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Biographical Note
Francis H. Russell (1904-1989) was the Ambassador to Ghana from 1960 to 1962 and the Ambassador to Tunisia from 1962 to 1969. This interview focuses on relations between the United States and Ghana, the political and economic situations in Ghana, and the Kennedy administration's involvement in Africa, among other topics.

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of Francis H. Russell

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Francis H. Russell
Francis H. Russell

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Nov. 16, 1976
Month, Day, Year

Dec. 7, 1976
Month, Day, Year

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Second Oral History Interview

with

FRANCIS H. RUSSELL

January 24, 1973
Medford, Massachusetts

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: You wanted to go into one or two things before you left Washington.

RUSSELL: One was that Secretary Herter [Christian A. Herter] had answered a press question about the U.S. government's attitude toward and feeling about Nkrumah [Kwame Nkrumah], as to whether he was drawing closer to the Communist countries or not, by saying that unfortunately it did appear that his neutralism was slipping a bit and that he was working more closely with the Communists than we had thought. That was poorly received by Nkrumah although, of course, the statement had perfectly adequate foundation. That meant that I was arriving in Ghana against the immediate background of that expression of concern on the part of the State Department about Nkrumah and his policies. The other thing was -- I don't know how this happened but -- there was a piece about three inches long in the *New York Times* to the effect that Wilson Flake had been called back because the department felt he had not been sufficiently firm with Nkrumah, and that now it was sending out Francis Russell who was expected to take a tough line. Those two things were slightly unfortunate backdrops to establishing a warm and close relationship with President Nkrumah.

MOSS: You said a moment ago that you were appointed by Eisenhower [Dwight D.

Eisenhower] and that Rusk [Dean Rusk] indicated to you that….

RUSSELL: Yes. I had been in New Zealand, and had been asked by Loy Henderson whether I had any preferences about my next post. I told him that New Zealand had been so extremely pleasant as a first post for an ambassador that….

MOSS: Yes. I've talked to Tony Akers [Anthony B. Akers]...

RUSSELL: Oh, really?

MOSS: …who followed you there. He loved it.

RUSSELL: But I told him that my conscience would be more comfortable if the next post were a more difficult one. So when I received a telegram saying that Secretary Herter was planning to put up my name as ambassador to Ghana, I said I would be delighted to go.

I went back to Washington, I think in October, for the usual briefings and prepared to go to Ghana. During that time Nkrumah was in New York attending the meeting of the General Assembly [United Nations], and these developments about his meetings with Khrushchev [Nikita S. Khrushchev] and other indications that he was pulling closer toward Khrushchev took place. And there was no point in my going to Ghana while he was in New York. During that period, after the election, I met Dean Rusk, whom I had known for a long time, in the secretary's dining room in the State Department, and he told me I should consider that I had, in effect, been nominated by the Kennedy administration and that there should not be any question in anybody's mind but what I was going as a representative of the Kennedy administration although nominated by the Eisenhower. But after Nkrumah got back, there was another period of two weeks or so in which he was taken up with other matters and I wasn't going to present my credentials, as it turned out, until the day after President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] would be assuming his office. So I telegraphed to the department pointing this out and saying that I thought it might be useful if I were able to present a letter from President Kennedy when I presented my credentials. My appointment was signed by President Eisenhower. So the department did suggest such a message to Kennedy which was sent to me.

MOSS: Confirming the Kennedy administration's reaffirmation of you as ambassador.

RUSSELL: Exactly.

MOSS: What time did you leave the United States?

RUSSELL: My guess is that it was between Christmas and New Year's.

MOSS: I was wondering whether or not you had been present when Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] met with the Kaiser [Kaiser Industries Corporation] people on January 5.

RUSSELL: No.

MOSS: Because he had a full briefing from the industry people.

RUSSELL: No, I was in Ghana by that time.

MOSS: Okay. Would you describe briefly for us the setting, the attitudes, and so on, at the time of the presentation of your credentials? I note from your cable that afterwards you had about a forty minute private chat with him in his study, talking about the Congo. Would you talk about this a little bit, sort of describe the atmosphere and so on?

RUSSELL: Nkrumah was extremely disenchanted with American policy toward the Congo. Nkrumah's dream, the goal that dominated his life after he went into politics, was that of a United States of Africa. As he voiced it, it included all the states of Africa, even including North Africa. Probably what he actually had in mind was sub-Saharan Africa. But there should be no doubt that it was a very real objective to him, not just oratory. He said over and over again that independence for Africa, and that Ghana would take the leadership in pressing for the independence of any parts of Africa that were not already independent, by which he had in mind particularly the Portuguese colonies and Rhodesia, and probably South Africa too.

MOSS: As a parenthetical comment, how did he react to the U.S. reversal in the UN on the Angola question which followed almost immediately on your….. It was in late January.

RUSSELL: I don't recall that specifically. But in answer to your question just before that, about my first meeting with him, it was made very clear that he was upset by the role that the United States was playing in the

Congo. He felt that the United Nations was acting there largely at the instigation of the United States and that in any event, it couldn't do what it was doing without the backing of the United States, its funding, and particularly the supplying of material and, from time to time, planes.

There was never any doubt in anyone's mind but what he intended to be the George Washington of the United States of Africa and to make Accra the capital. In fact he spent many millions of dollars to make Accra a suitable capital for a united Africa, the great Black

Star Square and a thirteen story hotel that was to be used exclusively for visits of heads of African states. Each one had a complete apartment with a kitchen, and so on.

The British left Ghana perhaps the wealthiest of all the sub-Saharan African states. They had tried hard to make Ghana a kind of show piece of what a former British colony in Africa could be. They were the largest producer of cocoa, and there were diamonds, gold, manganese and other resources. The British left the Ghanaian treasury with three-quarters of a billion dollars in cash reserves. All of this was spent by Nkrumah in pursuit of his goal, and when he was ousted he left a country that was deeply in debt and its economy in ruins. The initial instrument he used was the Ghana-Guinea-Mali union. That was an arrangement whereby those three countries did not send ambassadors to each other they sent resident ministers. The ministers, in theory at least, sat in at cabinet meetings. Nkrumah hoped to expand that into the United States of Africa. I think it's clear he had a commitment from Lumumba [Patrice Lumumba] that when the Congo became separate and independent with Lumumba as its president, he would bring the Congo into the Ghana-Guineau-Mali union. And if the Cono joined the union the seven or eight countries on its periphery would almost inevitably follow.

MOSS: Certainly the intervening ones.

RUSSELL: Given the wealth and the political power on the international scene and the strategic position that would accrue from that accession to the union it would obviously be a quantum leap toward his goal. Now, when Lumumba was humiliated and arrested and then slain, that dealt a shattering blow to this great dream of Nkrumah's. He attributed it, in large measure, to the United States. That's what consumed him, and the press, which was either owned by the party or subject to government review, reflected it in almost daily attacks against the United States that had to be read to be believed. Did you try to talk with him about this?

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: What sort of thing were you trying to tell him?

RUSSELL: That it was a genuine United Nations effort to bring peace to a country that was badly split, that was in danger of falling apart and wrecking the richest country in Africa, that it required some outside intervention to bring that about, and that the only role of the United States was providing logistics for that. It made no impression on him at all.

MOSS: Did you take up the subject at that time about the Ghana press?

RUSSELL: No. I'd only been there for two or three weeks and it hadn't become as apparent as it did later. In any event, I felt it was better to leave that for a

separate discussion rather than to bring it into the presentation of my credentials.

MOSS: He gave you a letter at that time to send to President Kennedy, and I understand he also sent one to Ambassador Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] on the subject of the Congo.

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: Suppose we move down the chronology. I note here on the thirtieth, in a cable in which you indicated you had delivered Kennedy's interim reply to Nkrumah's letter on the thirtieth, Nkrumah indicated he'd spoken to the press, following which there was some moderation of the generally anti-American tone. Do you recall that at all?

RUSSELL: Yes. The subject of the press was a fairly frequent subject because it did continue, and whenever you mentioned the press to him, his invariable reaction was one of surprise. He really hadn't noticed it; it hadn't occurred to him that it was really as bad as all that; he'd look into it. If he was in a reasonably amiable mood, he'd say that he'd see that something was done, brush it off.

MOSS: One of the early topics you took up was the question whether or not a South Atlantic command U.S. naval vessel should visit Ghana. There was some question whether or not it was to be one ship or

several. The United States, at least the State Department, wanted to see if you could get several ships in. This seemed to coincide with the Brezhnev [Leonid I. Brezhnev] visit, or came close to it. Was there any problem with this? I think you finally decided on the *Hermitage* [*U.S.S. Hermitage*].

RUSSELL: Yes. One ship. That was a mother, repair ship. That seemed the best thing to do in view of the fact that Nkrumah would not want too much of a display at that time.

MOSS: In your experience how useful are these visits by naval forces? What was the purpose of this one?

RUSSELL: The answer to your question is that it depends almost entirely upon the country. In New Zealand it was a marvelous thing because the New Zealanders will never forget the time in World War II when they were informed by Churchill [Winston Churchill] that the British could no longer be responsible for the defense of Australia and New Zealand. They expected a Japanese invasion, and the first

they knew they were not going to be invaded was when an American cruiser sailed into Wellington harbor. They regarded every visit of a ship as an opportunity to show their gratitude. In Tunisia, it was much the same way because of Bourguiba's [Habib Bourguiba] friendly attitude toward the United States.

In Ghana, there was no desire on the part of Nkrumah to have American ships come. On the other hand he didn't want to say they couldn't come.

MOSS: Let me ask you one more question on the naval visit. Do you have any indication that this might have been part of a general, "Show the flag. The United States is interested in Africa. Things are going on in the Congo. We do have a military presence in the Atlantic," kind of thing?

RUSSELL: I have no recollection of the theory that went into the visit. I merely received a telegram saying the fleet would like to have one or two or three of its ships visit Accra, and could I sound out the Ghanaian government on it. Undoubtedly there was some discussion back in Washington as to whether and why, but that didn't get into the telegrams.

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MOSS: The next item I have on the chronology is a cable in which you reported a weekend visit of the crown prince of Morocco in which, as I remember the cable, you were able to find out virtually nothing except that the crown prince seemed unhappy with the visit. You don't recall anything more about that, do you?

RUSSELL: No.

MOSS: All right. And then follows the death of Lumumba and the Nkrumah radio speech on it. I'm pretty sure that's on the record and can be characterized fairly easily in the light of your previous remarks. I wonder about the demonstration at the embassy. I have the cable in which you described it. It seemed well-organized.

RUSSELL: The marchers were coming down the avenue that went past the embassy building and led downtown. But there was a policeman at the corner who directed the demonstrators to take the little street to the left that come in toward the embassy. There was nothing spontaneous about it. The policeman told them where they were supposed to go, so they turned left and came on to the embassy grounds. There were several thousand. They came in over the lawn. The building is one that is on stilts. There is no first floor. They came onto the stairs leading up into the one floor. We had closed the gates, and all the blinds so they could not throw rocks through the windows. For a while we weren't sure whether they were going to try and break through the doors to get into the main floor of the embassy. But we looked out some of the windows onto the inside court and we could see some of the women sitting on the edge of the pool watching the goldfish

and paddling their hands in the water. It was kind of a picnic. After they were there about fifteen minutes, I saw a man who had on the white uniform of one of the officials at the airport look at his watch, and then h looked at it a couple of minutes later, and then finally summoned all the group and they went on. They'd been there for fifteen minutes; he'd timed it right to the second.

MOSS: So it was an orderly demonstration and in more ways than one. I think a plaque was ripped down.

RUSSELL: That's right.

MOSS: Then there comes an interesting little byplay between the United States and Ghana on the legitimacy of the Kasavubu [Joseph Kasavubu] government. You gave an aide-memoire to Nkrumah on the U.S. position respecting the Kasavubu government, and there comes a reply that is written by this fellow, Geoffrey Bing in which there's an argument about how closely the Congo government follows the Belgian government pattern, and whether the president is the legitimate authority and head of state, and that kind of thing. How did you feel about this sort of academic back and forth in a real tough diplomatic situation?

RUSSELL: Do you know anything about Geoffrey Bing?

MOSS: Very little, except for what I saw, in the cables.

RUSSELL: He's a notoriously interesting character.

MOSS: Well, talk about him a bit then.

RUSSELL: He looked very much as though he had some Chinese ancestry, and he used to say that he had a Chinese pirate as a grandfather. Presumably that was not true, but it probably was true that one way or other he had a Chinese ancestor. He was an extremely intelligent person. He'd been trained as a barrister, had been in politics in the Labour party in Britain, had gone under the British colonial office to serve as legal counselor to Nkrumah several years before independence. Nkrumah had come to rely on him so much for drafting important documents -- I think he helped draft the constitution -- and for assistance in writing some of his speeches, that he kept him on as legal advisor.

Geoffrey Bing was a Communist sympathizer, and was one of the influences pushing Nkrumah in that direction. He was an interesting person in a conversation. He could talk with great facility on almost any subject. Usually when I talked to him he was getting in digs at American policy. When Nkrumah was ousted, the revolutionary group put Bing in jail and he was there for several weeks. I'd left, of course, by that time. But he was finally released, went back to Britain, and the last I heard he was back in the Labour party.

MOSS: Let me ask you again about this business of how you, or the United States and Ghana viewed the Kasavubu government and this almost academic argument.

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RUSSELL: Well, that's the sort of thing that Geoffrey Bing would do. He was a legal scholar. He took great pleasure in making fine legal points about almost any issue.

MOSS: And what do you do? Just sort of accept it for what it is?

RUSSELL: Oh, yes.

MOSS: Okay. Now, Nkrumah again went to New York to the United Nations, and also there was a bit of negotiating to see whether or not he would see President Kennedy on the trip, and he in fact did, in March. Do you remember any difficulty with setting this up? They were not anxious to have it take place in Washington. I gather from the cables, but they weren't going to block it either. Do you recall your feelings about it at the time, or any conversations with Nkrumah about it, or with the foreign minister?

RUSSELL: It wouldn't do any harm and it might do some good. He had become a very disenchanted person. Also he was very sensitive about the fact that he was becoming regarded in the United States as in the pocket of the Soviet Union. During this time the Soviet ambassador to Accra was seeing him sometimes as many as four or five times a week. Whereas I would see him maybe every two, three or four weeks. Our goal was to bring him back, to convince him that we were a good friend of Ghana. All during this time the Volta dam was under discussion and my theory was we ought to capitalize on that. I thought meeting Kennedy would be a step in that direction.

MOSS: Parenthetically, there is a memorandum in our files from Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] to the president as the last step in preparing him. It starts out by saying, "Well, you have enough dope in your head now to impress the hell out of him. Now what you want to think about is, 'What do I want him to go away thinking?'" And it goes on to list a number of things. How did he come back to Ghana? What were his impressions after he came back? Do you know?

RUSSELL: His basic attitude toward the United States did not change substantially during any of the time I was there.

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MOSS: This is interesting in the light of the renowned Kennedy charm that he worked

with Sekou Toure and others. It did not go that deep with Nkrumah, I guess.

RUSSELL: No. Nkrumah himself could be extremely charming, as I will say when we get to Clarence Randall's visit out there, Edgar Kaiser and Nkrumah got along splendidly.

MOSS: So I gather, from the files.

RUSSELL: When he decided it would advance his goal to be charming, he could turn it on with considerable success. But essentially he felt our position in Africa was opposed to the achievement of his goals.

MOSS: I have a gap in the files of about four months from March '61 to July '61. There's almost nothing in the file. I don't know….

RUSSELL: That sounds like the fellow Daniel Webster sent as ambassador to Constantinople. There'd be no messages back from him for five or six months. Webster sent a fairly sharp note saying that he would be very happy to receive any reports on happenings in that part of the world. The ambassador sent back an equally sharp one saying nothing had happened, if it did Webster could rest assured that he would report it. [Laughter]

MOSS: I have to assume that everything was going well for those four months. At least if there were cables, they went to the State Department and didn't get shunted over to the White House. [Laughter] Okay.

I pickup with a question of selecting a chief executive for the Volta River Authority, but I think we'll postpone that until we talk about the whole project. We begin to get, in July and August of '61, what you, in one cable, call a "lurch to the left." You have, what's his name, Gbedemah [Kolma A. Gbedemah]?

RUSSELL: Gbedemah. You don't pronounce the G.

MOSS: Gbedemah had been ousted from his position as finance minister in May, made minister of health, and then kicked out later, in September. But all during this July-August period you get the feel that he is trying to build up some sort of counter political force in Ghana to Nkrumah. Now he and a fellow named Grosse and some

others are getting together. I wonder how much of that you recall in the way of how much participation you had in it, how much participation the embassy had in it, beyond keeping tabs on it.

RUSSELL: Gbedemah was in disagreement with Nkrumah about the thrust of his government's policies. He was quite friendly toward the United States. He is the Ghanaian minister who went to the States and was driving down to Washington. He and another Ghanaian stopped to go into a Howard Johnson restaurant. It got into the press, and Eisenhower invited him to have breakfast at the White House the next morning. Well, Gbedemah invited me to his house several times for dinner, and on one of those occasions he brought out a scrapbook that he had of newspaper clippings of the episode, and he was just as proud of it as he could be. As it turned out, it probably is a good thing the Howard Johnson people wouldn't let him in, because otherwise it just would have been an ordinary ride to Washington. But as it was, with the breakfast at the White House, it gave him a great feeling of essential warmth and goodness on the part of the American people and their government. So his basic attitude was one of warmth toward the United States. Nkrumah sensed this and for that reason had ousted him from his offices.

At one point -- I had called on Gbedemah on business of some kind and he had been unusually frank in telling me how he felt, and kind of looked at me with a questioning look as though he would like to know, well, what did I think about it, you know, what did I think he ought to do? He didn't ask me that question, but put it in terms of how he felt, what his views and policies were. It was a very dangerous thing for him to do. I reported it to the department, and somewhat to my surprise but also to my approval, they said that I could if I felt it was a good idea, call on Gbedemah and say that the department appreciated the position that he was taking, and he could count on the support of the American government if he should decide to take certain steps, something like that, indicating quite clearly that if he should take a move, he could expect support of the American government.

MOSS: I have two questions on this. One is, first, looking realistically at Gbedemah, what was his power base? Did he have a chance? What was your assessment of his position in Ghana?

RUSSELL: Well, Nkrumah was obviously quite aware of Gbedemah's basic feelings. In fact, Gbedemah went quite far in allowing them to become known. His standing in the Nkrumah government got less and less.

MOSS: All right. One of the things that prompted some of this tension -- well, there were a couple of things that prompted Gbedemah to think he had an opportunity to organize a Ghana national party in the parliament whenever it convened and so on -- was that he and the chief justice, and I forget who the third man was, were acting as a presidential commission while Nkrumah was in the [Soviet] bloc touring. Also you had a series of strikes and an economic crisis going on at the time. You had the question of Ghana sending young officers to the Soviet Union for training, and this didn't go down very well with the army. All these things were coming together at once. And then, when Nkrumah came back, he got rid of the British expatriate officers and fired them, fired Gbedemah and others. How did you react to this? What did you see in this?

RUSSELL: Just a further progression in the policies I've described.

MOSS: Okay. Gbedemah then went to London, and there in London he had an interview with Wagner [Joseph J. Wagner] who was on the embassy staff in London, and Gbedemah mentions that upon his deciding to leave Ghana somebody from the U.S. embassy approached him and offered him financial assistance. This is where the story ends in the file, and it's the kind of thing, you know, that if left hanging somebody says, "Aha, either Kaiser is at work or the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] is at work or something." Any of this ring any bells with you?

RUSSELL: I can say that I was not authorized to make any statement of that kind, and of course did not. I suppose this is as good a point as any to mention the fact that the CIA was quite active in Ghana. I had excellent relations with our CIA people. We worked very closely. They made, not complete reports to me of everything that was said or all the meetings they had, but I felt that I was being adequately briefed in general on what they were doing. They had quite a few good contacts in Accra and out around the country. It may be that Gbedemah was encouraged to make the statement that he did because of some previous CIA conversations

with him. It's conceivable that I was authorized to make the statement that I did after consultation between the department and the CIA back in Washington.

MOSS: Because somebody's going to look at this file and draw the natural parallel with the Saigon situation with Nolting [Frederick E. Nolting, Jr.] and Diem [Ngo Dinh Diem] and Lucien Conein, and that kind of thing. And I was wondering how much of this sort of thing was going on, and how much you knew about it.

RUSSELL: I didn't know anything about any conversations between the CIA and Gbedemah. All that I knew was that he made this statement to me that I've already told you about, that I reported it to Washington, and that I was authorized to make the statement to him. I must say, at the time I was a bit surprised at the extent to which I was authorized to go in the conversation. In the light of what you've just told me I think it can, with fair certainty, be reconstructed, in view of the extent of the CIA activity in the country, that there were some conversations between our CIA head representative and Gbedemah, and if a statement was made to Gbedemah that he would receive funds, it must have been made by a CIA representative.

MOSS: Okay.

RUSSELL: My guess is that what happened was that Gbedemah's dissatisfaction with the trend of things was known to Khrumah, that Gbedemah did flirt with the idea

of doing something but finally backed away from it and fled the country.

MOSS: Let me ask you about it and your opinion of the situation as a matter of principle. I have heard it said by other ambassadors that the duty of the ambassador is to deal with the government to which he is accredited and that any of this sideline stuff, contacts with the opposition, whether loyal or not, is beyond his duty, beyond not just his capacity but his duty. How do you react to this?

RUSSELL: Well, I wouldn't go as far as that. Ideally there should be a warm, close relationship between the head of the CIA office in the country and the ambassador. The ambassador ought to be briefed on the gist, at least, of what the CIA uncovers, and he ought to have a pretty good idea of any conversations that are going on that would affect the make-up of the government.

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MOSS: This differentiates a little bit between an activist role and a passive reporting role on the part of the CIA.

RUSSELL: Well, I'm not saying that under certain circumstances they ought not to have an activist role. This is a situation in which it's difficult to draw a very precise line.

MOSS: Could you put it in terms of the Ghana experience then?

RUSSELL: Well, I was always very satisfied with the relationship that existed between us. The CIA officer came in quite regularly, almost daily, and would give me reports on what they had picked up about Khrumah, about the activities of the Soviets, and other things that would be of interest. He did not report to me that he had made any offer of any kind to Gbedemah. I'm prepared to speculate on the basis of what you just told me that he probably did. It sheds a little light on what I know did happen.

I've already told you that I was surprised that Gbedemah was as open with me as he was. I was surprised at the reply I was authorized to give to him, although I didn't object at all to giving it. I think it was the right thing to do. But it becomes more plausible against a background that Gbedemah and the CIA representative had been talking together, and maybe Gbedemah said to him, "Well, it's all right for you to tell me that, but I'd like to have it officially from your government." So the CIA man may have said to him, again pure speculation, "Well, why don't you talk with Francis Russell and tell him how you feel and see what reaction you get?" So he did, and I reported to Washington. CIA and the department probably got together and prepared the directive that I got about what to say to Gbedemah.

MOSS: I have another impression from the files, and that is that Gbedemah was really pretty much of a weak reed to pin any hopes on.

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: It was unrealistic to expect him to take over….

RUSSELL: He was not forceful.

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MOSS: Okay. Perhaps, then, we could move on and talk about the Volta thing. As the Kennedy administration came in this thing was hanging. The Kaiser people were very much for it. It was an investment for them that they were interested in making with U.S. government guarantees.

RUSSELL: And Eisenhower had orally assured Nkrumah that he would contribute.

MOSS: Right. There are two aspects to it, one is the guarantees to the company, and the other one is the moral bind we were in of having given our word on a loan to the Ghanaian government to build the dam. Where do you first encounter dealings with the Ghanaian government on the Volta dam? What was the first moment at which you began talking with them about it? Do you recall the situation?

RUSSELL: The first was with Robert Jackson, a very important figure in this, the husband of Barbara Ward, a representative of the United Nations, and at that time a counselor to Nkrumah.

MOSS: On the Volta project particularly or on finances for Ghana in general? Because there is some confusion on that.

RUSSELL: Originally, on finances generally, although as time went on and Nkrumah became disenchanted with us and to a lesser extent with the British, Jackson's responsibilities related more and more just to the Volta.

Jackson had been in Ghana for eleven years and had been one of the first to graph the possibilities of the Volta. Not the first, because engineering studies had been made some years before that, but when he first went down as financial advisor before independence he immediately became interested in the idea of a Volta dam. He thought it offered great possibilities for the development of the country, and pushed it. I saw a great deal of Robert Jackson. He used to drop around to our house several times a week.

The first ten minutes he would be in our study he'd be quite precise, proper, with respect to Nkrumah, kind of present everything from Nkrumah's point of view as much as an ambassador would for his own country. He didn't drink, all he had was ginger ale. But it was almost as though he had had scotch

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in his glass instead and gradually his tongue would get looser and looser, and he'd start telling me about his problems with Nkrumah and what he really thought, Nkrumah's shortcomings, and so on. When I saw Nkrumah or other officers in the government who were concerned with the dam, it was clear that they attached the greatest importance to it. From the point of view of modernizing and industrializing the country, it was extremely important. The lake made by the dam is the largest man-made lake in the world.

MOSS: Even bigger than the one behind Aswan?

RUSSELL: Well, Aswan came later. But at the time it was built, Volta was the largest man-made lake and the amount of electricity it would produce was fabulous.

MOSS: I have a hard time following, in the papers that we have, the development of the negotiations during 1961. The critical point seems to come when the President appoints Randall [Clarence Randall] to come and have a last look at it.

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: There's also the trip made by Senators Gore [Albert A. Gore] and Neuberger [Maurine B. Neuberger] and, I believe, a slightly earlier trip in which Abe Chayes [Abram Chayes] and Walter Sauer and a couple of others came over. Now, what can you tell me about these, the way the thing developed?

RUSSELL: I should like to say at the beginning that Edgar Kaiser is one of the great industrial statesmen of the United States.

MOSS: Chad Calhoun too, was very important.

RUSSELL: My admiration for Kaiser is greater than my admiration for Chad Calhoun, Kaiser had a desire to advance the interests of the United States as well as of the Kaiser [Industries] Corporation. He had also a great desire to help underdeveloped countries. He wasn't just a businessman. I've met plenty of American businessmen who come abroad to just make a fast buck. But that was not true of Edgar Kaiser. The country is fortunate to have men like him who are trying to make American know-how and capital available abroad for the development of those countries. Chad Calhoun was just a sycophant. He was trotting around after Nkrumah, and if Nkrumah tossed him a

smile he was completely entranced for weeks afterward. But, I suppose that was his job, to keep on good terms, be able to walk into any of the offices of the Ghanaian government.

MOSS: So he was a P.R. [public relations] man instead of a negotiator.

RUSSELL: Eisenhower had indicated to Nkrumah that he could count on American government assistance in going ahead with the Volta project. But within days after that commitment was given, Nkrumah became disenchanted with the United States because of the Congo thing. So he was riding off in two directions. His newspapers were carrying these diatribes against the United States. American businessmen and officials would come through Accra, pick up a copy of the local paper, and wonder why we were trying to help a country that was so anti-American. It finally reached the point where the White House felt that it had to take a good hard look at it.

Nkrumah -- spent two hundred and fifty thousand dollars building access roads from the port to the site of the dam, so that when the money came through, as he was anticipating, they could get off to a fast start. They wouldn't have to spend a year building access roads. Those roads would be utterly useless unless the project, the dam, went ahead. So he made it a little more difficult for us to say no after he had already made that investment with funds of the Ghanaian government.

But as I say, the time came when a decision had to be made. At that point, at George Ball's suggestion -- he was then under secretary of state -- the President asked Clarence Randall who was a former president of the Inland Steel Company and a former president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, to come out to Ghana and talk with the people in the American embassy, in the British embassy, with Nkrumah and with businessmen and make a recommendation to President Kennedy about what we should do. Should we go ahead with the oral commitment, or should we back away? He saw Nkrumah several times and the meetings were very warm. Nkrumah presented Randall with a two-volume set of books on the birds of central Africa. He knew that Randall was a bird lover.

On the last afternoon Randall was there -- he was taking a plane at midnight to go back -- he told me that he was not

going to write his recommendation to the president until he got on the plane, and that no one except him and President Kennedy would ever know what his recommendation was. He said however, he would appreciate it if I would dictate a brief statement of what I would recommend if I were making the report to the president. I went to the office and dictated a two page memorandum. My opinion was that some 75 or 80 percent of the Ghanaian people had a warm attitude toward the United States despite what they were reading in their newspapers; 80 percent or more of the professional group, the doctors and the university professors and the teachers and the lawyers, the judges, were warmly disposed toward the United States; ninety percent of the student body. It is of course somewhat unusual for the student body of a university in an underdeveloped country to be strongly enamored of the United States. The reason was that the British had built a really first-class university whose standards were those of the University of London. The students took the same examinations as the University of London students, and there was real academic freedom; freedom to stand up to your professors, freedom of speech, freedom to hold meetings, and all that. The

students treasured that, particularly since Nkrumah was in the process of converting the institution from that kind of a university to something that would be an organ of his party, just for indoctrination, and the students resented that. So that was one side of it. The other was that Nkrumah seemed to be moving closer and closer into the orbit of the Soviet Union…

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

RUSSELL: …was continuing his attacks on the United States in his speeches and through the controlled press. If Nkrumah were to continue in power, his efforts at building up a strong single party that would control education all the way from the elementary grades up through the university, control the press and the labor movement, and so on would succeed. All organizations would be instruments of the party. Over a period of ten years there might be a considerable attrition in the pro-Western public opinion that I've described.

On the other hand, the army was pro-West and some of the ministers -- we've already mentioned Gbedemah -- were pro-West. It seemed to me, on balance, that this rather massive pro-U.S. sentiment was a little more likely to win out than that Nkrumah would continue to be able to dominate it all. If Nkrumah were to remain in power and the attrition took place and we went ahead with the dam, we would have made a bad investment. On

the other hand, if we decided to go ahead with the dam, we would be strengthening, in the greatest possible way, this pro-American sentiment. Because everyone who thought well of the United States would be able to point to the dam and say, "Nothing that the Communist countries are doing is one one-hundredth of what this dam is going to do for our national life. And it's the United States that is doing it." So I thought the best thing was to go ahead with it, and I gave that to Clarence Randall.

My wife and I gave a reception for him the evening just before he was leaving at midnight. I noticed early in the evening that Mr. Randall was over in a corner of the room with a young man who was with our USIA [United States Information Agency] office in Lagos and who was in Accra for a couple of days. After ten or fifteen minutes that broke up, and a few minutes after that the young man came to me and told me who he was and said, "My family are neighbors and friends of Mr. Randall, I've known him ever since I was a little boy, and he was just telling me why he's here. I thought you would want to know that he told me that he was going to recommend against going ahead with the damn." Then Randall left.

The next morning it occurred to me that the State Department ought to have the views that I had handed to Randall in my memorandum. Two days after that I got a message from Assistant Secretary Williams saying that my telegram had been very timely, that he had taken it to a meeting that was held at the White House where the decision was made on the Volta dam. Williams said my telegram had played a substantial role in the decision to go ahead with the dam. In other words, the President had turned down Randall's recommendation and

decided to go ahead. In Arthur Schelsinger's book, *A Thousand Days*, he devotes several pages to this and he gives the reasons why the President decided to go ahead. They're word for word from my telegram giving the reasons why I thought we should go ahead.

MOSS: There's also a State Department paper, by the way, that is dated 5 December which summarizes the whole thing, including some of your points. And there was, I believe, also on 5 December, the meeting of the NSC [National Security Council] that decided it.

One of the arguments that came up, both-in Congress and in the government from people like Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] and Robert Kennedy was that, "Suppose you do this for this fellow Nkrumah, what are the other chaps around him going to think? You know, we haven't done half as much for them and they're much nicer to us." How did you react to this kind of argument?"

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RUSSELL: Of course, there was Nigeria, but we've done a great deal for Nigeria. If you mean the Ivory Coast and…

MOSS: The Ivory Coast particularly.

RUSSELL: … Upper Volta and so on, it seemed to me that those countries were going to benefit. They were going to be able to get electricity at a very small cost. Ghana was going to export electricity to the countries around it. It seemed to me either the project was going to be done now, or it wouldn't be done for a long time. Edgar Kaiser would lose interest, it would take a long time to generate the whole thing with new companies. So it seemed to me it had to be done then, or not at all.

We'd promised Nassar [Gamal Abdel Nassar] to build the Aswan dam and if we turned back on this one and then went around to some of these countries and said, "Wouldn't you like us to help you build a dam?" they'd say, "Yeak, we know about the U.S.A. and its dams. We'd rather save our time."

That was not the major reason. I've given the major reason, that I thought that Ghana was an important country. It was an excellent opportunity to show what could be done to advance the economy of an underdeveloped country, and the prospect of Ghana being on the side of the United States in the long run was quite good.

Incidentally, I went back to Washington between the two Randall visits. There was a meeting in the oval office that I attended. Kaiser was there and George Ball, and Randall and Williams and myself. Kaiser started the meeting in a light, humorous way by saying that a couple of days ago he'd received a telephone call from his father, Henry [Henry J. Kaiser] who was in Hawaii, saying, "Edgar, what in hell are we doing getting mixed up with that fellow Nkrumah?" And the President said, "No. Did he really? My father called me and said the same thing." [Laughter]

MOSS: That's funny. I remember asking somebody to check the White House

appointments and I didn't come up with any references on your name. Maybe it was that you were put in at the last minute or something of this sort. But that's interesting. I would like to get those little bits and pieces of things that actually took place at the White House in the President's presence. Do you remember the arguments there in that meeting? Do you remember the back and forth?

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RUSSELL: There wasn't any vigorous argument. It was more a discussion presenting the situation to the President. Edgar Kaiser told him of his company's interest, his evaluation of Ghana, the feasibility of it, and about his many meetings with Nkrumah. There was no vigorous debate at that time. Robert Kennedy was not there.

MOSS: After the President made the decision, a cable came on December 14 to you and to Randall to go ahead and tell Nkrumah that we were going ahead, and there followed a little bit of back and forth over where the thing was to be signed; you finally signed part of it in Accra and part of it in Washington, to satisfy everybody. Then there came the question of Nkrumah presenting the thing to his parliament, and you got wind of the speech he was going to make and discovered that it did not contain very favorable references to the United States. It was very ungracious in tone. You got it changed substantially, did you not? How did you go about this?

RUSSELL: Through Robert Jackson.

MOSS: Through Jackson, entirely.

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: Okay. I was wondering about this because, just how do you go about approaching a ticklish situation like this? How do you write the speech for another head of state? It's quite an undertaking.

RUSSELL: Well, Robert Jackson and I worked it out.

MOSS: Do you remember his description of how Nkrumah responded to this, how he accepted it?

RUSSELL: My recollection is that he didn't have a difficult job. He went in and called it to Nkrumah's attention and told him why he thought he ought to make the changes, and Nkrumah did it.

MOSS: And Jackson was just staying on until this was over?

RUSSELL: Oh, no. He stayed on for some time after that.

MOSS: He had offered, I think, to resign at the same time that the others were kicked out.

RUSSELL: Yes.

MOSS: And Nkrumah, in effect, accepted this and then he was to stay on until after the queen's visit.

RUSSELL: That's right.

MOSS: Tell me about the queen's [Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain] visit, by the way.

RUSSELL: Nkrumah spent hundreds of thousands of dollars fixing up an old castle that was on the edge of the water that….

MOSS: It had been built by the Portuguese originally?

RUSSELL: Yes. He was refurbishing it for his residence, and then was building an addition for executive offices where his ministers would have their offices handy to him. He had a crash job done in finishing the interior work of the castle, putting in furniture and red carpets. He went around to inspect it and found that the bathroom for the queen's apartment was just some local stone. So he ordered some marble from Italy that was flown in to make the bathroom look more like a queen's bathroom, and it was put in and finished just a few days before the queen arrived. My wife and I were invited to go around and inspect the castle a couple of days before the queen arrived, so we saw all the details. One note about it is that although all the marble was there, the plumbing didn't work. [Laughter]

The queen's schedule was worked out minute by minute from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night. She was going to leave the castle, say, at 8:02; she would arrive at Black Star Square at 8:13. She would leave there at 9:43 and so forth. She was there ten days, and traveled around the country. There were innumerable events. They drove a car several times from here to there to find out how long it took, and that's what they put in the schedule. My wife and I were present at a considerable number of the events, and she was never late. She arrived right on the dot at every occasion. She was completely charming.

They presented some Greek tragedy in an outdoor theater and the stone seats were not all that comfortable. It went on for quite a while, and I was fidgety as the devil. I'd lean like this, and then I'd lean back like this, and so on. The queen sat there the entire time…

MOSS: Bolt upright.

RUSSELL: …just like this, with her hand clasped in front, apparently relaxed, but still she didn't slump forward, she didn't move around, she didn't twist, she didn't stretch her neck muscles or anything, just sat like that the entire time. Simply incredible. She made a great impression on me, I must say.

Nkrumah was proud as punch. He attached a great deal of importance to it, but he couldn't resist doing one thing. The queen gave a reception for the members of the diplomatic corps at the castle, and we were all informed that it was a white tie affair. Nkrumah was not supposed to be there. It was a reception given by the queen for the diplomatic corps. However, he showed up -- in a business suit.

MOSS: Oh, boy. Let me ask you to look for a minute at the cast of characters I have here. We've talked about some of these people. Let me ask you to talk a little bit about some of the people around Nkrumah, this Adamafio. I couldn't find any official position for him, as I could for some of the others.

RUSSELL: He was a minister of interior.

MOSS: The only information I have on who was holding the ministerial posts is a thing that the Kaiser people did, as a matter of fact. I don't have one from the State Department for that time. Well, you say he was a minister of interior.

RUSSELL: We always regarded him as a left-wing adviser. When I called on him once -- his offices were very close to Nkrumah's, and he was supposed to be very close to him -- I noticed he had a small statue about ten inches high of Lenin [Nikolai Lenin]. He'd made a visit to Moscow and I guess they presented it to him. The next time I called on him I gave him a ten-inch high statue of Abraham Lincoln to put along side of it.

MOSS: Did he keep it there?

RUSSELL: And he kept it there. There was an attempt on Nkrumah's life after I left…

MOSS: Yes. The following year.

RUSSELL: … and Adamafio was arrested as the leader of it.

MOSS: Oh, for heaven sake. Yes. I didn't know. I knew that the attempt had been made, but I didn't know this.

RUSSELL: John Tettegah was leader of the trade union movement, a vigorous,

high-pressure fellow, able administrator, a kind of political boss. He shouted his order and people jumped.

MOSS: This gets us into something else, the question of how Nkrumah tried to exert his influence in other African countries. I have one document which describes Tettegah as a prime instrument for Nkrumah's subversion of other African countries through his trade union contacts.

RUSSELL: I have no specific information, but I'm prepared to believe it. He was very active in trade union movements around Africa, and of course one of Nkrumah's instrumentalities for achieving these goals that I was describing earlier was through trade unions in the various countries, and Tetteghan was very active in trying to get the African trade unions of the the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions] and form a purely African trade organization.

Bwateng was a thin, wiry, nondescript looking person. No one ever saw very much of him. He was hovering around Nkrumah and, of course, was the one in charge of the newspapers and making sure that they handled the day's news the way Nkrumah wanted it. Geoffrey Bing I've described.

MOSS: What about Kaldor?

RUSSELL: I didn't get to know him at all. He was just a person you heard about. He didn't go to any meetings. He didn't attend ceremonies. He was behind the wings entirely. All we knew was that he'd been economic advisor to a number of countries whose economy had gone on the rocks shortly after he took over. I don't think I ever met him. Ofori-Atta [A.E.A. Ofori-Atta] was minister of justice.

MOSS: If there's nothing remarkable about some of these you can skip them.

RUSSELL: Sir Arku Korsah was a man of great courage and integrity. I played golf with him, oh, about once a month. He was the only one who was in charge of the [Presidential] Commission when the president was out of

the country, I have great admiration for him. He was not a great ball of fire, but he was a man of integrity and courage. Gbedemah we've already talked about.

Botsio [Kojo Botsio] was minister of Agriculture. He was one of the more friendly ministers. My wife and I were invited to his house several times, and his wife was particularly friendly. Abavana [L.R. Abavana] I didn't know particularly well.

Ako Adjei, of course, I saw a great deal of. Everytime I called on Ako Adjei, there were at least two members of his staff in with him. I'd appear at his office and his secretary would tell him I was there, and then I'd have to wait a few minutes, while members of his foreign ministry staff were asked to come up to his office. He and I never had a meeting

without other people being there. When I would raise a topic, or present the American view on something, and he replied, he would talk to the two men of his own staff. He didn't look me in the eye and talk to me, but he would expound the Ghanaian point of view and he'd be talking to them. In retrospect I think he was protecting his rear. He wanted to be able to say that he'd never had any meetings with the American ambassador that there weren't witnesses for. He didn't accept any invitations to functions at the residence.

MOSS: Not even the Fourth of July?

RUSSELL: Not even the Fourth of July. A delegation from New York came through Ghana trying to enlist African countries in putting on exhibits at the New York World's Fair while I was there. A former Lieutenant governor of New York was head of the delegation. We went in to see Ako Adjei, and the former Lieutenant governor made his pitch. Ako Adjei listened to him very carefully and said, "Well, this is an interesting moment for me. I was a student in New York at the time of the first New York World's Fair in 1937. I obtained employment at the fair while I was a student at Columbia [University] scrubbing floors on the night shift. "Now I'm foreign minister and you're here suggesting that my country put on an exhibit." He obviously relished the moment.

I have told you how offish he was both when I was in his office and about accepting invitations to the residence, but the United States put on a trade fair in Accra which really was a wonderful thing, beautifully done, a great success. It took a whole city block. On the last day I said to my wife, "Let's go down and have one last look; they'll be tearing everything up tomorrow." We went down and as we were walking around we came across Ako Adjei and his wife and his two daughters. They joined us, and we walked

around together. He informed us that this was not the first time he'd visited, he'd been there three or four times. Although there were several points along our walk when he could have peeled off and said, "Well, it's been nice to have seen you," but he keep right along with us. We finally came to a stand where they served Cokes, and I bought Cokes for all of us and we sat down and had Cokes and talked for at least half an hour. Finally, and with quite obvious reluctance, he said, well, he had to be getting on. So, my feeling is that he was on the Gbedemah side, really, but he was a little more cagey than Gbedemah.

General Alexander [General Major H.T. Alexander] was quite a character. He's written a book on his experiences there and his impressions.

MOSS: I have one reference to Otu [S.J.A. Otu] as rather a venal, unsavory character. Is that accurate?

RUSSELL: I hadn't heard that. All I know is that he did become general in charge when Alexander left, and I guess I made three or four calls on him. Military matters came up. I've forgotten just what they were. One or two would have been maybe a visit of some of our military figures going through.

MOSS: Which brings up a point. I had a reference here somewhere to a meeting you and your army attache had with Kofi Baako who asked that Ghanaian officers be trained in U.S. service schools. Do you remember this? It's a rather interesting point, given the Soviet bent, and so on.

RUSSELL: Yes. But also it shows the attitude of the military.

MOSS: Yeah. This was strictly a military proposition. Do you know if Nkrumah knew anything about it, and did much come of it?

RUSSELL: I don't know.

MOSS: I've got the British and American people down here. I think we can leave them pretty much alone at this point, except I'd like you to nail down whether or not Mennen Williams came. He was scheduled at one point.

RUSSELL: Oh, yes. He and his wife came. He was making his first tour of Africa, and Ghana was on it.

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MOSS: How did he conduct himself? I've had differing opinions from various ambassadors as to what kind of impression he was making on the Africans and on the diplomatic service abroad, some good, some bad; that he knew what he was doing, that he was very effective, or that he looked like a busybody who didn't know what he was doing. I get both pictures of him.

RUSSELL: It was a little bit of both. He always wore a snappy bow tie. He was young and boyish in his appearance. Immense vigor. Didn't seem to have a very incisive mind. The kind who was up looking around rather than getting down to the nitty-gritty of an intellectual problem. However, his interest in Africa, African culture and African politics was very sincere. He always talked as though he was running for office.

He met with the American community and talked with them. He went out to the university and talked to the Americans there. You felt as though he were really talking to a group in Michigan and hoped to be re-elected governor. You got the impression that he was a man on the make. But he could be warm, friendly, and I would estimate that by and large he made a favorable impression on African leaders that he met. Africa was his constituency at that time, and on balance I think he did a good job.

MOSS: How did you find him as an assistant secretary to work with?

RUSSELL: Splendid. No complaints at all. He was always very cooperative, backstopping, friendly.

MOSS: Did you feel, for instance on the Volta project, that he was running the State Department end of things or that George Ball was?

RUSSELL: Well, of course, George was under secretary for economic affairs at that time and George was in on the Volta Dam because of its economic aspects, and Soapy was there as assistant secretary for African Affairs. They both had a legitimate interest. George Ball is obviously the sounder man, more depth, more experience, more capable in analysis.

MOSS: The principal communications to the State Department on the subject seem to come from Ball rather than from Williams. Let me ask you about the organization and staffing of your mission, and so on, in the

light of the JFK letter reaffirming the ambassador as chief of mission, and so on. You've already talked a little bit about your CIA. What about the attache situation? Did you have naval as well as army attaches?

RUSSELL: No.

MOSS: I didn't see any references to a naval attache.

RUSSELL: No.

MOSS: What about their relationship with the Ghanaian military and so on? Did you have any problems there?

RUSSELL: Well, they didn't have particularly close relationships because of Nkrumah's overall policy. Relations were proper but not close. Our military people did not have a great deal to do there. They got in quite a lot of golf.

MOSS: What about the Peace Corps?

RUSSELL: We had the first Peace Corps contingent to set foot abroad….

MOSS: Yes, I remember you mentioned this last time.

RUSSELL: …and we were always very proud of that. There was a young black who came out to do the organizing for it. he had no precedents to go on. There had never been a Peace Corps contingent before. He did a marvelous job at lining up a program. It was mostly teaching in schools. He worked with the Cocoa Trust. The British had set up a trust fund, a certain percentage of cocoa exports went into this trust fund for

education. There were excellent school buildings around the country that were not being used because they didn't have the teachers, so they were quite glad to get Peace Corps teachers.

MOSS: So they were well employed.

RUSSELL: They were well employed and it went very smoothly.

MOSS: What about USIS [United States Information Service] and its efforts to counter the press?

RUSSELL: Of course they made no headway at all on the press, but they had a fairly sizeable and very busy center, indicating that what I said earlier was true, that there were a lot of people who were still interested in the United

States, and in our quite sizeable library. They moved in areas in which they could move. They maintained contact of course with the press corps, but without any noticeable result.

MOSS: On the U.S. aid mission end of things, I recall something about the setting up of a national institutes of health and a research center…

RUSSELL: They had a very sizeable operation. In agriculture they conducted research for a kind of rubber tree that would grow in that soil and climate. A man who had had a lot of experience came out and lived two hundred miles from Accra, did a wonderful job. I'd say it was very successful. In education and agriculture particularly.

MOSS: I'm beginning to run to the end of the things that I had. Let me ask you at the end to talk about some things in general. You were in a much more difficult assignment than you'd had in Wellington, in many senses. I wonder if you would comment on what I see coming up again and again and again in these interviews and in things that I read. It's a notion of U.S. leverage upon another nation. It's a notion that Ambassador Darlington [Charles F. Darlington], for instance, talks about in his book on Gabon. It's a notion that's implicit in the whole relationship that Nolting had with Diem in Saigon, that Win Brown [Winthrop G. Brown] had in Vientiane, and so on. How do you get other countries to behave the way you would want them to do? Is it realistic to believe that we have leverage? Is the leverate idea a false image, or what is it? Could you address that generally for a moment, from your experience?

RUSSELL: The last thing you want to convey to the people in the country where you are is that you're trying to exert "leverage." The best stance you can take is one of dialogue, of conversation, of listening, of friendly interest. You represent the richest country in the world and most countries are at the other end of the economic spectrum. Sincerity. We do have ambassadors like McClintock [Robert McClintock] who

rides around twitch dogs under his arm. Ellis Briggs writes books about shots heard round the world indicating that a considerable part of his time was spent out hunting. Burke Elbrick [C. Burke Elbrick], you see pictures of him and his wife with fancy French poodles on the end of a leash, and so on.

For me, the most successful way is to try and establish a relationship of mutual trust and friendly interest and concern.

then you do want to exert some leverage you do it as a friend who had money in the bank, someone who has talked over all kinds of problems, who has given the impression that he would accurately convey to Washington what they thought about a problem. If there was an issue coming up in the United Nations, we always made it a point to let them know how we were going to vote, and in fact how we hoped they would vote. If they couldn't go along with us, all right. They were intelligent people; they had their own constituencies, their own loyalties, their own country. We couldn't expect them to agree with us all the time, and I think they got to know that while I wasn't trying to put any leverage on Washington either, Washington was being fully and fairly informed on how they felt. I think that's the best way to "exert leverage."

MOSS: It doesn't always work, though, in a situation of continuing crisis wherein lots of things are continually at stake.

RUSSELL: Well, I never exerted successfully any leverage on Nkrumah. However, Nkrumah was kicked out of his job partly because we built the Volta dam, I'm quite sure. There are a hundred ways of exerting leverage. In the case of Ghana I'd be inclined to think the best way was to convince those around Nkrumah that the United States had their interests very much on its mind.

MOSS: Let me ask you to comment generally on the impact of the Kennedy Administration and the sort of new Africa policy that come in with Williams and his Africa for the Africans kind of thing.

RUSSELL: Kennedy electrified the people of Africa almost as much as he did the people of America. He was a vivid personality there. All the leaders of governments that I knew anything about felt they had a friend in him, someone who knew that the Africans were human beings and had aspirations, and that while the United States couldn't be the means of their meeting all of them, we wished them well, and we would do what we could. Of course this was when our interest in Africa was on the upsweep. At just about the time that Kennedy came in we were opening up a lot of new embassies. Williams had been the first member of the State Department to be appointed, even before the secretary was, and Kennedy had said it was one of the most important appointments that he would make in the State Department. All those things, in my opinion, achieved what they were designed to achieve.

MOSS: All right. Well, that brings me to the point. What was it designed to achieve and in what context?

[-62-]

RUSSELL: Let me say, by way of background, Truman [Harry S. Truman] had enunciated the Point Four doctrine -- which, I guess I told you when you were here before, I had the privilege of helping to compose -- and which was a demonstration fairly early on, in 1949, that we were interested in the underdeveloped countries. One of the reasons for that was, that we thought these countries would be regarded as a hunting ground by Moscow -- a rather fertile one. So Africa became, in the foreign policy thinking in Washington, an area where we could not just sit back and allow the Soviets to move in without our making an effort.

Loy Henderson and his committee made a tour of Africa and decided what kind of posts we should set up. Soapy Williams became assistant secretary in the circumstances that I've mentioned. It was all for the purpose of convincing these countries that they had a lot to gain by maintaining close relationships with the United States. I think we succeeded.

MOSS: All right. The conventional wisdom in the popular writings now would have it that this was sort of an overdone kind of thing, that really Africa and Africans don't have much use for Moscow and Communism any more than somebody in Massachusetts might, and that really we overreacted in many ways that set up expectations that were too high, too much glamour, too much Soapy Williams, too much Kennedy, and that there was a big letdown with Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] and a return to sort of where our realistic interests were. How do you regard this?

RUSSELL: It's possible that we overdid it, but I think not seriously. I think it was much better to err on the side of being a little more interested rather than being a little less interested, under-interested. I think it's clear that there was a competition going on and to some extent has continued up to the present time. Every time there was a meeting of the Organization of African Unity there was a split down the middle. Algeria, and while Nkrumah was around, Ghana and Guinea, Mali and two or three other states took a side that veered toward Moscow. As a result of the efforts that we made, that group has not been the predominant one. We convinced the Tunisians that we wished them well and they've taken the leadership of the moderate group. I think, on the whole, we have achieved what we wanted to achieve in Africa. Who can say that if we had done nothing, it would have been achieved?

MOSS: Okay. I believe that's all I have. Do you have anything you want to add at this point? Okay. Okay. Fine. Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Ambassador.

[END OF INTERVIEW]