

Paul Tsongas

Rich Arenberg and Chris Chamberlain

May 25, 1979

After the story of how Chris was hired (later) I asked him about theory that Senate is staff run.

"I know what you're getting at; and I can give you the answer in one minute. The two major initiatives we have taken--Angola and divestiture were completely his ideas. I had nothing to do with them--not a thing. When he first told me he was going to make a speech about Angola, I couldn't understand why he would do it. To me, Rhodesia was the question. All Africanists agreed on that. What happened in Rhodesia would affect everything else in southern Africa. I almost argued with him, but decided I might lose my job and I had better see what he wanted to do. Gradually I came to understand what a brilliant strategic move it was for him to start with Angola if he wanted to get into African issues. It was the easiest of the issues. Nobody else cared much about it. Those who did wouldn't seriously disagree with him. And he was able to develop his anti-Soviet argument--that by not recognizing Angola we were just playing into Soviet hands. Then on divestiture, he went to Massachusetts one weekend and came back with a plan for divestiture. Some parts of it backed me off a little and I convinced him to change them. But the idea was to take it up was his and the basic plan was his. I didn't know exactly where he got the idea. I think he talked to the people at Brandeis. But divestiture is one of the big foreign policy issues up in Massachusetts. Of all the institutions that have divested themselves of stocks, the great majority are from Massachusetts. I wrote his speeches on both subjects but the initiatives were his. He wasn't run by his staff--not a bit. Once he took them up, interest in what he was doing grew and grew and grew.

"On the issue of sanctions on Rhodesia, I may have pushed Paul a little bit; but he would have come to it without my pushing. He couldn't avoid it. It was the issue that most people were talking about. Angola, divestiture-- those weren't what the Africans were excited about. To them, the issue of Rhodesia was--I hate to say this--the watershed issue. If the Rhodesian settlement sticks, with support from the West, the Africans will never forgive us. Things will get worse and worse and worse. That's what Paul has been saying in the Senate. He's been playing a Wayne Morse role. He's telling the Senate to look at the long run, not the short run. He's saying that lifting sanctions will be a terrible mistake, a mistake that will come back to haunt us. He has a sympathy for Africa and an appreciation of African realities. His instincts and mine are exactly the same. So when he took up the issue, I didn't have to tell him what to say. He's taken a strong position and he's the only one in the Senate saying it. He was the only person to stay on the floor to argue the position--for seven hours. He got some support in a few perfunctory speeches, but no one else really fought against the lifting of sanctions. He is the opposition."

Then I asked them about Senator McGovern's contrasting support for Angola speech and criticism of Rhodesia observer-speech. McGovern, is Chairman of *of F.R. Comm. "He took the Chairmanship of the Africa Subcommittee"* African subcommittee with great reluctance and after a lot of thought. He took a trip to Southern Africa and made a lot of typical liberal American remarks about the horrors of apartheid. But he doesn't want to go into it seriously. He's scared. He has told his staff--I know them, I went to UCLA with Pauline-- that he wants to play it pragmatically and that they are not going to rock the boat in an election year."

Rich: "The reason why McGovern made that angry speech on the observer issue was because Paul likened it--and this was not in Chris' written speech--

to the Gulf of Tonkin. That touched an exposed nerve with McGovern, and he got mad. It didn't last long. They talked it over on the floor."

Chris: "Well it hasn't been forgotten either. The relations between our staff and his staff have gotten worse and worse. There's a good deal of animosity between us now. It's not our fault; it's their fault. I'm sorry to say that. I've known Pauline since UCLA. She's had a lot more experience than I've had. They think we're trying to take over their territory. And we're making them look bad among the Africanists. We are taking the lead. I think she'd rather be taking the position we are ^{taking} than the one she is taking. I sat in on conversation between Paul and McGovern--on part of it--and it was a strained conversation."

I asked if anyone else was interested in Africa in the Senate. Rich said that no one else was. "If Paul dropped the lance, no one would pick it up."

Rich talked about the fact that "Paul's personal motivations are stronger in this area than in any other area. It is the issue he personally cares the most about. It involves his roots. He will always be more aggressive here than in any other area. He is more likely to take initiatives here."

...The other evening Mitch and I were here alone and Mitch said he was worried at the amount of influence he had over Paul's performance on the energy bill. We got 10 or 12 amendments passed in committee, and Paul hadn't even seen some of them. I used Africa to explain to Mitch that these are some areas where Paul takes nearly all the initiatives."

The point here is that staff influence worries inversely with member personal interest.

Later Rich made same point. "Africa was Paul's major personal interest when he first came to Congress. He wanted to go on the Foreign Affairs Committee, but he didn't think he should. It wouldn't look very good for a

first term congressman from Lowell to be running around talking Africa, Africa. One reason he went on the Banking committee was because it had two international subcommittees. He's not interested in banking institutions. He is interested in housing, which is handled by Banking. But he was interested in the subcommittees on trade and international development. By his second term, he began to come out of the closet. And he's shown his interest in Africa ever since. Some day he will be on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It will be a thread in Paul's Senate career for as long as he stays around here.

Individualist
Rich noted--as differentiated from the Asbell and Culver stories, that Paul's association with Africa will be episodic, since it is not tied (yet) to any subcommittee chairmanship or formal process. "The institution isn't forcing him to deal with Africa. He will deal with Africa as occasions (or events) arise in external world or as the spirit moves him. And that will make for a different story line."

We discussed whether or not there were political costs to this--at home or in Senate.

As for the Senate, I returned to the Wayne Morse analogy--noting that Wayne Morse was both a prophet and a maverick.

Rich said "Paul is not a Wayne Morse. He's not a maverick. I have said this to you before--that I think Paul is almost the ideal legislator. He always works for compromise. He works well with people who are opposed to him. In fact he seeks out the people who disagree with him."

"In the Senate there is a lot less hostility to people who speak when they aren't a member of the committee dealing with the subject. In the House, you can hardly get anywhere if you speak but are not on the committee. There is much more protection of turf there than in the Senate. Besides I think Paul did a masterful job of positioning himself after the committee assignments. Despite the fact the he got 2 of his top 3 choices, he positioned himself as a

loser. It is assumed that he will get the next vacancy. So he's a sort of shadow member of the committee now. That tempers any resentment."

And finally (my comment) it is obvious that he has a long standing personal interest in Africa-peace corps etc. He's not a johnny come lately. Also, it's not a crowded field.

Chris chimed in and spoke of how Paul moves easily around the floor dealing with other members--how he got Moynihan's vote on lifting of sanctions. But I can't credit Chris with being an astute observer on this.

Chris got very eloquent about the "turning point" nature of things now. South Africa is girding for a struggle, growing strong and if they get ~~in~~ in *transigent*, African problem will get worse. Even if South Africa and Rhodesia settle down, there will be problems for Paul to deal with, "Instability is the name of Africa,"-especially the southern and western part. The eastern part is more stable--pre colonial. Zaire could blow up, etc. Much of what he said was triggered by my question "Where do you go from here?" And he wanted to make the point that Paul would be stimulated on African matters for as long as one could see.

As to how they chose Chris--he's a Ph.D. in economic history from UCLA, got a public affairs grant of some sort from Hoover Institute (about which he was very defensive) to get him to D.C. He applied 2 days after Paul's election--as did a lot of his Africanist friends! "Everybody in Washington knew Paul Tsongas wanted to have an Africanist. Everybody applied. I had heard he was good to work for. It's the best job I could have." Very happy. Nice and unassuming.

Rich said they had 3500 applications for jobs--that he interviewed 300 himself. They narrowed the Africanist job down to 4 people. Chris had credentials, was personally adaptable and "we viewed his lack of full experience

as a plus where so many people who had already staked out their position for everybody to see, we thought it an advantage to hire someone who was coming to everything fresh."

On personal adaptability, Rich said "We run a different operation from most offices. Typically there's a tendency for staff to get a specialty and then to build a wall around themselves and protect their turf. We wanted a more cooperative arrangement where people have areas of special responsibility, but ~~where there are~~ no rigid, hard and fast separations ^{--so} that we can pool our resources on a problem and work together when need be."

He indicated that there were Dick Clark and Don Fraser specialists all around looking for jobs.

On the Massachusetts political liability, Rich said "If the only time Paul got in the Boston Globe was on Africa, I'd be worried. But that isn't going to happen. His interests are much broader than that. Massachusetts is a unique case--and it goes back to Jack Kennedy. He made a kind of style acceptable in Massachusetts. That style stresses involvement in the world. It's not that Massachusetts is a very liberal state. It isn't. But ~~that~~ the lunch bucket worker or the South Boston Democrat ^{ic} pol accepts the idea that their Senator should be interested in foreign policy. Besides, Senators are supposed to be more interested in foreign policy than House members."

Chris said he was happy that Africa didn't involve "money or nuts and bolts" ^{involves} less pressure on him. (That may mean that business doesn't yet feel threatened on [^] Lett Africa stuff.)