson's work for the State Department as leader specialist
12	Stevenson's selection as ambassador to the Philippines
17	Stevenson's preparation and training for ambassadorship
21	Organizational structure of the State Department
24	Shuffling of diplomatic positions within the State Department
25	Tensions regarding U.S.-Philippines relations
27	1963 Maphilindo Conference
29	Filipinos' love for JFK and Robert F. Kennedy (RFK)
33	RFK's suggestions for U.S. dealings in Southeast Asia
34	Discussion regarding renewal of Laurel-Langlely agreement
36	Significance of the Philippines sugar and tobacco industries in its relations with U.S.
40	Agency for International Development (AID) mission in Philippines
42	Difficulties of establishing labor unions in Philippines
46	Filipinos' feeling that they were being overlooked by the U.S.
46	Collaboration between US and Philippines regarding defense policy
49	CIA involvement in Southeast Asia
57	Tensions caused by U.S. military bases abroad
63	Stevenson on problems within the State Department
66	United States' failure to pay reparations to Philippines

Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM E. STEVENSON

[Also present, in part, Mrs. Eleanor Bumstead Stevenson]

May 4, 1969

Captiva Island, Florida

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: I think the logical place to begin an interview would be to ask you when was the first time you met John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

STEVENSON: The first time I met him was on the street in New York City opposite the St. Regis Hotel, several years before I went to the Philippines. I went up and introduced myself to him because the Oberlin College mock political convention had just selected him as the presidential candidate, and so I explained to him that I was president of the college that had chosen him as their idea of the best person to run for the presidency.

More important, the first time I met him in connection with the ambassadorship -- and the only time -- was at the end of my briefing shortly before leaving for the Philippines in January 1962. I went to the White House, and Mrs. Stevenson went with me, by the way, which I take it was slightly unorthodox. We met him together. He obviously had some background about the Philippines, and we talked about the simple basic questions and a certain amount of social conversation. And that was the only time I think I ever met him

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with his senatorial or campaign staff at all during those years?

STEVENSON: None.

O'BRIEN: How about academic groups that in some way or another associated themselves with the campaign?

STEVENSON: Well, I was an advocate of Adlai Stevenson and did what I could as president of a college, which raised some problems. And so I didn't have very much if anything to do in the Kennedy campaign, or any Kennedy campaign.

O'BRIEN: Did you support Stevenson right up on to the Convention?

STEVENSON: Yes.

O'BRIEN: You were at the 1960 Convention, as I understand.

STEVENSON: Yes, I was at the one in Los Angeles.

O'BRIEN: Did you go as a delegate...

STEVENSON: No, no. My son-in-law is Robert Meyner, who was Governor of New Jersey at the time, and my daughter persuaded my wife and myself to go and see the Convention. From my point of view, one's about enough.

O'BRIEN: What were your impressions of that Convention?

[-2-]

STEVENSON: Well, to me it was disillusioning and discouraging -- crowds and lack of system, the usual criticisms that are raised. It struck me as a very ineffective way of doing business. I was glad to see one, however. It was interesting, and I was very impressed, of course, with the Kennedy efficiency in organizing it and nearly winning without any ballot. My son-in-law from New Jersey has been criticized, I think, for not having folded at the very beginning so they didn't need a ballot. It was interesting to watch from the galleries the Kennedy family, the girls in particular, speaking to the various political leaders on the floor, John Kenneth Galbraith and others all working. It certainly was an impressive display of highly organized political astuteness.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with the Stevenson organization at all in that Convention? Any insights into the Stevenson people at all, what they

were...

STEVENSON: Well, I knew some of them, and I saw Adlai a couple of times while we were there. He and I were classmates at Princeton, and we had been friends ever since. In fact, he was a close friend of my wife's before I even met my wife because she visited her relatives in Bloomington, Illinois, and so she knew him in her childhood. We knew him quite well, and therefore we'd seen him and known him socially through the years. I saw him a couple of times there, but I was playing no part personally in the Convention. I was not involved as a delegate, nor did I have any responsibility.

[-3-]

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with or did you get any insight into the Kennedy organization and the way they were working?

STEVENSON: Well, I was a bystander in a conversation or two between my son-in-law, Robert Meyner, and Jack Kennedy about the balloting. This was a conciliatory type of thing. And I know Meyner felt that it was who had been the one who had resentment, because Meyner felt that his mandate from the State of New Jersey was to stay as a favorite son through at least one ballot. And he certainly felt, at least he expressed it to me -- that's Meyner -- that Jack Kennedy did not bear any ill feelings at all. And he was very calm about it and felt very relaxed.

On the night that Jack Kennedy gave his acceptance speech in the stadium, Meyner and my daughter went down, having been invited by somebody to appear on the platform, but when they got there their names were not on the list. So they had to come back again and sit with us in the crowd. That's the only thing I remember of that sort of thing.

O'BRIEN: Do you think some of the pressures that the Kennedy people put on were perhaps a little too high-pressured, or did you see any of the...

STEVENSON: I didn't see any particular pressures. I assumed that they existed, and I observed, they were using any influences that they could; they were playing the game with a great deal of know-how and background and astuteness; they were out to win, and they did win very convincingly. I can't speak from personal observation, but certainly my impression is that they were very clever about it -- and successful.

[-4-]

O'BRIEN: In the demonstrations for Stevenson in the galleries in 1960, did you get any insight into the way those might have been organized?

STEVENSON: Well, my impression was that they really were fairly spontaneous. It could

be that some student groups, let's say, or particular Stevenson groups had done some organization, but I wasn't aware of any highly organized work on Stevenson's part.

I worked for Stevenson in the '52 campaign a little more than I did in the succeeding one -- my college commitment, I found, made it necessary for me to be neutral, more neutral than I'd like to have been -- and in that campaign I certainly had the impression, and I think I feel is a permanent one, that Stevenson lacked good organization. I was unhappy about the amateurism of Adlai's supporters. I know many of them well, especially since I later spent six months in Chicago helping to organize his memorial, the Stevenson Institute. So I know them quite well, that little group, mostly from Lake Forest and Libertyville, that came from his social background and supported him for the governorship rather effectively by many of whom dropped out when it came to the presidency. And that group, in my way of thinking, and working with them more recently, two years ago, struck me as very far removed from the type of efficient, able, politically experienced people that were in the Kennedy camp, let's say. I'd make the comment that I think Stevenson always lacked really hard-boiled, experienced political know-how, even though he had some very fine, dedicated people supporting him.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with these people, any of these people, in 1960? Did they in any way seek you out prior to that election?

[-5-]

STEVENSON: I really don't remember that I did very much.

O'BRIEN: You don't remember any specific individuals?

STEVENSON: No. I don't really remember anything very specific then. I gave a little money myself, and I think I may have tried to raise a little money to support Stevenson, knowing how desperately he needed it, but I don't really think I played much of a part.

O'BRIEN: Did you prepare any position papers or anything in regard to the Stevenson position on foreign policy matters or, well, any matters?

STEVENSON: No, but Adlai visited my wife and myself in Oberlin in relation to the '52 campaign -- I'm going back to that for a minute -- and both my wife and I urged him to take a strong position on the race question. And he was afraid of it, I think we can say, because he ultimately didn't. And both of us told him that we thought that if we would only come out on that one it would make a very great difference in his chances, even though I assume, in the light of subsequent events, that defeating Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] would have been an impossibility. But he was a little afraid of it at that time; not that his feeling weren't right, but he was afraid of it politically.



Shortly after he was nominated in '42 he went up to northern Wisconsin for a few days' rest, and he asked me to go up there with him. And I went up. He had a big group of people with him and I didn't get a chance to talk to him very much. I did try to ask him what I might do to be useful. I was trying to make up my mind whether to support him or not, even though I knew him well, but I hadn't seen him for a good many years.

[-6-]

O'BRIEN: In regard to some of the things you were doing in the late 1950's, for example, as I understand it, you went to Tanganyika with a World Bank [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development] economic study mission.

STEVENSON: Yes.

O'BRIEN: What was involved with this? How did this come about?

STEVENSON: Well, Eugene Black called me at Oberlin and asked me if I would head their economic development study mission to what was then Tanganyika. And since my wife and I had been there on safari as far back as 1939 and always loved Tanganyika and I wanted to go back, I accepted with alacrity. She and I -- she went with me -- spent a whole summer there with this mission, and then I went back again the following summer briefly for a recap before we printed our final report. There were about nine of us all together, and I was the head of the mission. That, I think, was a personal thing with Eugene Black. I happened to know him.

My first experience with the State Department preceded that, though. Just after the Stevenson-Eisenhower 1952 campaign I was invited to go as a leader specialist on an educational mission to four countries: Japan; India, for the longer stay of six weeks; Lebanon; and Egypt. And we went on that one starting in November, '52, and coming back in March. And I visited something like sixty colleges and universities in India and smaller numbers in the other places.

[-7-]

O'BRIEN: Do many of these associations with people like Black come as a result of your experience as a lawyer in New York and also, in foundation work?

STEVENSON: As I was talking I was trying to recall, how it was I happened to first know Black. I think it was in New York. But I did know Jack McCloy [John J. McCloy] quite well; that's through New York legal and social contacts. Actually, my secretary in New York when I left to go to Oberlin College, who was a very efficient young lady, needed a change of assignment. I happened to mention it to Jack McCloy, so she became secretary to the president of the World Bank until she retired last year. So she was with Black; not that she had anything to do with it, but this did mean that I

was in to see him occasionally. But I can't remember the details of how he happened to ask me to go on this. I didn't know him intimately at all.

O'BRIEN: I was thinking that it seems that so many people within foreign relations and within, well, high governmental posts come out of that New York community. Do you have any observations to make about that?

STEVENSON: How much time have we got? [Laughter]

O'BRIEN: Well, as much as you like.

[ -8 - ]

STEVENSON: I think that too many people come out of it. I think the Council of Foreign Relations has an understandable but perhaps an undue background influence. I was particularly conscious of this when I became president of a college in Ohio. Although I'm an Easterner and educated in the East and knew a good many Easterners and moved in those circles, I felt that there's too much emphasis on the East Coast. There's not enough realization of what a great, vast country this is and how many able people there are with different views throughout the country. And appointments ought to be not so heavily concentrated, as they are, in that particular group -- Wall Street and the Council and other groups. Not that they're not excellent people, but the point is that it's a little solidified and a little homogeneous and that different viewpoints and different abilities ought to be brought in. I felt this for a long while, even though I'm a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. But every time I look at their literature and see the lists, I notice that it's a pretty small group of Wall Street lawyers, New York bankers, and educators and others. And it seems to me that they do have a very great influence because every prominent person that comes to the United States appears there for an off-the-record meeting, and I get these invitations -- I get two or three a week. I think from their point of view it's a very fine organization and doing an excellent job, but the point is that government assignments should be broadened a bit.

O'BRIEN: Well, how does a group like, let's say, the Council on Foreign Relations and this Eastern group you're talking about -- how do they really influence, let's say, the, well, not only the foreign relations but, let's say, in this business of recruitment of people for government posts with an administration, like the Kennedy Administration?

[ -9 - ]

STEVENSON: Well, I can't speak firsthand about it, but it seems rather obvious to me that because these names keep recurring and friends of friends keep repeating, they do take important assignments in administration after administration. I suppose it's because they're very familiar with each other. A man like Rusk

[Dean Rusk], to use him purely as an example, came out of that general background, from New York, I mean, and he knows that others who have been to all the meetings, and they knew each other, and people generally assign people who they know. This is true in any phase of life. And so I think it probably develops in this way. And then they're in Washington, and I suppose they therefore have influence on the Presidents to appoint people that they know and trust. So it's a sort of an ongoing oligarchy in a sense.

I think it's a natural thing. Generally, I notice in my experience, frequently appoint their classmates from West Point whom they knew. I admit we all do the same thing; we appoint our neighbors or our classmates or friends or relatives or somebody simply because we know them. And I think that's more or less what must happen in the New York picture, and in Boston and Washington.

O'BRIEN: Right, right. We were just getting there. Prior to 1960 how would you describe the -- could you describe the attitudes of people on the Council on Foreign Relations and in the New York community towards, let's say, the candidacy of a man like Kennedy?

[-10-]

STEVENSON: Well, I was not active in the Council. You see, I was in Ohio from '46 to '59, and I wasn't active in the Council until after I came back from the Philippines. So I can't say. I did know a great many of the people because a lot of them are Wall Street lawyers as I was. [Interruption]

Well, I think, as I've already said, the New York groups see a lot of each other and don't necessarily agree on everything, but they do have certainly a pretty general solidarity. I would assume, though I do not know, that they probably were a little bit unhappy about Kennedy or Kennedys first appearing on the scene, and perhaps even people from Boston felt that way even though a lot of them are Harvard graduates and therefore they had a double loyalty. But this is only an assumption on my part. I would assume that as time work on and at the end of the Kennedy experience in the White House they probably were reconciled to it, especially because Rusk was one of the New York group and, of course, a number of others, such as Eugene Black and McCloy were active in the various administrations. So I don't think it was anything very significant in later years.

O'BRIEN: How did your appointment as a leader specialist for the State Department in 1952-53 come about?

STEVENSON: All I know is I got a letter inviting me when I was president of Oberlin College. I don't remember who signed the letter. It didn't come from the Secretary of State; it came from some other official that was handling that sort of assignment. And incidentally, I was the first leader specialist in three of the four countries I mentioned. I believe only India had had any. I was the first one in Lebanon, Japan, and Egypt of a long line of subsequent visitors.

[-11-]

O'BRIEN: You were in on an ICA [International Cooperation Administration] survey, too, weren't you, a Committee on Education?

STEVENSON: Yes. That was later.

O'BRIEN: Later.

STEVENSON: That was to study the American University in Beirut, the American University in Cairo, and Robert College in Istanbul with regard to whether or not AID [Agency for International Development] money should be put into them, or in the words, whether they were doing an effective job with the Arab world and their other constituencies.

O'BRIEN: When did you first sense that you were under consideration as an ambassador?

STEVENSON: I got a long distance call when I was in Aspen, Colorado from Chet Bowles [Chester Bowles], whom I had known since college days. Both my wife and I knew him and Steb [Dorothy Stebbins Bowles], his second wife, quite well. He called me in Aspen and asked me if I'd like to be Ambassador to the Philippines. He had seen me in India in action in the other assignment I've mentioned as a leader specialist. And I was rather startled by the call. I think this was in August. I more or less took a dim view of it because -- as I said to him, "I don't speak Spanish." He said, "That's not a requirement at all." I frankly knew very little about the Philippines at that point, except through my brother who'd spent two and a half years there in a prison camp during the war as an internee.

[-12-]

I said I'd call him back in a day or two after thinking it over, after consulting my family and my son-in-law, Robert Meyner, who recommended it very strongly. He felt it was an important assignment and I could be useful. So I assented. Chet told me to await developments. I waited all during August and September with several other job assignments on the fire, which I deferred or lost.

O'BRIEN: What were they, if I may interrupt?

STEVENSON: As president of the Aspen Institute [for Humanistic Studies] for example, and a couple of other things. Finally, along about the end of September or October, I called Chet and said, "What's going on, because I really would like to know if anything's going to develop or not?" And he was rather uncertain about it. To make a long story short, it finally came through. In the meantime, I had a security check,

which seemed encouraging. Somebody came to Aspen and rang the doorbells as they do. Obviously in a small town you know this, even though they don't come to see you. And finally along about November sometime the appointment came through. I imagine Chet called me -- I can't remember specifically -- and told me that it was becoming definite.

Subsequently I was put in touch with Tyler Thompson, who was then Director of the Foreign Service, I think was his title. He took initial responsibility for ambassadors and their indoctrination and so on. He called me. I didn't know him before. And we had discussions, and he told us to report in Washington in December.

[-13-]

So we went to Washington on the date agreed upon, and I called him from the station, and he told me, "Oh, please don't come now, we're not ready for you. Why don't you go back to Aspen, and I'll call you when we want you." This was slightly disappointing because we had taken it seriously, come a long distance, and burned our bridges. So I naturally called Chet Bowles, who was still there. He went into action and got them to receive me and start briefing me. But it was rather perfunctory until it had solidified. That was my first experience with the personnel policies of the State Department and/or Washington.

I don't know this for a fact, but I learned over a period of time from various conversations that what held my appointment up was they were also considering other people and making other moves. I believe there was an ambassador in a certain country they were very anxious to move out, and so they wanted to hold the Philippine assignment open in case they could make a checkerboard switch. Therefore they didn't want to give it to me until it was clear what the other moves would be. But this is only gossip and hearsay. It was a rather unsatisfactory delay, but it worked out all right.

O'BRIEN: Well, in regard to that and, you know, assuming and realizing that it is gossip, what was that move? Do you recall the person?

STEVENSON: I understood it was the Ambassador in Formosa at that time, whose name I've forgotten. I didn't know him.

[-14-]

O'BRIEN: Was there any significance in this, in the timing of the appointment of you to the ambassadorship of the Philippines? The Philippine elections were going along, and Ambassador Hickerson [John D. Hickerson] left about the same time the Macapagal [Diosdado Macapagal] administration came in.

STEVENSON: Well, Hickerson was subject to criticism, I heard, because he left just before Macapagal's inauguration. I arrived after it. There was some story that he had made his plans, he and his wife, to take a boat trip home and that they wouldn't change it. No, I have to retract that. I guess this was in relation to MacArthur's [Douglas A. MacArthur] return for a visit. And there was a good deal of feeling

that Hickerson should not have left just when he did. I saw him in Washington, actually, before I departed.

I had nothing, of course, to do with the elections. And by a funny coincidence -- if it was a coincidence -- my son-in-law, Robert Meyner, was the President's representative at the inauguration of Macapagal, and the Meyners actually lived in the house we were soon to occupy. So when we got there we inherited pictures of our daughter and son-in-law in our house, they having already been there and reported back to us, of course, of their visit.

O'BRIEN: You actually didn't have anything to do with the selection of Governor Meyner...

STEVENSON: I had nothing to do with it.

O'BRIEN: ... as the special representative?

[-15-]

STEVENSON: As far as I know, it was a coincidence.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with anyone else, in the State Department before you actually got to Washington?

STEVENSON: No.

O'BRIEN: ... or the Administration over your appointment as Ambassador to the Philippines?

STEVENSON: No, not that I can remember. I attribute it entirely to Chester Bowles and his desire to bring in some new blood, including Charlie Cole [Charles W. Cole], who went to Chile; Reischauer [Edwin O. Reischauer]; and John Badeau, who, knew Egypt, and was appointed Ambassador there. And the fact that our day in the diplomatic sun was brief was possibly because Bowles was sent to India very shortly, and that was the end of my support.

O'BRIEN: In regard to that, did you run into any or sense any opposition either in Congress or in the State Department to the appointment of yourself and perhaps some of the other people like Badeau and Cole?

STEVENSON: I didn't encounter that. When I went before the Committee on Foreign Relations, to my surprise I found that I knew a good many of them one way or another. They'd either been to speak at Oberlin or a fellow like Symington [Stuart Symington], whom I'd known for a long while; Lausche [Frank J. Lausche] from Ohio, who I knew quite well; and the general group. They gave me a very easy time. I didn't sense any antagonistic questioning or negative attitude.

[-16-]

O'BRIEN: Well, backing up a little bit -- oh, well, first of all, did you suggest anyone else? At any time did you suggest anyone else for an appointment to any government post or in the Foreign Service?

STEVENSON: You mean at this time?

O'BRIEN: Right.

STEVENSON: I don't think so. No, I don't remember doing so.

O'BRIEN: Or a little later even?

STEVENSON: No, I don't think I did.

O'BRIEN: Backing up a little bit to the interim period between the inauguration and the -- well, the election and the inauguration and the -- well, the election and the inauguration, as there ever any time that you had any contact with the so-called task forces that were making the transition, you know, smoothing the transition between the administrations?

STEVENSON: No, I was not included in that at all.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember much about the briefings that you got before you went out from Washington?

STEVENSON: Well, yes. The Philippine desk officer was in charge -- McFarland, Jim, I think it was. He was a nice young man and he put me through a fairly routine experience, gave me some literature and reports and printed material to chew on for a few days. Then I went the rounds of seeing the appropriate people in Labor and in the Pentagon, where I met Bill Bundy [William P. Bundy] for the first time. He was over there then. He happened to be the one I talked to there. I went to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and several other departments. Then there was, of course, the question of getting papers cleared and all that sort of thing.

[-17-]

Before I left I saw Dean Rusk, whom I had known previously in New York as a college president trying to get money from the Rockefeller Foundation. And incidentally, I've chided him about this -- and complimented him at the same time -- because I went in to see him and had a very, very warm reception not only from him but from the other people, at the Foundation. In fact, they asked me to stay to lunch with their group much to my surprise.

This was really out of respect to Oberlin, I think. And he told me that he planned to send his children to Oberlin, but as it turned out they didn't happen to come there. I've kidded him about that one, but perhaps the children were decisive or maybe he changed his mind; I don't know. I certainly saw him before I left for Manila but it was all very brief.

When I went to the Philippines there were no great issues up as yet, and it was fairly calm. So in relation to other parts of the world and other matters, it seemed a rather quiet spot, and so I don't think the Department or President Kennedy, either, when we talked -- thought that there was anything except our general relations and a few things of that kind. It was not put in terms of any critical items such as other countries might have had.

O'BRIEN: Were any of these people or did you sense whether any of the people that you talked to, people like Bundy particularly, but others, too, in Labor, CIA, at this time were relating the Philippines with the rest of Southeast Asia, in a sense, particularly in support in regard to SEATO matters and American policy and so on?

[-18-]

STEVENSON: I don't remember that they went into the broad political or philosophic angles very much. I think in some departments they were concerned about the Philippine sugar quota, that sort of thing and American imports into the Philippines. These, naturally, were the kind of routine matters that are always on the fire, and they'd be discussed. I saw Secretary Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] personally, but it was just really a courtesy visit.

O'BRIEN: Did you get involved in any meetings or any groups that were dealing with Southeast Asia in the State Department or in the National Security Council...

STEVENSON: Well, not in Washington.

O'BRIEN: ...before you left?

STEVENSON: In retrospect, I think in briefing an ambassador it would have been very helpful, especially to one coming into the Service for the first time, if I could have been invited to Rusk's daily briefing to watch how policy is made at the Washington end. I was invited to it when I came home on a trip -- I think I had to get myself invited -- because I felt that being on the other end of cables it was important to see how this particular thing worked. But I wasn't invited, and this may have been the fault of the briefing officer, who may not have been very imaginative and obviously was quite humble in the hierarchy. I can't remember all the people that I met there. Obviously I knew several.

[-19-]



I did call on business groups in New York, and they gave me luncheons or receptions: the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce and there's another group there, the name of which I've forgotten, in which businessmen interested in the Philippines are active. And I went and met both those groups. There was some talk about the things that were disturbing them at the time, which were mostly Laurel-Langley tariffs, quotas and things of that kind.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember anything specific about that White House meeting with President Kennedy in January of '62 before you left?

STEVENSON: Well, nothing of a serious nature. It probably lasted fifteen minutes. We talked briefly about two or three topics that he brought up, but they were very calm, uncontroversial things because there wasn't anything heavily brewing at that time. Then as we were leaving he was very courteous and charming to my wife and myself. We got talking about what presents we ought to take out there to give to various officials in the customary way. My wife and I had been thinking in terms of Steuben glass, perhaps, but he obviously didn't take a good view of that since that's apparently what Eisenhower has used a lot. So he thought that wasn't such a good idea and suggested silver objects of some kind. And he signed the customary photograph wishing me Godspeed as Ambassador to have on my desk; he also inscribed a book to President Macapagal for me to take. He was very relaxed that morning, and we wandered from his main office where I'd met him first into another department, a nearby office, as we chatted. And then we left.

[-20-]

O'BRIEN: What book did he send, just out of curiosity? You don't happen to recall the title?

STEVENSON: Well, I can't remember, but I would guess it was probably his campaign speeches.

O'BRIEN: Oh, oh, sure.

STEVENSON: Probably, but I could be wrong about that.

O'BRIEN: At this point what were your impressions of the Administration, the State Department, on assuming that appointment?

STEVENSON: You mean when I started or when I finished?

O'BRIEN: When you started, right. [Laughter]

STEVENSON: Well, I assumed that I was going to the Philippines as Ambassador of the United States representing the President, of course, and that my

relationship was with Dean Rusk and others in the Department. I was surprised, in having a chance to wander around the corridors at Foggy Bottom, as they call it, how vast the place is and how departmentalized and how the hierarchy, with which I would have to deal, the President, the Secretary, and then his political affairs and economic assistants and then down through the Southeast Asian desk and then down to the Philippine desk officer, who really in the end, as I later learned, sends my cables telling me what to do and what not to do or suggesting what I should do or not to do. It certainly struck me as a very complicated setup, though I wouldn't say it wasn't necessary, but it was rather an eye opener to me how complex the organizational formation was.

[-21-]

Later on, of course, I found from experience -- I knew from experience -- that when various crises came up that the desk officer's assignment was to try to handle it if he could, unless he was afraid to make the decision, and then it would buck up to the Far East Affairs person, who was Bell [James D. Bell], when I first went there, who ultimately became Ambassador to Malaysia. And then if he couldn't handle it, then it went on up to someone else up in the Secretary's staff, and I suppose if he couldn't handle it, then it ultimately might get to the Secretary. But I quite appreciate that with a hundred and twenty-five countries or whatever it is, of which probably a half have a crisis at any given time, he has to confine his thoughts to the squeakiest wheels, and therefore unless you're very squeaky you don't get very high.

O'BRIEN: Did you feel a little intimidated by the whole sequence?

STEVENSON: I'm afraid I... I don't think I felt intimidated. I was a free agent; I was an independent person; I was only trying to carry out the assignment successfully and I hoped to do a good job. I had had a lifelong experience in law and education and other things, so I don't think I was intimidated. Most of these people were younger than I was, anyway.

I certainly was interested in learning how they worked, particularly when I got to the Philippines and I naturally tried to follow the recommendations of my staff as to what should be said and what shouldn't be said. Occasionally I said things in a cable that my minister would suggest might be ill received at home and it might be better to word it this way, and I accepted those if I felt they were legitimate.

[-22-]

I personally felt that I inherited a very wonderful staff, especially at the beginning, because my DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was Gordon Mein [John Gordon Mein], one of the finest men I've ever met in my life in any connection, and his lovely wife. They became intimate friends of ours. And he did a marvelous job of accepting a new ambassador and helping me over the rough spots. [Interruption]

Incidentally, he was the one who was murdered in Guatemala about a year ago.

O'BRIEN: Oh.

STEVENSON: A very tragic outcome because he, in my opinion, was one of the finest people that the Department had, and a marvelous person. While we're on the subject, one of the matters that I felt was quite significant was that he was taken away. I'd just about started in the Philippines and began to get used to working with him and the others and relying on him, because he was a very good man, when they took him away from me and took him to Brazil. I would have fought harder to hold him if it hadn't been for the fact that he spoke Portuguese.

O'BRIEN: Oh, I see.

STEVENSON: He was a missionary's son from Brazil, and so once in his career he wanted to serve there. He wanted to stay with me, I know, and I wanted to hold him very much, but because he spoke Portuguese and this might be his only chance to get back to his "own country".... And Lincoln Gordon, of course, was an important Harvard professor. So he was taken away from me, and in the end I didn't put up a strong protest. I'm not positive it would have been effective, but in any case .... He didn't want to be embarrassed by it either; it might affect his career. But it was quite disappointing to have him taken away so soon.

[-23-]

When I went to Washington later -- and I may be anticipating the sequence here -- in connection with finding a new DCM (that wasn't the reason I went, but when I was there I was working on this), I found that they're not easy to find. It's another checkerboard game. To get me a good one they have to steal one from somebody else or they give me the one that happened to arrive for assignment yesterday from somewhere. It's pretty much of a haphazard arrangement, but that's the way it seems to work.

At that time I took a chart with me to point out to them that in the first few months of my ambassadorship one third of my staff had already turned over. And even the personnel department there I think admitted that I'd had an unusually heavy withdrawal of key people and that this was, as everyone would agree, not an ideal way to do things. The other side of the coin is that the fellows in Washington have to fill these assignments, and I suppose opening so many new embassies around the world, it probably aggravated the situation rather a good deal. But it was a very unsatisfactory personnel arrangement to have so many of the key people leaving within such a short time, especially for a new ambassador.

O'BRIEN: But this happened in several Southeast Asian nations during the Kennedy years. Did you ever get any insights into where these people went or why? Was there something wrong with Southeast Asia?

STEVENSON: Well, I never thought of it in terms of your question. I could probably

relate it to another feeling I have, which is certainly not original with me, that the Department historically is related to Europe and Asia's been comparatively, a "Siberia" in the old days perhaps, and that therefore this still tends to be a part of the feeling or thinking and that it may well be that some of the career people feel that if they don't serve in Europe, their chances of ultimate promotion may not be good. My personal view is that this must be diminishing because Asia has become so important, but whether that entered in, I don't know. I think it was mostly just that the personnel department has a huge checkerboard game to play and that they just grab people whenever they want to.

[-24-]

And then in addition to that, this awful business of pulling them home on promotion boards, taking your best people home for three months in the middle of the winter, plus all those that they take away -- it is a very disruptive way of handling embassy business. And then if you couple with that the fact that the State Department is so low on the Congressional appropriation totem pole that they run out of money every spring or, in other words, they spend their money too soon.... I even had the situation of having two labor attachés there at the same time. The successor couldn't take office because the other fellow was there, and the latter couldn't leave because there was no money to send him to his next assignment. This sort of thing led to a good deal of friction and difficulty. But you can understand the reasons for it. It isn't a very satisfactory and efficient method of operation.

O'BRIEN: Well, someone suggested that the State Department policy of encouraging generalists, the development of generalists, and promoting generalists over the promotion of people who become specialists in a particular area or country has had some problems. Do you have any feelings about that?

STEVENSON: It certainly raises problems even though there is much to be said on both sides. We need both categories.

O'BRIEN: What were some of the major, or could you sketch some of the major problem areas of U.S.-Philippine relations when you assumed your post as Ambassador?

[-25-]

STEVENSON: Well, the thing that came up fairly soon after my arrival there late in January, I think it was, or early February of '62, was the rejection of the final payments under the war damage bill. We'd had a rather placid beginning of my Manila experience, and then all of a sudden this struck like a thunderbolt, unexpected in every way. It is true that I remember sending several cables beforehand trying to make sure that there wouldn't be any slip on this, and while I have nothing here to refer to, it's my impression that I either got letters or cables back indicating that, "Don't worry. We do our work, and you don't worry. It's not your job as Ambassador to concern yourself with this

kind of thing.” Perhaps that’s not exactly the way it read, but I certainly felt some doubt that when it did come up it would receive adequate attention because we believed it was most important. But when the vote came through as it did, it was a very startling and unhappy event and led to a good many of the subsequent problems that arose. Do you want me to go into this further, or...

O’BRIEN: Well, we can come back to it a little later.

STEVENSON: ...do it later. All right.

O’BRIEN: Let’s take up some of the...

STEVENSON: That was first.

O’BRIEN: What were some of the other things that you came up with?

[-26-]

STEVENSON: Well then, of course, an important matter was the Philippine claim to North Borneo and/or its relationship to the Maphilindo Conference, and then the formulation of Malaysia, and the Philippine relationship to Indonesia, which concerned a lot of people as to whether or not the Filipinos were being sucked in by Sukarno [Achmed Sukarno] and his group. These were all important events.

Another one was the question of American textiles being sent to the Philippines for various kinds of fabrication, notably brassieres, twelve million dozen brassieres a year ago from Broadway to the Philippines to be embroidered and back to the States. In other words, in effect, it’s sweatshop work because -- they come to the Philippines only because they do it so cheaply. They used to send them to Japan, as I understand it, and then they sent them to Hong Kong. Those wages went up, so now, at least at the time I was there, the Philippine labor cost the lowest. This was more or less cottage industry business, and it was worth sending them all the way from the States and back to procure the Philippine embroidery.

There was a big argument over quotas there with a good deal of pressure from the New York group through Washington to work on bigger quotas and the Philippines feeling unhappy about it, and a commission was finally set up to discuss it. That was another kind of a thing.

And then, of course, there always was the relationship at the bases, the military bases: the problem of jurisdiction over Americans that get involved in some kind of difficulties, whether on the base or off the base; the question of salaries to Filipinos on the bases, because they don’t get the same ones as Americans doing exactly the same job; the question of security; the question of squatters on the bases; lots of questions having to do with bases. The problems of American officers clubs in MAG [Military Assistance Group], JUSMAG [Joint United States Military Assistance Group] was the name they put on it in the Philippines. A small group, but it had big, elaborate officers clubs and Filipinos wanted to be members. They had to have Filipino members because there weren’t enough to run it the

[-27-]

way they wanted it without help. So that they had something like twelve hundred Filipino members for forty American officers, let's say, and the Filipino inducement is that they get tax-free cigarettes and tax-free American liquor and other items in the bingo games without paying import duty. This raises all sorts of problems back and forth depending on the attitudes. Raffles at the bases of American automobiles and so forth, without paying tariffs on the prizes. And this brings the bases a lot of credit, but is also quite a graft arrangement for local officials. Things of this kind.

Ultimately, some students did do some picketing of the embassy once or twice but not very seriously. At least I wasn't burned in effigy at that time -- or at any time, as far as that goes. This came up, I think, at the time of the textile dispute, and it was clear to me that the students were being manipulated by various groups to cause trouble. It wasn't too serious. In fact, I called some of them in to talk to me. I had a photographer come in to take a picture of us, and this they didn't like at all, so they high-tailed it out of there without the photograph. These were the thing that occurred to me just at this moment. Perhaps there are others that will come to mind.

O'BRIEN: Was there any that was foremost in the minds of people in Washington or people in the Philippines, in other words, the Macapagal Administration and the Kennedy Administration? Was there any particular issue that was...

[-28-]

STEVENSON: My impression was that Kennedy had a very fine audience there. The fact that he was a Romanist didn't hurt him any in a very strong Catholic country. The Kennedys certainly were very popular. And when Bobby Kennedy came with Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] on that mission later on to talk to Sukarno and others and see if he could smooth down the Malaysia dispute or, particularly, the Indonesian confrontation in the Borneo area, it was a very amazing thing to see the reception he got. He arrived at the airport late at night, and I met him and took him to the Palace where the President insisted he stay, rather than at our residence. As we got in the car there were just a perfunctory crowd there, but they all started cheering. It surprised me a little because I wouldn't have thought that he, Robert Kennedy, at that time would have had quite this reception. And throughout his stay there it was very clear that "Kennedy" was a very, very significant word in the Philippines.

O'BRIEN: This was '64?

STEVENSON: Yes, early '64. And I would say that related back to Jack Kennedy and their feeling for him, or, to pick that up, like all embassies we had a book

in the lobby where people could come and sign, and as I remember, it was a whole week of lines all day long and people crying and weeping and a great deal of emotion shown. So there's no doubt about it that both Kennedys had a very strong following in the Philippines.

[-29-]

O'BRIEN: Well, getting ahead of ourselves, but I think it's certainly well worthwhile at this point, in that visit in 1964 when Robert Kennedy comes through, did you get any insight into the meetings he had with Macapagal and -- was it Lopez [Salvador P. Lopez] who was the Foreign Minister at that time?

STEVENSON: I think Lopez had become Foreign Minister by then. Well, I was with him. He arrived that night, and I had arranged to have a breakfast with the President the following morning. The Kennedys stayed in the guest house of the Palace, and so I went down the next morning to join Mr. Kennedy and have breakfast with the President, and I was there throughout all the discussions.

I was very much impressed with Robert Kennedy. I hadn't necessarily been before. I'd read various things about him and would have expected him perhaps to be rather superficial, but I found that he was carefully briefed. He handled himself very well, I felt, and I was very pleasantly surprised by the fact that he was doing it. He had done his homework; he knew what he was talking about; he was, I thought, diplomatic with the President. I can't remember the details of the discussion at this point, but I think they got along very well and it was a fruitful discussion.

Of course, at that point Macapagal had felt -- and I talked to him about it many times -- that the way to handle Sukarno was to humor him and build him up and appeal to his vanity and not antagonize him and possibly create more trouble. This policy, of course, was not agreed upon. For instance, Malaysia and the British through this was absolutely foolish and therefore were very critical of Macapagal. I know that this was in the conversation that day.

[-30-]

Kennedy had been to see Sukarno by this time, and I think that he'd felt he had had a fairly satisfactory talk with Sukarno, though I know Macapagal was realist enough to know, and I'm sure Kennedy, that you couldn't count on Sukarno. He was shifty, and the people around him were, and he was an opportunist. He was a great public relations man, but not a very good worker in the vineyard, shall we say, and therefore you couldn't be sure what the outcome would be. He played it by ear to stay in power, and that involves shifting pretty rapidly.

But as I remember the conversation that morning with Macapagal and Kennedy, it was a very friendly one. I don't remember that there were any differences of opinion.

O'BRIEN: Could you assume that Kennedy agreed with that position on Sukarno

and...

STEVENSON: I don't remember his specifically saying so, but I'm sure Macapagal mentioned it at the breakfast because it was very much on his mind. I don't remember that Kennedy disagreed with it. I think it was just taken for granted that he accepted Macapagal's statement, at least at that meeting.

O'BRIEN: Did he say anything to you at that time about what he was going to recommend to President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] when he got back?

[-31-]

STEVENSON: No, he didn't at that time, but we had an immediate follow-up of that because probably a week or two later he ended up in Bangkok. And he asked all the involved ambassadors, that is, Baldwin [Charles F. Baldwin], Howard Jones from Indonesia, the ambassador at Bangkok, Graham Martin, and myself to confer about follow up of his, Kennedy's, visit. Mike Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal] was there, as I recall, and one or two others. The idea then was to try to carry on the work that Kennedy had started, he felt, in bringing these people into some harmony. And the emphasis was on ambassadors, we ambassadors speaking and carrying this on.

And I now have to anticipate another part of my career. I had received my notice from Rusk that I was being relieved less than two years after I was there, so I had to get across that I wasn't going to be involved any more because I was leaving for home very shortly. I don't think I spoke to Kennedy about it, but I spoke to Mike Forrestal about it. And I know he said that this was very disappointing that since I'd been involved right then and there and knew the background that I was going to be leaving. And the upshot of that was that when they went home, Kennedy or perhaps Forrestal got Rusk to send me a wire and ask me if I wouldn't be gracious enough to stay until later, which I -- contrary to the advice of some of the men in the political part of my staff -- I said surely, I was only there to serve, and if I could be useful I'd do it. But that's another story.

O'BRIEN: Did you hear of any, well, at this time Attorney General Kennedy's reactions and feelings about those meetings when he went to Southeast Asia in an attempt to put this together?

[-32-]

STEVENSON: Well, my impression would be that he felt that he had been effective and had had reasonably satisfactory talks with the parties involved, notably the Tunku [Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj] Macapagal and Sukarno, and Subrandrio, I suppose, too. And therefore I assume that he went home with the feeling that it had been a useful mission.

O'BRIEN: I guess what I'm driving at is, did you ever hear of what his response to



President Johnson's response to that trip was. In other words, it's rumored that President Johnson...

STEVENSON: Sent him for....

O'BRIEN: ... just simply ignored all his suggestions about Southeast Asia when he returned.

STEVENSON: Well, certainly nothing much came of it. It may have had some effects here or there, but certainly the feeling that I think Kennedy may have had when he went home was that he had the thing on a pretty good track which was not followed up in those terms.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever see him again after that?

STEVENSON: I've seen him, but I haven't spoken to him.

O'BRIEN: Oh. Let's get back into some of the economic...

STEVENSON: Now wait a minute. Excuse me.

O'BRIEN: Go ahead.

[-33-]

STEVENSON: I have to try to think. He came to Aspen once, and we had him over at the house for a drink with Ethel. That was after the Los Angeles Convention. But that was just a social occasion, really. I did tell him, as he was getting into his car, I remember, leaving my house there in Aspen, that in talking to the businessmen that I was working with at the Aspen Institute that I thought President Kennedy had a real opportunity to work with businessmen, that I found that they were showing a new interest in world affairs and there was a chance to get the business community sympathetic to moves the Administration was making. And he said, "Oh, really?" -- I remember -- "I wish you'd write me about it." But I don't remember that I actually got around to doing it.

O'BRIEN: Let me flip this tape.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

O'BRIEN: Let's get into some problems about economic relations. What problems were you involved in in 1962 when you first went in the way of trade relations and economic problems?

STEVENSON: Well, they were beginning to talk about the Laurel-Langley agreement and

whether or not it should be renewed in 1974, I think it is. And this was beginning to be fomented and discussed a bit. I'd have conversations with various people about it. Toward the end of my stay there this was beginning to firm up more. It was always a good political thing for Filipino politicians to talk about. This came up, therefore, in their campaigns. And American opinion was solicited, and I gave one or two speeches there, this kind of speech being more or less served up by the economic section of the embassy to get across some of our positions how much we'd put into the Philippines and try to make them feel that we weren't neglecting them and be an offset to their feeling that they needed further help and protection, try to cut down their requests for aid from us. This kind of thing would come up.

[-34-]

I mentioned the textile dispute. That ultimately ended up with a commission being sent out from Washington to work with Filipinos, but they couldn't get anywhere, and it broke up in a rather unsatisfactory manner. My own feeling was that the Americans were terribly tough and inflexible.

And I say here in a general way now that I'm very conscious, of course, of an ambassador becoming over sympathetic to the country in which he happens to be serving, especially, I suppose, if you're a one term ambassador, because you haven't learned to break your ties and start again as you go around. But I do think that I can be objective about my comments, bearing in mind that I have that difficulty in my thoughts. So my impression was that they were pretty darn tough, though obviously their job was to protect the American position. I think ultimately they worked it out, but it was after I was there, I had left.

The war damage thing and its aftermath took a great deal of our time from the spring of '62 into the following fall. And then the Philippine claim in the Malaysia matter came along and took a great deal of time with the Maphilindo Conference and so on, so that economic disputes of any magnitude didn't seem important in relation to these more political things.

O'BRIEN: Well, did Laurel-Langley establish preferred position for U.S. investment in the Philippines?

STEVENSON: That was the idea of it, that it gave Americans in effect the same position as if they had been Filipino nationals or national companies. And this was the deal we made, I take it, that in return for giving them their freedom and helping them economically and financially and otherwise, we would have this preferred position till the agreement expired or was renewed. But, of course, the Filipinos are on a spot on this one because they've got preferential sugar quotas, and if they kick too hard about renewing Laurel-Langley and giving the Americans some continuing benefits, then they run the risk of losing their preferred sugar position.

[-35-]

O'BRIEN: How does this affect the economic system of the Philippines?

STEVENSON: If they have an economic system. [Laughter] Well, of course, sugar -- it's the same story. Sugar has been in the hands of certain very, very wealthy and influential families there from Spanish times. It's a feudal condition. But it's a very important part of their economy, whether you get a fair share of it or don't, or get too much of the share or don't. But it's a large part of their economy, and, therefore, the preferred position they have with the United States is obviously economically very advantageous to them. And the subsidy, if that's what you want to call it, that we give them amounts to a good many millions of dollars a year against the world market price.

O'BRIEN: Well, are there political and social ties of the sugar industry in the Philippines with the United States or with groups in the United States?

STEVENSON: Oh, I think so. So much depends on which side of the American sugar situation you're in. But certainly the families that have led the sugar industry out there, the Spanish-Filipino families, for so many years are the senators and prominent politicians and so forth and the richest people, very, very rich, live very lavishly, and therefore are very influential and have a lot to say about policy.

O'BRIEN: Do they have any particular ties with...

[-36-]

STEVENSON: With the States?

O'BRIEN: ... with people in the States?

STEVENSON: Oh, I think so. They usually travel a great deal. They usually go to Spain and the United States very regularly. And I'm sure there're all sorts of ties; but I wasn't involved in following those down. But undoubtedly lobbyists in Washington. I assume Romulo [Carlos P. Romulo], a distinguished ambassador, had a lot to do with keeping relations with Congress and our government friendly in this matter as well as others. It's a big thing to the Filipinos to make sure that they don't lose this subsidy. I'm calling it a subsidy -- they would resent that -- this preferred price.

O'BRIEN: Well, going into, and as long as you've mentioned him here, what were your impressions of Romulo?

STEVENSON: Well, they entertained us in Washington, and my wife and I gave a little reception as we were leaving Washington for the Philippines and, of course, invited him and his wife. I started with a very -- I don't know why -- personal sense of doubt about him. But I did get to know him quite well out there, and I was very impressed with him. I think he is a very intelligent person, partly from talking to

him and partly from reading his books; I think he is a remarkable man. He, of course, was a brilliant speaker, as the large fees he got in the States must have established. But I think he was a dedicated Filipino. He came back with a local feeling that he'd become Americanized, and he had to offset this, which he's successfully done, I would say, since he's been president of the university, and he's also now Foreign Secretary, and he's been Education Secretary. So it rather proves that he established himself again. But he did this by various moves like changing the names of all the streets

[-37-]

at the University of the Philippines campus from American to Filipino names and putting the ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] in Filipino historical garb instead of American ROTC garb, little things like this, and speaking very frankly about Filipino nationalism and about the United States.

I've never been disturbed about Filipinos talking about Filipino nationalism. It seems to me it's a very healthy development. But it seems to stir up the animals here. I'm surprised how many people I run into say, "Oh, what's happened to the Philippines?" And I say, "What do you mean?" "Well, I see the other day that Romulo made a statement that the Philippines must stand on their own feet and mustn't do this or that." Well, to me it's a very natural, logical thing for them to do, and in our interests that they do it and take their own responsibility. He certainly has done that. I give him a lot of credit.

O'BRIEN: In regard to exchange, some of the exchange controls in '62, did you have any problem with those exchange controls? Was there any criticism on the part of the Philippines of the exchange controls?

STEVENSON: I don't remember that as anything serious that I was involved in.

O'BRIEN: How about the guidelines of programs that were working in the Philippines, things like the ECA [Economic Cooperation Administration] and the ICA and some of the .... Well, apparently this goes back to the Bell mission, doesn't it, and some of the suggestions they make in regard to...

[-38-]

STEVENSON: Well, we were interested in the question of tobacco. This was another big thing that did come up, now that you refresh my recollection -- the American tobacco industry wanting to force as much tobacco as they could on the Philippines. Ironically, of course, we had started it under the Bell mission, the Filipinos going into the tobacco business, as I recall it. They had an arrangement whereby any Philippine cigarettes being produced as local American brands must have in them so much of the Philippine tobacco. Filipinos, of course, preferred American tobacco. And this led to quite a difficult situation because the Philippine farmers were paid different rates for their tobacco based on its quality. And I believe there was quite a scandal in this area --

inferior weeds and things being upgraded and so on and so forth. So the Philippine government had acquired a vast amount of inferior tobacco. And this was a kind of a scandal. But this was tied right to this Harry Stonehill who had a very strong position in the Philippines when I got there. He was in tobacco up to his neck and involved in all sorts of shenanigans having to do with this, and other things, too. But the American tobacco people were having quite a dispute there about the cancellation of a contract. The preceding president to Macapagal...

O'BRIEN: Garcia [Carlos P. Garcia]?

STEVENSON: Garcia. (This is the first time I've thought about this for five years, so it's coming back slowly.) I think he had canceled.... No, he had approved a contract, and Macapagal had, as soon as he took office, canceled it on the ground that it was detrimental to Philippine interests. And this was quite a dispute. This stirred up Secretary Hodges and the North Carolina growers quite a lot, and there was very heavy political pressure brought on this one. It finally died down. We had things of this kind.

[-39-]

O'BRIEN: Yeah. Well, in some of those programs, I was thinking of the -- what was it -- Economic Cooperation, ECA. They attempted to promote some land reform and things like this, didn't they?

STEVENSON: You mean the Philippines themselves?

O'BRIEN: Well, U.S. policies in regard to....

STEVENSON: Well, our AID mission...

O'BRIEN: And our AID mission.

STEVENSON: ...obviously was doing its best to help them on these things. Mapacagal put through a land reform bill while I was there. It was pretty well watered down, I'm afraid, by the strong political influences, the land owners' influences, in, for instance, on the amount of maximum acreage you could have was upped quite a lot. There was a lot of talk about the Formosa success and following that pattern. But the Philippine bill ended up, after it got through the Congress, fairly well watered down and, as I've understood since, not really applied very satisfactorily or successfully. But Mapacagal was very proud of that. I attended the big celebration downtown where we all gathered to celebrate this great step forward, and it's certainly an important step, and there'll be very serious consequences later if it isn't implemented seriously.

O'BRIEN: Were you talking with Mapacagal at this point and encouraging any land reform measures on him before the passage of that bill or afterward?

[-40-]

STEVENSON: I don't think this was a result of American influence, particularly. He's a pretty smart fellow. And you know, he's a double Ph. D. in economics and in law, and while I don't know that he's the greatest authority in the world, he certainly is a very intelligent person, and I think he saw the handwriting on the wall in this and took this very much on his own initiative. But certainly we all would join in in encouraging him and talking about it when the subject came up. But I don't remember any directives to talk to him about it particularly or to influence him because I think the thing was *en train*, if I may revert to diplomatic language for a minute.

Our AID mission, of course, had some experts there to confer, and others came, and the Philippines had sent people out to Formosa and other parts of the world to study this. It had been going on for quite a while, I think, before I got there. And it is a basic issue, because sooner or later they've got to do something about their poor peasants and do something about land reform. And they've got to move in on these very rich people, who dominate the economy very strongly in the same pattern as they do in other countries, particularly in Latin America.

O'BRIEN: Did the AID people get involved in any way in that...

STEVENSON: In the land reform movement?

O'BRIEN: ...land reform?

[-41-]

STEVENSON: Well, it's hard for me to be sure. We had a very able head of AID, Jim Ingersoll [James H. Ingersoll], a fellow that I admired very much. I thought he was one of the finest people we could possibly have. He, incidentally, came in from the outside. I'm sure he must have, he and his group would have had talks about it, but I wasn't in on them.

O'BRIEN: Part of that AID mission, or at least the old part of AID before it became AID, had worked encouraging organization of labor unions, and it had had some rather close contact with labor unions. Did that continue while you were Ambassador?

STEVENSON: Yes. It was the subject of a good deal of discussion, why unionization was going so slowly. I'd have to have my memory refreshed, now, about, I think, a Catholic priest who was there and tried to get labor organization going. I think there were visitors from Honolulu and probably from the United States. But I came away from the Philippines with the feeling that the reason unionization doesn't work very well there is because of this *compadre* system. And in other words, that's a sort of a

vertical system, and a labor union is a horizontal system, and therefore they don't dovetail very well or work very well. And through the vertical system Filipinos are so used to going all the way up to the President if necessary that they don't welcome a new approach, a different type of a thing. Something of this kind may be one reason why unionization has moved so slowly in the Philippines.

[-42-]

O'BRIEN: What's your feeling about attempting to graft American, Western kinds of institutions like labor unions on a country like the Philippines? Do you think it's possible?

STEVENSON: Well, as I've just said, it may have difficulties. I think it's very much in the interest of the Philippine workers to have unions, the right kind of unions, because this is one way to bring about the reforms that are necessary, either land reform or wage reforms or better conditions, which they certainly need. And so I hoped, personally, and discussed it with people -- we had labor attachés working on it, and so did the AID mission -- that it's very much in their interest to do it. I think it probably will come because if the compadre system is partly the reason why, by way of background, they don't pick this up more rapidly, the compadre system is supposedly breaking up because the young people are leaving their homes and moving around more and going to the cities, and this is changing the whole ancient pattern of family life. And this will probably then pave the way for unionization. And I think it would be good.

O'BRIEN: What did you think of Mapacagal's five year...

STEVENSON: Plan?

O'BRIEN: ...integrated program, the plan for....

[-43-]

STEVENSON: Well, it read very well. It was all right as far as it went. He was very proud of it. Some people who worked on it, I think had a good deal of confidence. It was a start; it was a good beginning. I haven't checked it, lately been in a position to, but I suppose it didn't get very far, certainly some phases of it didn't.

O'BRIEN: How did the State Department respond to it? Were they particularly interested in it?

STEVENSON: I don't remember anything much coming from the State Department on it one way or the other. I don't mean to say that lots of people in Washington

probably didn't study it and talk about it, but as I sit here at this moment, I can't remember that we had much from them about it one way or the other or trying to influence or trying to comment on it.

O'BRIEN: Well, there was a joint Philippine-American development commission set up. Did you get any insight into the way that....

STEVENSON: I don't remember having much to do with that or talking to them. I wasn't personally involved in that, that I can remember.

O'BRIEN: Did you take any part in the programs that -- were started to train Filipino business people in graduate schools and American corporations?

[-44-]

STEVENSON: Well, this was handled through our AID mission, I think, and our economic officers probably were on the edge of it and meeting with them. But I personally wasn't involved in it directly, though there were a great many programs, of course, to help Filipinos, either farmers or trade unionists or young businessmen. Being a lawyer by profession, I tried several times to get Justice Warren [Earl Warren] or judges over to talk to their legal people because lawyers are so important in the Philippines. We had a lot of this going on all the time. I was involved in some of it, but I don't remember particularly the thing you mentioned.

O'BRIEN: Did the American Bar Association ever....

STEVENSON: A judge from Brooklyn, Judge Froessel [Charles W. Froessel], F-R-O-E-S-S-E-L, came out there under some semi-official auspices and visited around. I was treated very courteously when I went to pay my respects on the Chief Justice at the beginning. To my surprise he invited me right in to where all the -- I think they have eleven judges there -- were sitting working on cases and had me sit down right with them. They were in their shirt sleeves working away. We chatted for a while. This rather took me by surprise; I hadn't expected to be treated this way. But they were always very deferential to me as a former attorney, and I spoke at several bar dinners with bar groups. The Harvard Law School has an alumni association there and so does the Yale Law School. I attended functions with them. But this was of a social nature.

O'BRIEN: Did you sense any opposition or any disappointment on the part of the Philippines to the lack of or -- let's put it this way -- the relative ease in which other nations in Southeast Asia are getting aid money and money, and the seeming drying up of it going to the Philippines?

[-45-]



STEVENSON: Yes, certainly. This was a subject of a lot editorializing and columns, and some of my speeches were directed to trying to offset this by showing what we had given. But obviously they feel rather bitter of our love affair with Japan, a country which they had fought and we had fought. And as you know, the damage in the Philippines and the deaths were very heavy as a result of that. And they felt very resentful that Japan was getting so much attention from us and Formosa was getting so much, and they know very well, of course, lately Vietnam and perhaps Bangkok and other areas. They were very conscious of this and felt put upon that we seemed to be overlooking the fact that they're the one Asian nation that had fought with us and query if, in retrospect, they hadn't made a mistake.

O'BRIEN: Getting into some matters of defense policy and talking about some defense questions -- well, perhaps start in a general area -- how does the Philippines play a role in U.S.-Asian policy, or how did it during the Kennedy Administration in the years you were there?

STEVENSON: Well, you put it in terms of playing a role. They were involved, of course, because we are using the Philippines as an important part of our series of bastions, as we say, and Clark Air Field and Subic Naval Base are two very significant links in that island chain. Lots of disputes came up over it because, as I recall it, we have 174,000 acres at Clark Field, for example. It's so big that when I would go up there to see a joint Formosan-Philippine-Korean air exercise, I would fly to the main base and then I would transship into a DC-3 and fly for fifteen minutes within the base. And it certainly was my impression that we had a great deal more land than we needed and some of their best land for our bases. The same thing is true over at Subic Bay on the coast. So there was this kind of discussion.

[-46-]

But the issue would come up normally in terms of -- answering your original question here -- it would come up normally in terms of how much our military aid was going to be the Philippine forces. And of course they have a great advantage in the fact that the percentage of their budget that goes into defense is disproportionately very low because of our presence there and our forces there. But they do have, I think, a pretty good military attitude. They make good fighters, and therefore they were always hoping to get better equipment than we were giving them and feeling that we were giving them inferior equipment to what Formosa was getting, for instance, in terms of fighter planes.

Well, there was a good deal of haggling back and forth over this. And the JUSMAG [Joint United States Military Assistance Group] assignment was to try to get them to be more efficient in the use of the equipment we did give them. Apparently they left something to be desired when it came to maintenance on trucks and this kind of thing. So there was a great deal of haggling in this area back and forth, with their feeling we preferred other countries and didn't give them good equipment and our feeling that they didn't look after it if we did give it to them. So this brought up plenty of opportunities for discussion.

O'BRIEN: In regard to those MAAG [Military Assistants Advisory Group] groups and their relationships with the Philippines, did they keep you constantly on top of what they were doing in relationship to the Philippine military?

[-47-]

STEVENSON: Yes, I'd say so. We had a weekly conference of the whole staff -- that is to say, the leadership in the staff -- which I met in my office; I'd say about twenty people. This was all the various attachés, including some specialized ones, including the Peace Corps and others. And the general in charge of JUSMAG attended that. I might be wrong that he attended it every time, but he certainly did quite often.

Then we had a strictly military conference every two weeks for the commanding general from Clark, the commanding admiral from Subic, the Naval person from Sangley, a smaller base in Manila Bay, and the JUSMAG people were present and we thrashed out these things, and the JUSMAG man reported quite often. I got along well with General Tacon who came shortly after I was there -- a very charming and, I thought, a very able man. The first man when I first got there was quite colorless and not particularly effective, Tacon was really on his toes. He had a very articulate way of putting things, and I think he did a fine job for the United States with the Filipinos in keeping them happy but, on the other hand, keeping them within reasonable limits.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any problems with these people taking things directly to Washington instead of through you?

STEVENSON: You're talking about the military?

O'BRIEN: The military.

[-48-]

STEVENSON: I wasn't conscious of it. I think I saw all the communications and had a chance to comment on them. He usually presented them to our staff meetings, especially the military one. I wasn't conscious that there was any trouble there.

O'BRIEN: Right. Did you...

STEVENSON: I'm not speaking for every department now. You're talking about.... I'm not talking about the CIA.

O'BRIEN: Right. Well, we'll come back to that, and I want to pursue that specifically a little later, if we could -- well, why not now, because in a sense it relates.

In the Philippines, of course, you had the problem of Huks [Hukbalahaps] in the years past, but did you sense there was a particular interest in counterinsurgency, or developing programs of counterinsurgency in the Philippines, particularly after 1962?

STEVENSON: Well, of course, there was an ongoing pattern there, as you suggested, and the CIA felt responsible for having made Magsaysay [Ramon Magsaysay] President and having helped him through that famous colonel whose name escapes me at the moment, he ultimately went over to...

O'BRIEN: Lansdale [Edward G. Lansdale]?

STEVENSON: Lansdale.

[-49-]

O'BRIEN: Right.

STEVENSON: He, as part of the CIA, had helped Magsaysay win. And of course, they feel they were responsible. And Magsaysay, with their help no doubt, did succeed in working out that Huk problem rather satisfactorily. And I was surprised to learn when I got there how close they'd come to taking Manila and what a strong movement it was. I think that was a very great accomplishment, the combination of toughness and softness, letting those who wish be repatriated in Mindanao and giving them new land, an expeditious type of land reform, and arresting the leaders and convicting them. This was a good program, and I think the CIA, if they are the ones that get the credit, ought to have real credit for that, and so does Magsaysay.

But having done that, of course, they naturally have the feeling that this was their show and their baby, and by the time I got there this was pretty well old history. I kept asking my CIA station chief there, "How many Huks are there?" AND there was always a rather vague statement that there were probably about three hundred. This whole thing, to my mind, tends to be distorted because about twice a year reporters come, especially from *The New York Times*, and have to write two or three columns on the Phillipines and maybe a Sunday article in a Sunday magazine, and a good one is always sto write about the resurgence of the Huks. And so this goes on year after year after year. And I'm not at all positive that it isn't about the same story every year and that there is much change. However, certainly there's a nucleus of brigands or guerrillas or ex-guerrilla fighters up in that country not far north of Manila strangely enough, who potentially could be the nucleus of a very serious counter-revolution if that day ever comes. But how many they are and how strong they are is hard to say.

[-50-]

But anyway, the CIA, of course, having inherited this Magsaysay period sort of felt they had a special status there, and, of course, they knew a great many of the high

government officials because they had known them from the previous days. And so they did have a special interest in following through on this one.

In relation to my position there, they occasionally would come and ask if they could see the President alone because they had known him when he was a senator. And I, of course, was a little nervous about this one because I felt my chief responsibility was to be very close to the President, and since they had unlimited funds, or could throw money around without any accounting and I couldn't, this could create problems because the President knew this. I felt it was a slightly unfortunate element in the whole picture there.

I hasten to say that the station chief during most of my time there and I got along very well. And he purported, certainly, to carry out the directives that Eisenhower first adopted and then Kennedy reaffirmed -- I think Bowles had President Kennedy do this -- that I was the responsible person there in all departments, including intelligence, military and everything else, especially since there was an actual conflict going on. And I felt that they did a good job of living up to it.

But he would occasionally pose a problem to me because he would come and want to send a cable from one of his very secret sources reporting quite a different thing as said by the President from something the President had been telling me. And since I knew the source and didn't have a great deal of confidence in it, I resented this because I felt it wasn't worthy, especially because it comes from one man to another man to their department and then has to be translated. Being a lawyer by profession, it strikes me that fourth degree hearsay isn't as good as what the President told me. And on top of that, the source, I felt, was rather dubious, and whether he wasn't a double agent, so to speak.

[-51-]

O'BRIEN:           Who was the source, if I may ask?

STEVENSON:        I think this is one I'd better not state. In fact, I'll go so far as to say that in one case I don't even know. I know one was an American businessman there, but I don't know who it was. This is a highly secret thing, and I never pushed him on it.

But the point was that to me this was disturbing, because on one or two occasions this kind of a message from... Well, one of the sources was a well-known character around town who did know Macapagal. But even the British AMBassador told me once when I hinted to him about a certain piece of information, he said, "Oh, you're talking about so-and-so. Well, his information isn't very good." So he was a well-known source and probably selling his material all over the place. And naturally I was concerned, then, when they brought these cables indicating Macapagal had a different view than he'd expressed to me about it. And I had a couple of arguments with him about this. They always took the view, "Well, this ought to go in. At least it shows what he's telling other people. And I, of course, had the right to comment on it if I wished, but usually we worked it out to my satisfaction. I don't think in the end I ever had to send a counter-telegram, so to speak, saying that I don't agree with this and think this or that. I let our intelligence stand on its own base and reported what the President told me.

O'BRIEN: Did the CIA have any operations going in the Philippines in which they were involved in...

[-52-]

STEVENSON: Well, this was another thing that disappointed me. I didn't think they were justifying themselves very much. I would particularly ask them about the Chinese and what they were up to there., and they never had any information on that that I remember, or did I get the impression that they had any good contacts in the Chinese community -- admittedly a difficult one to work with. But it struck me that this was something to be watched. And then the Indonesian situation they were watching in a very casual way. To make a long story short, I didn't really think that they were proving an awful lot. They were doing certain things for students, and I think they were interested in this labor situation. And of course, how they spend their money I never knew. I once had the impression they were having trouble finding ways to spend their allotment there at this particular time. And they were very nice, clean-cut people, but I didn't think they were down to the dirty work that, in my view, having been a district attorney once in New York years ago, was the kind of thing that I would view a tough intelligence agency might be doing to find out about the Chinese or maybe to do some rougher stuff with the Indonesians. But if they did, I never knew it.

O'BRIEN: Did you know of any financing of political or youth groups?

[-53-]

STEVENSON: Oh, yes, I knew they were doing that. I knew they sent various senators on trips around the world or wrote speeches for them, that kind of business. I don't know that they told me every time, but I knew they were doing it. They certainly were -- I want to give them credit -- they tried to cooperate very fully with me. They had a job to do -- whether it was a good job or a bad job is another argument -- but they had a job, and they were trying their best to do it. I didn't have the trouble that I gather some ambassadors had of feeling that they were double-crossing them. But of course, I'll never know what they said about me that went home and might have reached the President or Rusk or someone. On the fact of it they said they showed me everything, but I can't believe that staff wasn't reporting daily. It makes you a little uncomfortable not to know how they're reacting.

O'BRIEN: Did they ever finance any youth groups there or any particular ones that you know or labor unions or political parties?

STEVENSON: I think they did. I think they financed some. There was a radical element, of course, at the University of the Philippines, an anti-American group,

and my impression would be they probably were taking steps to encourage counter-groups, but I can't speak from first-hand knowledge because this was their operation. It wasn't anything very significant, or I would have wanted to know more about it.

O'BRIEN: Did they keep track of or promote any counterinsurgency programs, training of police and things like this?

[-54-]

STEVENSON: Yes. Yes, they did. They did. They were doing that kind of thing. I'm sure they were working with the Philippine Intelligence Agency, their counterparts. In fact, I often felt they got a lot of their information directly from Philippine sources. All they did was to show me the report that the Philippine people had collected. And of course, the Philippine people could do it easier than our people could do it.

And they also, toward the end, were organizing groups to go over and work in the Vietnam situation. They were beginning to work on that. They got a Filipino cadre of specialists prepared. After I left this became a political football in the Philippines, whether to support the war or not to support it. But they did have a specially trained cadre, and I think they worked with the Philippine Constabulary, which is the state police, in effect, there. They kept busy, I guess, but just what they did all the time I didn't know. I repeat that they certainly made every effort to be friendly.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember who the director was while you were there?

STEVENSON: Fenimore [Edward C. Fenimore].

O'BRIEN: Fenimore.

STEVENSON: Yes. He was a nice fellow. He's a former teacher, and I think he's gone back into teaching again.

[-55-]

The preceding fellow's name was John Richardson, and he came over toward the end of my stay and asked to see Mapacagal on the ground he was one of the guys that knew Magsaysay. This I was a little unhappy about, but I didn't see how I could block it because if I did I would be in a very vulnerable spot. He did agree to show me his report, and certainly he didn't state a single thing that we hadn't been reporting. I didn't see really what this accomplished, and it seemed to me it sort of undermined the ambassador. But, I'll repeat, the Philippines was a special case. They had had a special relationship there, and I can see their point of view.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever get any insight or did you ever sense that they were

sponsoring perhaps people studying on scholarly grants to come in and study counterinsurgency on the Huk thing for perhaps application elsewhere?

STEVENSON: Well, particularly for Vietnam, is the only thing that I recall.

O'BRIEN: How were they preparing them?

STEVENSON: Well, they had a cadre that was being trained in all sorts of specialized guerilla training and so forth, a specially selected group.

O'BRIEN: These were not Filipinos?

STEVENSON: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Oh, they were Filipinos.

[-56-]

STEVENSON: These were Filipinos. This was in conjunction with the Filipino intelligence group, I think.

O'BRIEN: Ahhh. And then these people subsequently did go to Vietnam?

STEVENSON: I can't remember if they actually went. They were ready to go but there was some kind of an argument about it. Whether they went or not I'm not sure. My impression is that the Philippines have only had their "Operation Brotherhood" deal of sending doctors over, which went back quite a ways before.

O'BRIEN: Yeah, and non-combative.

STEVENSON: ... who also sent over, ostensibly, combat engineers. And I think the Philippines have tried not to actually have combat operations there, in which case perhaps this special *cadre* that we were talking about didn't get there because they wanted it not to be actually involved in combat. But a lot of this has gone on since I left and I don't know.

O'BRIEN: Well, in regard to the bases there, apparently you had a lot of problems with incidents and with, generally, the bases. Do you remember any particular things there that you feel that...

STEVENSON: Well, the kind of thing that's bound to come up anywhere there are American bases is the contrast between our affluence and almost *deluxe*

way of running a war or running a base and their poverty. I think there had been as many -- certainly there were twenty thousand when I was there, Filipinos working on Clark Air Force Base. On the one hand, the Americans even had a fishing pool there where they flew fish from Minnesota because certain boys liked to catch Minnesota bass. And of course we had terrifically elaborate officers clubs, and everything was pretty posh. The PX kept

[-57-]

contrasting themselves to Macy's, a million dollars a month sales, and it's a most splendid display of stuff from all over the world: Swedish products, Danish products, Japanese pearls. You name it, they've got them. This, of course, to the poor Filipinos is a terrific contrast and encourages a great deal of resentment and envy and leads to all sorts of black market operations which are unfortunate.

I know in one case, for instance, my wife wanted to get something there, and we found out it was coming in on a certain morning. And within five minutes it completely disappeared off the shelves but was available outside the gates in the black market stores with a jazzed up price. This kind of thing is just routine.

And I think it isn't true only in the Philippines; I've seen it in the bases in Germany and in Istanbul and all over the world. This is the problem we have of the way we run a war, or run a military operations. That's on the lighter side.

The serious side comes down to where a guard shoots a Filipino or there's some kind of an incident. And certainly it is true that at such a big base as I've described -- they have a fence around the main part of it, I suppose maybe a ten-mile fence -- and obviously, it's easy enough for Filipinos to cut through that at night and go in and help themselves to various things from houses or whatever else is around. They had police dogs and so forth, and they used the local, very primitive Filipino Igorot tribesmen as stealthy night watchmen and so forth. Nevertheless, they keep breaking in, and sooner or later a guard takes a shot and hits one, and then there's a great row.

[-58-]

And I mentioned earlier the economic contrasts, which -- I think they've moved now to remedy by giving Filipinos the same rates for doing the same work that Americans get paid. Thus, you can see the argument *pro* and *con*. It disturbs their whole economy to suddenly take a Filipino that's used to working for three pesos a day and pay him five dollars a day, let's say, or whatever it would be. But this has been a pressure point, and I suppose under the duress of the Vietnam situation they've probably moved faster on this than they would have otherwise.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any particularly disturbing base situations that took a great deal of your time?

STEVENSON: No. I didn't happen to. My successor had one immediately and got in quite



a lot of hot water over it, according to what I read, but I don't remember one that was particularly disturbing. There was the question about what representation they could have on the base of an official nature. At the time they had one officer representative, a liaison man who was allowed there, but certainly we didn't give him freedom of the place at all. And he was supposed to satisfy their feeling that they should be in touch. This was apart from combat people that might be going back and forth and having joint exercises. He was supposed to be sort of a trouble-shooter in these frictions with the populace, but it didn't amount to an awful lot. I have read since that Romulo is pushing this much further, that they have a right to have free access to all aspects of the base. This is what the present mood is.

[-59-]

There was a lot of difficulty about American cars. This was a subject of a great deal of discussion because military people bring them in tax-free, and then when they leave they sell them to Filipinos, and this is a way of avoiding the tax -- it's not done deliberately, but it leads to an avoidance of the Filipino import duty. And there was a good deal of dispute over it. We had a long series of discussions as to how to work this out in some way. The trouble is that these cars get shunted around very fast and papers get lost, and the net result is that they try to move on it but they can never catch up with it. And there are all sorts of schemes to have a big depot up there and joint operation to try to make the car sit a while so that it didn't get wafted off into the countryside or another island, but it was a very hard one to handle because undoubtedly there was a good deal of corruption along the way and there's a lot of money involved. An American car sells for a great deal, especially if you don't pay the duty, and the GIs leaving don't want to take them with them. This was a problem of a great deal of discussion, and so was the question of the black market. So was the problem at the officers club at JUSMAG where these Filipino people could get all sorts of benefits from being members, and this was a violation, in effect, of the Philippine tariff laws.

O'BRIEN: Did you have many discussions with Mapacagal or the Foreign Secretary or people in regard to these base problems?

STEVENSON: Oh, yes. I did.

O'BRIEN: What were they suggesting to you?

[-60-]

STEVENSON: Well, of course, it was different situations at different times, I always had the friendliest relationships with Mapacagal. I never had one unpleasant argument with him, even though my duty was to take up something of a prickly nature. But I always found him friendly and easy to talk to and responsive.

I think, with regard to Pelaez [Emmanuel Pelaez] or Lopez or another Foreign Secretary that served for a while whose name I've forgotten, we had the same basic

relationship, but I didn't feel as close to them as Mapacagal because there were changes there. Pelaez and I did have some unpleasant situations. I remember it came up first on the war damage bill. He was terribly upset about that, but that was understandable.

We then had the question of the town of Olongapo outside Subic, which used to be under American auspices. It's the place where all the Navy go ashore, and it's just full of dives and bars and all sorts of things. And it's a mess. It grew up like Topsy out of the swamps, and sanitation and cleanliness and disease are all involved in it. But before I got there they had forced it to be turned over to Filipino hands, and the Filipinos weren't doing much on it. Well, there was a good deal of discussion of this kind of a problem and what to do. One of the assistants to Pelaez very much misrepresented a certain situation, and we had quite a hot session one time over that one, but it ultimately, smoothed down. Our military wanted to take it back because they felt the Filipinos were not making it a decent place for young sailors to go, and the Filipinos, of course, didn't want that.

O'BRIEN: Were you making any suggestions to Washington in regard to putting additional restrictions on military personnel or the reduction of the size of the bases in the time that you were there as Ambassador?

[-61-]

STEVENSON: It's very hard to remember just what communications went out on this. I don't think that I was asked, nor did I take the initiative in saying that in my opinion the bases were unnecessarily large. Perhaps I should have, but I don't remember working on that one except to express it verbally to the top military people. But I don't remember working on that one except to express it verbally to the top military people. But I don't remember sending a formal request in this area.

O'BRIEN: Well, you know, reflecting back over the presence of the military as well as this large group of Americans in the Philippines and also carrying it over to some of your comments about other areas of the world as well, is this kind of a new colon class for America that is growing up in the post-World War II period?

STEVENSON: I'm afraid I didn't quite get the...

O'BRIEN: Colon class. You know, a kind of overseas Americans that are becoming...

STEVENSON: You mean expatriates?

O'BRIEN: ... less attached to America? Right. And more attached to...

STEVENSON: You mean the military people...

O'BRIEN: Right.

STEVENSON: ... or in general? No, I wouldn't put it in those terms. For one thing, they change them so fast. I'd take the other side of that and say that I think they change everyone so darn fast that they don't become colons, and on top of that they don't stay long enough to do an adequate job. This is a subject I could say quite a little about it if you want me to.

[-62-]

O'BRIEN: Oh, go ahead.

STEVENSON: Well, I was thanked for what I had done and before I had been there two years Rusk wrote me that my assignment was terminated. I felt that I was just onto the job, and this, of course, was very disturbing to me and disappointing. In the end, after the Bangkok conference I mentioned, I stayed, as I've already said, a few months more because Rusk asked me. But this is just typical of so many situations where two years is the turnover. I feel very strongly that they either ought to have two two-year terms with a home leave or a three-to-five year stint. I quite agree it shouldn't be too long because then you get dug in. I remember the statistics at one time that in the Philippines the average tenure of ambassadors since World War I was twenty-one months. That's about typical of my experience, and I think it's very wrong. You just about get to know what you're doing and get to know the people and get so you can work with them closely when out you go.

And then there's a long hiatus always on a Philippine appointment. It's not the top one in the Department. Right now they're going through it again. And the same thing with the Filipinos in Washington, I note, too. I think the problem there is that it's so expensive for a Philippine ambassador to operate in Washington, especially the way Romulo did, that they can't get anyone except a very rich man to take it, and they don't want to take that particular assignment. But in our case I don't know why it is, but it's always a long delay. It's the same thing with most of the government agencies. The military and the Peace Corps, certainly. It tends to mean that nobody really can become too dug in. There may be a few exceptions occasionally, but on the whole I'd say it works the other way.

[-63-]

O'BRIEN: Was there a mutual defense board that was set up between the Philippines and the United States in regard to defense policies?

STEVENSON: You mean on a political level?

O'BRIEN: I think it would have been on a military level. I don't know.

STEVENSON: Well, just the JUSMAG working with their counterparts would be all I can recall.

O'BRIEN: Well, in regard to...

STEVENSON: You mean to overall defense policy, whether Clark is too big, or whether...

O'BRIEN: Right. Or to coordinate U.S. military policy for the Philippines, Southeast Asia...

STEVENSON: No, I don't remember anything like that. That would be just simply out of our embassy with various departments and officials.

O'BRIEN: Well, how did PHilippine political leadership, people like Lopez and Macapagal, look at SEATO, for example, and the Philippines and their role in SEATO?

STEVENSON: Well, when I was first there they were rather proud of it and their membership in it and took it quite seriously, just as we did. And Rusk came out to a SEATO conference and all. It's deteriorated so much since. But when I was there I think they felt that it was the thing they were proud of and happy to be a member of. I don't remember any other feeling.

[-64-]

O'BRIEN: How did they respond, for example, when the U.S. sent the Marines into northern Thailand during the Laotian crisis there in 1962? Did they give you any reflection of what they were thinking?

STEVENSON: I don't remember any particular reaction to that one.

O'BRIEN: And well, of course, Vietnam. How did they feel towards Vietnam an American presence in Vietnam?

STEVENSON: Well, I think they certainly feel that the American presence out there for a long time to come is important because, as I've said, number one, it cuts their budget way down. They rely on our forces and our Navy in particular. I think that they were very happy to have us there, and so I don't remember that there was any unhappiness about this. Now I'm not saying there aren't groups in the Philippines who take a different view, but I'm talking now about basically their political leadership. And I'm only talking about the time I was there; it may have changed since, but I doubt it. I think Romulo would be in favor of our presence and thinks it's pretty important.

There's unhappiness in the Philippines about the size of our bases, and I personally think they're much larger than they need to be, bearing in mind that some of it's on pretty fertile land that could be used. We had one funny incident when I was there. At one of the

military meetings, biweekly meetings, they raised the question about squatters on Clark Air Force Base. An officer made the suggestion that there were quite a few. And so I said, "Well, let's have a report at the next meeting." At the next meeting they reported, and there were fifty thousand, that's all! [Laughter] The base was so big that these people had just moved up into some valley that was so far away from the base nobody even notice, and they set up a new community there. It was all set up there before the Air Force even knew that this was happening on the territory that they insist is so important.

[-65-]

O'BRIEN: You know, I can't remember whether we discussed it on the tape or whether we discussed last night, some of the things revolving around the claims.

STEVENSON: We haven't put it on the tape yet.

O'BRIEN: We haven't put it on the tape. Well, let's get into that whole problem of the claims. What was your feeling about the claims? Were you pretty well briefed before you went out there on the matter of claims?

STEVENSON: Oh, yes, certainly on that -- I've just thought of another thing that might have been left out. Yes, oh surely, this was a matter of briefing, I think I did say on the tape earlier that we were conscious of the importance of this being concluded. This was to be the final payment. There was unhappiness about the long delay due, as I understand it, to the Eisenhower Administration feeling they couldn't afford to pay the final seventy-five million while the Korean War was going on. And here were these people that had filed their claims years ago, they'd been paid on account, and now came the final payment. Admittedly, it was a moral commitment we undertook; it was not technically an obligation. But it was an obligation that we very strongly wanted to live up to, and Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] said so and so forth.

[-66-]

So everyone thought this was going along very nicely, and then all of a sudden we got the word that it had been defeated. This struck like a bombshell, it really did; it broke their whole feeling about us. The President reacted strongly; he ultimately changed the name of Dewey Boulevard to Rojas Boulevard. They changed their holiday from July fourth to June 12th, which is Aguinaldo's [Emilio Aguinaldo] republic's foundation date. The President was on his way to a trip to the States and also other countries, and he canceled his visit to the States. Tension developed immediately. This was after I'd been there about three months. It completely changed the whole atmosphere around. I couldn't help but be sympathetic to it from the Philippine point of view, because I knew the history of it. It was a very unfortunate event.

And over a period of time, of course, we began to find out what went on in Washington, an entirely different approach, trying to get after a lobbyist that they thought was making unconscionable money and this sort of thing. But certainly my own opinion is that we had gone so far on this that it was our obligation, or at least wise policy, to make that final payment, and it should have been done. And speaking as an individual, I'm very disappointed at the way it worked out. I think it's died down, but in the end our Congress took the money away from people who had a legitimate right to it, and they put it into an educational foundation. In other words, they took individual's and organization's money away from them and used it to set up an educational program is what happened.

O'BRIEN: Well, do you feel this is a failure of the Administration to adequately educate the American people on the validity of these claims?

[-67-]

STEVENSON: Yes; I think it was.

O'BRIEN: In other words, is this a failure of President Kennedy and the Kennedy Administration?

STEVENSON: Well, I can't say that he personally was to blame, but I would certainly say that there should have been leadership in Washington to make sure that the bill went through. It was badly handled; it was brought up after a holiday; there was only a small quorum present. I believe some of the leaders that knew something about this didn't do their part in it. And I suppose part of the trouble was that this seventy-five million is chicken-feed in relation to other things that the Congress has to cope with and therefore it just got lost in the shuffle, plus the fact that it gave people like Gross [H.R. Gross] of Iowa and perhaps others a chance to talk strongly against it, whereas the proponents of it weren't ready. And the thing just happened to be a fiasco, an unfortunate one.

O'BRIEN: This must have been about the time, in fact, it was right about the time that President Kennedy went to Mexico, as I recall, or very close to that time.

STEVENSON: I'm afraid I don't really remember much about his trip to Mexico.

O'BRIEN: It was right around Memorial Day of 1962, as I recall.

STEVENSON: It was?

[-68-]

O'BRIEN: Do you think the Administration had perhaps lost some of its idealism by this time in changing directions in American foreign policy?

STEVENSON: You mean in relations to the war damage thing?

O'BRIEN: Well, overall, in a broad perspective of their view towards not only Southeast Asia but the rest of the world.

STEVENSON: I don't think I could comment on that in those terms. I don't know that they had or hadn't. I think they certainly were heavily preoccupied in Southeast Asia, and if you mean by that that the war in Vietnam, upcoming war, and the fuss Sukarno was creating and things of this kind were disillusioning him about Southeast Asia, if this is what you were implying...

O'BRIEN: Right.

STEVENSON: ... I suppose it could be true. But I doubt if it had anything to do with the defeat of the war damage bill. It seems to me it was just a set of unfortunate circumstances and lack of concentration and leadership where it would have gone sailing through and that would have been that. That would be my impression.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever get any feedback on some of General Romulo's comments in the United States in regard to this. I understand that he said a good many things that would have gotten other ambassadors...

[-69-]

STEVENSON: No, I don't remember that he did, if you're suggesting did he embarrass me in anything he said...

O'BRIEN: Or did you just get any feedback from -- apparently he was writing directly to congressmen and attempting to influence...

STEVENSON: I didn't get any feedback on it. I wrote a few congressmen myself. I don't know whether I should have, as an ambassador. I only knew a couple, but I wrote them. I also wrote to Stu Symington [Stuart Symington], I remember. But the answers indicated that they just didn't have any familiarity at all with what it was all about, the ones I happened to know. But I was quite perturbed about it. This would be after the bill had been turned down and we were still hoping to see if it couldn't be reconstituted before it dwindled down into the ultimate unhappy compromise that came.

O'BRIEN: Did you sense the State Department put it on a high priority basis?

STEVENSON: No, I sensed that the State Department felt that they did their thing and

that was that and I shouldn't worry about it anymore, plus the fact that it then got off on this strange tack that the Filipinos really didn't deserve it, that the lobbyist was making so much money and all this business. It got off on that tack, and the original purpose of the bill and the rights of the recipients got pretty well lost in the shuffle was my impression.

[-70-]

O'BRIEN: What was your reaction and some of your responses to this cancellation on the part of Macapagal of his planned visit to the United States?

STEVENSON: Well, I tried to talk him out of it. I remember having several conversations with him about it and urging him to go on and make the visit. And I tried to suggest to him that he would show he was a bigger man by going despite this and, if he handled himself in an android way, might easily rub it in very heavily on the Congress and others and show that he could rise above it. But he felt that for local political reasons it would be suicide for him to go because the resentment was so great and so in the end he didn't agree on that point.

O'BRIEN: What were you saying to Washington at this time about his cancellation?

STEVENSON: I was sending cables -- and probably letters, I don't remember -- urging that the invitation be renewed. Well, anyway, I got there ultimately sometime that summer, I think it was, and had a conversation with Averell Harriman. He invited Mike Forrestal to join us. AND in that conversation I was urging that Macapagal be invited to come. I stress the point that he was going to the only countries he'd visited as a new President of a democracy fashioned after ours were all dictatorships, Spain, Pakistan, and Italy, and that I thought that he ought to see a democracy, especially the United States, because of our close relations.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-71-]