Excerpts from the Russia Country Reader

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SOVIET UNION/RUSSIA

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	1979-1981	Deputy Assistant Secretary for USSR and Europe, Washington, DC
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	1973-1974	Political Officer, Moscow
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	1971-1973	Economic Officer, Moscow
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	1978-1980	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
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	1979-1980	Press Officer, Moscow
	1980-1982	Soviet Union Desk Office, Washington, DC
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Michael A. Boorstein	1978-1980	Administrative Officer, Moscow
	1980-1981	Supervisory General Services Officer, Moscow
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	1982-1985	Economic Counselor, Moscow

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Warren Zimmerman	1981-1984	Deputy Chief of Mission, Moscow
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Joseph R. McGhee	1991-1992	Deputy Director, Office of Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Robert S. Strauss	1991-1992	Ambassador, USSR
Nadia Tongour	1991-1993	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
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	1996-1997	Political Officer, Moscow

Ralph H. Ruedy	1995-1997	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Moscow
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Jane Miller Floyd	1996-1998	Consul General, Vladivostok, Russia
Louise Taylor	1996-1998	Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States, Washington, DC

EDWARD R. PIERCE
Clerk
Moscow (1938-1940)

Edward R. Pierce was born in Lexington, Mississippi and raised in Washington, DC. After working in the US Patent Office and attending Strayer College and George Washington University, he took a clerical job in the Foreign Service in 1937. Pierce held positions in Germany, Italy, Washington, DC, and the Bahamas. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You arrived in Moscow in November of 1938. Were you given any briefing when you got to Moscow about security precautions and all that? Was there concern about compromising American personnel or things that could get you into trouble, or things like that?

PIERCE: Actually, no. I knew a lot. See, between the time I was told I was going to Moscow, and I actually left, I knew several people back in the State Department who had served in Moscow. See, the embassy opened in '34, actually '33, but we didn't have anybody in there. They had to staff it. So they sent at least two or three code people from up in David Salomon's outfit. A couple had come back, one of them had quit or been fired, or something. To be frank with you, there appeared to be an awful lot of homosexuality.

Q: It's interesting, and this is what is known today as politically incorrect, but it does seem that within the code business, and the communications business, many of the people who were involved in this were sort of loners.

PIERCE: They were the ones who were good at it.

Q: It wasn't necessarily just plain homosexuality. They were sort of loners. In a way, they were different than you might say the more gregarious other people, which made them more susceptible, I think.

PIERCE: It's a filthy story, I'm telling you. It's never been told. I know some things I'm not even going to tell you. But the reason is, I'm not sure to this day...the actual people are dead. The clock's taken care of most of them. But who's left behind? They're covering up. Now you can cut some of this out, if you want.

Q: No, we'll leave it here.

PIERCE: There's no question...I wasn't going to do this, but I'm going to show you a picture. You can draw your own conclusions. You see, when you talk about stuff like this, you begin to talk about people who are considered to be icons. When you attack an icon, any fool knows, you're liable to get hurt because most people would say, "Imagine that jerk talking about so-and-so." Truth of the matter is, the absolute facts, the truth has been covered up for 50 years. Fifty years. It's still being covered up. Because all this talk about documents coming out into the open, you know, is carefully managed. There's a lot of them that are not going to know.

Q: What are we talking about, we're talking about the '38 to '40 period. What is this we're talking about?

PIERCE: Well, we're talking about flatly, treason. I mean, you ask me if there were really instructions given to me on security, vulnerability from women, and stuff like that. All that's been going on, you know, for 2,000 years.

Q: But when you go to a place where you know the NKVD [Narodni Kommissariat Vnutrennykh Del - People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs - Soviet secret police] was trapping people...I would think somebody would say, "Watch out for this."

PIERCE: It's a very strange thing, and you ask a very good question. I guess it was assumed that everybody knew it. Certainly I knew it. But maybe I was more educated in the State Department world. But the same applies to any country. You hear it all the time. I mean, Jack Kennedy was supposed to have been involved with some German woman, stuff like that. Let me show you this...

Q: You're saying that William Bullitt supposedly selected his staff. He was the first ambassador there, and he had...because I didn't have the tape on...they were...

PIERCE: ...a weird bunch. A couple of them straight off the Left Bank in Paris. I'm telling you! Well, it's a wonder I wasn't stepped on and squashed long ago.

Q: When you went out there what was your position?

PIERCE: I was a clerk.

Q: All right, there were other clerks who were probably putting you into the picture, weren't they? When you got there, they would say, "You know, watch out for so and so."

PIERCE: Yes, right. Maybe it was my fault. I think I sort of felt I knew more than most of them, anyway. I'd been around longer, and from an early age, and so on and so forth. I'll tell you, even if you were there, staring at it day after day, it really doesn't... Certain things happened later on.

Q: What was the atmosphere at the embassy?

PIERCE: Very strange. It was wintertime when I first got there. Gloomy. The sun comes up at ten in the morning, sets at four in the afternoon. Everybody drank a lot. Anybody who was inclined to drink that was the worst place to send them. There was no organized social life for anybody but the top echelon at the embassy. Everybody else was left on their own. I'm telling you it was really strange. Well, I'm not going to say too much, but there were people there who had been there since the embassy opened. You understand? This is more than four years. Moscow was a hardship post. You're not supposed to spend more than 18 months there. How did these people remain all this time? It wasn't because they were forced to. It's because they wanted to, and somebody wanted them to be there.
Q: You pointed out up above....yes.

PIERCE: Absolutely. There they were. Nobody over a period of time...it was like going into the Army and getting kicked around in boot camp...you don't have a chance. They've got ways of making you miserable, keeping you busy. I'm telling you. I'm probably, I'm not proud of it at all...I'm probably the only clerk that ever went there that had the background to be observant and the tenacity to hang on and be observant and the good friends... since I was 18 years old back in the States...to keep me on the payroll in spite of some efforts to do anything at all...disgrace me and what not. These people were vicious.

Q: Let's talk about this. We're talking basically right now...what type of things were happening, socially...?

PIERCE: The social life was left up to the individual. If you were interested, let's say, in ballet, or music, or something, you could keep really busy there in Moscow. If you were interested in athletics, you could go to ski and ice skate, and do this and do that. But there was no meeting place for, say, a young man like me, American, 27 years old to go and meet nice girls. So you didn't meet any nice girls. You met some bad ones. You had to presume that they were reporting immediately to the secret police, because if they didn't they'd be out in Siberia.

Q: Did you have the feeling...I talked to somebody who was there somewhat later and said there was a hierarchy of I think they're called "sparrows." That if you were at the very top you sort of ended up with a ballet dancer and then you moved down by rank. But you were pretty much aware that these were young ladies who either were assigned to

you or if you became acquainted with them they very soon had to make their deals with the NKVD.

PIERCE: Without any question. You had to presume that. But everybody knew that.

Q: Did it make any difference? I would think there would be the normal male/female liaisons.

PIERCE: Absolutely. In these homosexual cases, God knows what they were doing. I had a girlfriend. Not right after I got there. I met her at the Metropole Hotel in a bar or something. I believe she worked for one of the government agencies right around the Kremlin there somewhere. From all appearances, she'd be like some girl you'd meet over at Annandale or Falls Church. But you had to know...it just made sense that...She never asked any questions. But she didn't have to because I would go out with her, and there would be a couple of other guys and their girlfriends, there's bound to be some talk back and forth.

…

Q: You're pointing in the picture to Joseph Davies.

PIERCE: This lady sitting here in the front row where all the ladies are...How many of them are there...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight women, and I would say approximately 30 men. Unfortunately, about one third of them were homosexuals. No question about it. She was highly publicized at that time as the richest woman in the world.

Q: Mrs. Davies.

PIERCE: Marjorie Post Davies. Everybody's eating Post Toasties so they know about that. Here's Joe Davies, the ambassador, who really got famous for his book called *Mission to Moscow*. The word is, and I believe it, that he wrote about 10 words in the whole book. He didn't even trouble to learn a few words of Russian. He hated the place because she hated it. From all accounts she had all that wealth and they owned the biggest yacht in the world, which they kept moored up at St. Petersburg.

…

Q: You mentioned that [Code room communicator] Tyler Kent was arrested.

PIERCE: Well, that's part of the cover-up.

Q: He spent six years in a British prison.

PIERCE: Incommunicado. They let him go at the end of the war. He may even have been given money to keep quiet. 'Cause Tyler Kent know all about [Code room communicator Henry] Antheil. Here's the real point. Kent was arrested in London on May 20, 1940, open and shut. Open and shut because he had hundreds of... They put him in the code

room, see? He was a very intelligent guy. I knew Kent for the brief time he served in Moscow, after I had got there.

He was privy to the exchange of very secret messages between Churchill and Roosevelt. Hitler was poised over in Europe after Dunkirk, ready to invade England. Nobody knows quite why he did it. Unless we had come into the war. Strangely enough, many people are still very suspicious about Pearl Harbor, the timing of it. Hitler would have overrun England, there's no question about it. The liaison between Churchill and Roosevelt was priceless. I'm not saying anything in criticism of that. Hitler would have overrun England and the world would be different today.

But here's the point of the story. 1940 was an election year. Roosevelt was elected in '32, '36, and he was running for the third term in 1940. Never been done before. The isolationists, of whom there were millions, were raving away, and gaining ground, really, all the time, because people didn't like the idea of what they saw coming. Father Coughlin, you ever hear of him?

Q: Oh, yes, in Detroit.

PIERCE: He was banging away, and various other people. Roosevelt wasn't even certain of getting nominated for a third term. A lot of people didn't like the idea of a third term.

Q: Oh, yes.

PIERCE: Here's Kent, May 20, 1940, arrested, guilty as he could be. He had hundreds of cables in his apartment including the super-secret stuff between Churchill and Roosevelt. His aim was to get it into the hands of the isolationists in the States. With the idea, and he was correct, if he could get that info there, that Churchill and Roosevelt were under the table maneuvering, Roosevelt probably wouldn't even get nominated much less elected. So what do they do? They put him away for five years on the Isle of Wight digging potatoes or whatever he did. Then when the war is over, late '45, they let him loose. Kent. He married a rich widow. Family that established Hyattsville, I think. Named Martha Hyatt, millionaire woman, much older than he. He just lived out his life, he's dead now, but he remained quiet. Okay, that's Kent. Okay, that's May 20, 1940. Covered up in a secret trial. Here's an American citizen. They put him away, secret.

VLADIMIR LEHOVICH
USIS Exhibition Tour
Soviet Union (1961-1962)

Vladimir Lehovich was born in New York in 1939 and received his Bachelor's Degree from Harvard University 1961. He was posted to

Saigon, Brussels, Bonn and Vienna. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Lehovich on March 25, 1997.

Q: Did you find that you or any of your colleagues - were there attempts by the KGB to compromise you?

LEHOVICH: Yes, there were attempts to compromise a couple of my other colleagues. I was not put in that particular situation. I think what they were doing was conducting very intensive biographic intelligence on me, personality surveillance, psychological profiling. I think they were looking at me much more in terms of the long term than anything they wanted to mess up right there and then. I presume they knew that I was going to join the diplomatic service. I didn't conceal this kind of thing. So, the KGB was actually very decent to me. I knew that they were around all the time. They got me cabs without my knowing it or asking for it. Once, they pulled me out of a very nasty situation with a half-crazy drunk whose hobby was fist-fighting. He was very good at it. A half crazy drunk on a snowy night attacked me and was amusing himself by having me on the ground and was stomping on my ears. That's a very frustrating situation, Stu, when some guy is stomping on your ears, when you're lying on the ground, with the heel of his foot. Luckily, I had a hat on, which didn't come off. Even more luckily, a taxi pulled up, which I should have notices earlier was in the neighborhood because of me. The driver got out and I saw from the ground out of the corner of my eye, he took the guy who was stomping on me, he hit him only once in the back of the neck, and then he stacked him like a big bag of potatoes against the wall. Then he changed the expression on his face to a friendly one and in a friendly way asked me if I wanted a taxi ride. That was the KGB. So, I didn't have any hostile behavior. The rules we played by, those of us who were reasonable about it, was not to make life hard for those guys and we didn't.

Q: I would have thought though, using young people - I've had problems with young Foreign Service officers who start playing games. I think, as you get older, you understand your surveillants are people doing their job and you don't play games. Why make it more difficult for them?

LEHOVICH: There's a big temptation to do it. I remember clearly that we were told in a very unambiguous way before and during not to do that. Apparently, it was convincing. The real reason you don't do it is because they have one of the dumber jobs in the country, and they were not being well-rewarded for it. It's not a particular glamorous job to tail people like me around. If you don't bother them, they think they've done a great job. They think they've followed you all day, know a lot about you, and have not fallen into disgrace and you haven't made an obscene gesture at them or anything like that. The only thing I ever did to those guys, which I think was a good thing to do on balance, was one evening when I was with a young lady at a cafe, one of these hard to find cafes in Moscow, called "The Cafe Lyra," which was open rather late every day and had a good omelette and very cheap champagne, a very drinkable kind. I sent a bottle of champagne and a glass with my compliments to the KGB monitor who followed me around most evenings. This fellow then left. I didn't mean for him to leave. I hoped he might enjoy the

champagne, but he left. I felt more like James Bond than I ever had before or ever have since. I don't think that was an unfriendly thing to do to the guy.

THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN
Intelligence Research Specialist
Moscow (1962-1964)

Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1968-1970)

Political Counselor
Moscow (1970-1973)

Thompson R. Buchanan was born in Beverly Hills, California in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1946. Mr. Buchanan's Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, France, Russia, Burundi, Gabon, and Norway. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 15, 1996.

Q: You had been dealing with the Soviet Union for really a considerable period of time, from 1948-62, after being there were there any shocks or changes of attitude about things?

BUCHANAN: Of course, Khrushchev was in power. It was a period of so-called thaw. There was hope and excitement in the air. Unorthodox books started being published, one called, for example, "Not by Bread Alone," by Dudintsev. During my first tour at the embassy we were fortunate to live out on Leninsky Prospekt, alongside Soviets and East Europeans, not in an American ghetto. On my first taxi ride into town I asked the driver how things were now compared to Stalin's day. There was the same nostalgia we hear today. The driver replied: "Ah, much worse. In Stalin's day you could buy a bottle of vodka for two kopeks," a gross exaggeration.

It was an exciting period because Khrushchev was a very lively leader and he had no compunction about visiting with foreigners. I remember I was at a businessman's reception and I got into an argument with some KGB type from the Ministry of Commerce. He finally grabbed me (he had had a few drinks) and said, "Here is a man who can answer our argument," and started dragging me across the room. Good grief, he was dragging me to Khrushchev who had just entered. So, it was an exciting time.

Q: Were you there during the missile crisis over Cuba?

BUCHANAN: I was. We were in many ways much more insulated against the panic and fears that one would have had if one had been in Washington. We didn't have the newspapers and TV to alarm us every day. The Soviet press was pretty bland on this issue. I was personally not very heavily involved, the negotiations were very closely held

by the ambassador, the DCM, Jack McSweeney, and Dick Davies, Political Counselor. But I also came to Russia with a strong belief that the Russians huff and puff but then retreat. They are not adventurous, but conservative in their policies. So, I was not inclined to be scared.

It was an interesting time on another level. The Robert Shaw Chorale was in Russia at that time. They sang the Bach B Minor Mass, which the Russians had never been allowed to hear. It was a very moving experience. We were present when a young Russian artist, who had managed to get a second black market ticket, and spent all night painting a picture of Christ, rushed up to present it to Robert Shaw the following day after the concert. Shaw told us that the Russians in Leningrad had asked him if he would agree to serve there as choral director, an honor he declined.

Q: What was your impression of the embassy, how it operated, the morale, the ambassador, the staff?

BUCHANAN: It is a very different embassy than now. We didn't have professional area specialists, for example. The most interesting area in those days were in Asia, particularly Laos. So as head of the foreign political section I made myself "the Asian expert," not really knowing much about Asia. I remember once Kohler saying, "I hope you know something about Laos, Tom, because no one else does." The Brits also didn't seem to know a great deal.

On that score, one of the more amusing incidents was in the summer of 1963 when Harriman came to discuss Laos with Gromyko. Gromyko started his usual diatribe, Harriman listened for about a minute and then ostentatiously turned off his listening aid, so Gromyko was talking to himself for 20 minutes. Afterwards we had the usual VIP lunch at the Foreign Ministry guest house. Bill Sullivan and Mike Forrestal, Harriman's aides, were there. Both of them regaled Gromkyo by saying that the governor was called "the crocodile." Gromyko was quite amused, but not the governor.

Q: How did you find morale there?

BUCHANAN: I thought that it was good. Any situation where people feel themselves under pressure and isolated, brings out their inner resources and feeling of comradery. These feelings extend to officers in other diplomatic missions during my first tour, the diplomatic colony remained small enough so that there was a good cross section of diplomats from all parts of the globe at social events, in contrast to the 1970s when parties tended to be regionally segregated. Morale was better in the 1960s than later, but that may simply be because I was a younger, more lighthearted officer. To hear the old hands speak who served in Stalin's time, that was truly the *belle époque* of service in Moscow.

Q: What was the view of Khrushchev during this particular time?

BUCHANAN: To some extent the feeling was that this was someone with whom we could do business, and in fact, of course, we did. We negotiated the nuclear test ban treaty and kept up a dialogue. He was a very tough negotiator and a highly erratic human being, so you never knew which way he was going to jump. But, he certainly was the most interesting leader that we had to deal with, and there was some hope.

Q: How was the death, the assassination, of President Kennedy treated?

BUCHANAN: Well, I was at the French commercial counselor's smoking a large Cuban cigar, which was making me increasingly green when the Agence France Press correspondent went to the phone and came rushing back and told us the shocking news. I was happy to be able to dash out of the room at that point. The Russians treated this as though we had killed their leader. In a certain sense he was, for he was their ideal, the sort of young leader they would have liked to have had. So, there were recriminations from people in the streets, how could we have allowed this to happen. Khrushchev came and signed the condolence book at the embassy. It was a very moving period.

Q: Was the Oswald connection...?

BUCHANAN: Consular affairs, of course, had a flap to find out what they could on Oswald, pull out the file. But the Soviet press didn't publish it for obvious reasons. We on the political side never thought this was a KGB plot to kill Kennedy. We just thought Oswald was a nut.

Q: Yes, because we dealt with these nuts in our business so much that you know that they are out there. Did you and your family have any interesting experiences with the Russians?

BUCHANAN: Let me give you a few examples. Our daughter and a pretty French friend of hers visited us in the summer and very quickly attracted the attention of two nice looking young Russians, obviously children of the Nomenklatura living in our area. The Russians used to take them out to Gorky Park, where they would sneak into restaurants by the back door, and obviously have fun. The boys would turn up their coat collars to avoid being recognized as they walked by the militia outside our entrance when they came to visit us, but they stood out because they were much better dressed than the American kids.

I took my son to Central Asia during his Easter vacation and we visited Frunze, now called Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. It was memorable in part because the police were so obnoxious, blocking everything we wanted to do. It was so bad that when we went see the Imam (religious leader) of Kirghizia, who had invited us to come and have a real Kirghiz meal, and we saw a car with four toughs sitting outside his door, we told him that another time would probably be better. He was visibly relieved. So instead , we went to a restaurant, with a good jazz band, where a fight broke out between a well-dressed group of Iraqi air force pilots and a drunken Kirghiz, who was almost knifed.

A young Russian, who was accompanying the Iraqis, then attached himself to us, or rather to the attractive, red head teacher from the Anglo-American school who was accompanying us. We said we were going to church because it was Easter. He said he would like to come along, claiming to be an ex-MVD officer who was now studying to become a surgeon. In any case, we got to the church through about a foot and a half of mud, pouring rain and women milling around trying to get into the church. It was the best show in town on a Saturday night, so all the young Komsomol thugs were trying to push their way into the church, and being thrown back down the steps by muscular *babushki*. It ended up with our self-appointed guide and I standing on steps, helping the ladies. Finally, our "friend" pulled our teacher into the church. She had the impression that he really did want to see the service. At that point the little old ladies all turned on me, assuming that I was a militia officer, saying "aren't you ashamed of yourself allowing these hooligans to behave this way?" When I explained who we were, they apologized, put their umbrellas up over us, and then asked: "Is it true that in America the Easter service is broadcast over television?" Word of the West had traveled even here to the Afghan border.

One of our neighbors on Leninsky Prospekt was Victor Louis, a notorious KGB agent coopteé. He tried to ingratiate himself with us by introducing us to Oskar, a dissident artist. When we went back to Moscow on our second tour, we found that he had moved up in the world, with a house in Peredelkino, a fashionable artistic suburbanite. He had his own ski lift, a Mercedes and Jaguar. We had finally given him a visa to visit the US An American, whom he had visited, told us that Viktor had asked him to ship back $1,000 worth of miscellanea that he had bought at Hammacher and Schlemmer. Basically, Viktor was a 19th century buccaneer, who knew how to use the Soviet system to the best advantage of himself and his English nanny wife, Jennifer, who regularly attended Sunday church service with their children at the English Embassy.

Q: Wasn't he also sort of used by us as someone we could talk to?

BUCHANAN: He used us and we used him, to hear what Viktor had to say. It was often interesting, something the Soviets wanted us to know On one occasion, he basically told our Administrative officer that Khrushchev had been overthrown, but the officer did not appreciate what he was being told and waited a day before passing on the information. The Soviets used to send Viktor off to places like Israel, where they did not have relations, to sort of sniff out the terrain. He claimed to have an in-law in Copenhagen, who was in the rug business, to explain how he was able to bring back large quantities of rugs for all of his *Nomenklatura* friends. As I said, he knew how to work the system.

You asked about morale. I think where morale wasn't very good was among the children. It was a very difficult post for children. The only place they had to play was in a sort of little playground next to the garbage dump. They were always getting into trouble for obvious reasons. One time they set a fire in the chancery's only elevator. So, it was difficult. Our son went to the Anglo-American School there which was run jointly by the two embassies. It had some good teachers, but later he said he wished in a way he had gone to a Soviet school. Some people, who sent their children to Moscow schools, found

it was a good experience and we had thought about it. But, Campbell had been in a German school in Frankfurt and came away with a heavy German accent in English; then he had been in French school and left feeling more French than American, so we said no, we didn't want him confused again.

My two years flew by and the time came for the April Fool sheet. As I mentioned I had become hooked on Africa and applied to go to a French-speaking, Sub-Saharan post on the water. From a career standpoint obviously, I would have been smarter to have tried to stay in EUR and get involved in "important" political-military affairs. But, I was always more interested in doing what I enjoyed than what might professionally advance my career.

Q: That is one of the great fun of the Foreign Service. You can sort of pick an area of the world and say, "Gee, I would like to go there," and there is a reasonable chance if you try hard enough that you can go there.

BUCHANAN: Exactly. I was thinking about being on the water, Dakar or Abidjan, but I couldn't fault Personnel when they sent me to Bujumbura on the longest lake in the world, Lake Tanganyika, French speaking, sub-Sahara.

Q: Before we move to Burundi, while in Moscow you dealt with Soviet foreign affairs. What was the Soviet policy towards the rest of the world?

BUCHANAN: Khrushchev's offensive into the Third World was still continuing. He was having problems because so many Third World states were becoming disenchanted and the Soviets, themselves, were becoming disenchanted with their greedy "allies". Foreign aid was about as popular in Russia as it is in the Middle West of the United States, with all sorts of anecdotes..."If we get one more ally we are going to go broke." Nevertheless, Khrushchev was an activist and it didn't matter whether you were talking about Asia or Africa, his diplomats and his KGB types were out there, trying to weaken our influence and promote Soviet interests.

In the area of bilateral relations, as I mentioned, we began to do business. Khrushchev was an impressionable person, in the sense that even though he was an ideologue, who felt that by going back to some of Lenin's policies he could revitalize the Communist Party, he was open to outside influences. He was tremendously impressed by his trip to the United States and, of course, very impressed by what we could do in the area of agriculture. He also, I think, genuinely got along very well and had personal respect for General Eisenhower. So, from that standpoint the U-2 incident was a personal disappointment for Khrushchev. It was also a great embarrassment to him to have to admit that the Americans had been able to overfly Russian territory for years and take photographs, and the Soviet military hadn't been able to do anything about it. I think his apoplectic reaction in Paris was basically embarrassment, and an effort to protect himself politically. In retrospect, of course, he was under greater pressure internally than we realized at the time. To be sure, there were rumors that he had his problems, that there was an opposition. A variety of names kept surfacing as potential rivals. But, when he was actually bounced, I had already left, we were more relaxed because that year there

had been a very good crop. The previous year, 1963, when we were in Russia, there had been basically a famine. Bread to the Russians is very important and some of the bread you bought in shops was almost inedible. It was a very difficult time. So, logically we thought if Khrushchev was going to be bounced, that he would have been removed in 1963.

In a sense we all found him an interesting person to deal with, yet he made us somewhat nervous because he was, as the Russians accused him, subjective, volatile, and erratic. And quite arbitrary and impulsive. He decided for example, that since the Americans had such success growing corn, it should be grown all over the Soviet Union. It did not matter whether local conditions favored the growth of corn or not. His huge program earned him the name of "Nikita Kukuruznik", the corn grower. He began a similar massive campaign to grow vegetables. He got into much greater political trouble, however, when he decided to split the regional Communist Party organizations into urban and agricultural sections, thereby depriving powerful Party officials of part of their fiefdoms. When he undertook a serious program of arms reduction, cutting the armed forces by over a million men, many coddled officers found themselves sent out to collective farms to become collective farm chairmen. By the time of his ouster, Khrushchev had managed to alienate virtually every powerful group in that population. That made it easy for Brezhnev to topple him.

I went back into Soviet affairs, on the desk, and became de facto deputy to Spike Dubs.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1968-70. I arrived just when the Czech crisis was coming to a head.

Q: Explain this crisis.

BUCHANAN: It was the Prague Spring when Communist Party leader Alexander Dubcek, challenged Moscow by a program of radical change in Czechoslovakia aimed at the creation of a "Socialism with a human face." Spike Dubs and I were impressed by the *sang froid* of the old Soviet hands, Chip Bohlen and Mac Toon, during the tense weeks that led up to the Soviet invasion. While we bit our nails, wondering if Moscow would react, they went off and played golf, convinced no doubt that there was nothing that the US could do, realistically, that would affect Moscow's decision. It was during this period when Spike continued to smoke his three to four packs of cigarettes a day, and I increased my intake from a maximum of ten to a pack and a half, that I made my decision to stop smoking. I have not smoked since.

Q: From the desk, how did we view the Soviet Union during this 1968-70 period?

BUCHANAN: As an assertive, muscular and somewhat unpredictable power. The proclamations of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine, in connection with Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia, whereby the Soviets asserted their right to intervene wherever a Communist regime was threatened, introduced an element of increased tension into East-West relations. We felt that we must demonstrate that we were not going to be pushed

around whether in Berlin or elsewhere. But we were also concerned to probe and determine what agreements we could reach with the Soviets that were of mutual benefit. I was head, at the time, of the Bilateral Section in EUR/SOV. The travel program whereby we monitored the travel of Soviet officials in the US, authorizing travel on a strict reciprocity basis, depending on who was allowed to travel in Moscow, and what difficulties they encountered. I inherited the program whereby our two sides exchanged chancery sites and agreed on the terms of construction. There is a general impression that the State Department gave away the store in allowing the Soviets to build their new chancery on Mount Alto on Wisconsin Avenue. I learned that this was a distortion of what happened. In fact, the Soviets had tried to purchase two other estates, Tregarin and Bonnie Brae, before agreeing to Mount Alto. In each case, neighbors objected strongly to having a Soviet Embassy nearby. It was finally agreed that we needed to find federal property, over which we had full control, if any exchange was to take place. The only obviously suitable federal property was the old Veterans hospital on Mt. Alto. Initially there was little understanding among diplomats on either side, I suspect, of the intelligence value of being on high ground. Eventually, of course, Soviet technical experts doubtless reassured their diplomatic colleagues that they had made a good deal, and we, on our side, realized that we had made a mistake. If Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson had been briefed about the potential of radio intercepts in Moscow, he might not have so cavalierly rejected Stalin's offer of some 15 acres of land on Lenin Hills, but he thought at the time that Stalin was trying to isolate the Americans, away from the center of town. We ended up, therefore, with a property next to our old embassy on Tchaikovsky Prospekt, which was dominated by higher buildings all around. The Soviets then rejected our request to build a chancery building thirteen stories high, and we had to compromise with eight stories.

I recall being very much concerned with the issue of security in constructing our new embassy. My thought was to try to have everything built off site in Denmark, Germany or in the United States. But our hands were tied because the head of the Federal Buildings Organization (FBO) had been basically nominated by Wayne Hayes, who headed the Appropriations Committee in Congress. Hayes had been told years before that the embassy would cost $36 million, and no one had had the guts to tell him that that figure was totally unrealistic, particularly if we tried to build much of the embassy off site. To some extent, therefore, concern to try to keep our budget somewhere within the projected figure took priority over concern for security. But we were also arrogant in our belief that we could take care of any "bugs" that the Soviets planted during the construction phase. After all, we were technically more advanced!

A major issue was who should be allowed to carry out the actual construction. We insisted that we should be allowed to bring in our own workmen, and do most of the construction ourselves in Moscow. The Soviets argued that this was "humiliating;" that they were perfectly competent to do the construction for us. I recall the present Russian Ambassador to Washington, Vorontsov, who was then Deputy Chief of Mission, saying to me: "But Mr. Buchanan, why should you object? After all, we don't insist that Cubans build our embassy here. We are prepared to let your construction people build our embassy. I can assure you that your FBI is no less clever than our KGB." Well, actually I

don't think it would have made any great difference even if all my plans had materialized, because none of us foresaw the skill with which the Soviets introduced listening devices into the great steel girders, which we would probably have considered much too expensive to import.

Q: At a later date, the '80s I guess, it became quite evident that the new embassy was riddled with listening devices and that...

BUCHANAN: They were so sophisticated that to this day I am not sure we know entirely how they work.

Q: And it has been unusable more or less. I don 't know what has happened to it.

BUCHANAN: Well, it should be used, it could have been used. In fact, when I went there in 1992 for Humanitarian Aid, I thought what we should be doing is putting all the unclassified aspects of the embassy -- AID, USIA, Commerce -- should have all been put in that building. They didn't need any classified section. But we continued to have different technicians working inside the embassy to uncover the damage, and it remained unused. Finally, as you know we seem to have decided what we are going to do with the building, but it has been a long story.

Another big issue on my plate involved the exchange of consulates between Leningrad and San Francisco, notably the definition of our respective consular districts. Our last consulate in the U.S.S.R., in Vladivostok, was closed in 1948. This was an effort, in a sense, to get back to the era when we had some consular listening posts. My major problem was how to define our consular district in the Baltic states without seeming to acknowledge Soviet occupation of the area in 1940. Under the final compromise, the capital cities of the Baltic states, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius, were placed within the Leningrad consular district, but the remainder of the Baltic territory was the responsibility of our Embassy in Moscow. To avoid appearing to accept Soviet rule in the capital cities, we developed a whole protocol for our visits. When I was Consul General, I was authorized to meet officials up to the Deputy Minister rank, but not above; and I could fly the flag but not when I was visiting an official building like the Foreign Ministry. The local population seemed to appreciate my flying the flag in driving around town, as a symbol of our interest in their future. My French colleague in Leningrad, who was not allowed to visit the Baltic States, with obvious envy, accused us correctly of "hypocrisy." After the agreement on the exchange of consulates was concluded, I accompanied a CODEL to Moscow, where I was embarrassed to see our representatives silent in the face of Soviet vituperation, on the principle apparently that guests should not talk back to their hosts. They did not understand that Russians only respect people who stand up for their principles. On the way back from Tashkent, where I let the delegation go on to a Parliamentary Union meeting in India, I stopped off in Leningrad to try and identify consular property that would meet our various specifications. I thought at the time that we must have owned Embassy property before the revolution, and I thought that it would be fun to try and rent the same property, if appropriate. I discovered, however, that we had never owned property, that our ministers and ambassadors had always rented

their residences and chanceries, depending on their pocketbooks. The 1914 Baedeker listed our chancery at 11 Million street behind the Hermitage. Since the collapse of Communism, the street has reverted to its pre-revolutionary name. I thought that it would be appropriate for the great Capitalist power to be lodged on Million Street, but unfortunately the building was too large, too many people would have had to be evicted. As it was, the Soviets offered us property on Petra Lavrova, almost opposite our last chancery site at No. 24, as I requested in the note I wrote upon my return to Washington. The Soviets told my predecessors that our last Embassy had been in a building which housed a "wedding palace" on Petra Lavrova. But my research showed that not to be the case. George Kennan made a photograph of our former Embassy when he visited it in the 1930s to recover Embassy archives that had been left there by the Norwegians, who represented American interests after we broke relations following the revolution. This search for our former chancery properties became a hobby when I was stationed in Leningrad.

JAMES A. KLEMSTINE
Consular Officer
Moscow (1963-1965)

James A. Klemstine was born in Pennsylvania in 1930. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1952-1954 and entered the Foreign Service in 1956. Mr. Klemstine's career included assignments to Germany, the Soviet Union, China (Taiwan), and Korea. He was interviewed by Jeff Broadwater on April 15, 1993.

Q: I want to ask you a couple of questions about the time you spent in Moscow. You went to the Soviet Union in 1963, and stayed until '65. What did you do there?

KLEMSTINE: Consular work. The first year I worked in the section, the second year I ran the consular section in Moscow. There were some interesting things, and in some respects it was probably a valuable experience, though at that time I sort of felt shunted aside. Over time I have realized that in some respects I was able to get a better picture and travel around the Soviet Union more than say political officers, or other officers, who the Russians sort of kept on a leash. As consular officer, after they decided I was not CIA or anything like that, I was able to travel around fairly freely and extensively. I've been everywhere west of the Urals, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, the Baltic states, and places like that. And also I was able to talk with a lot of Russian citizens who came into the Embassy. And I'd go to the Foreign Ministry and talk to the consular people, and it was a more free exchange. There was not the tension or putoffs that sometimes I think political people would get, because they wanted visas, for certain groups who they wanted to get into the States. I mean the Soviet officials wanted things to run smoothly in this area, and so they were rather accommodating.

An interesting thing happened when I was chief of the consular section, and that's when I learned about the invisible economy, the black market. This is an interesting story, its nothing of high politics, but sort of a sidelight on human interest. There were a lot of Armenians in the United States who had immigrated to the Soviet Union after World War II. Stalin gave them incentives, and a lot of them thought to go back to the great homeland. And there were also a lot of Americans who went over there in the '30s who thought this was the future. By the 1960s all of these people were disillusioned and wanted to get out.

I always remember one poor old lady, an American, who had gone down to the Ukraine with her family, and unfortunately she had renounced her citizenship. And she'd come up once a year just to talk to Americans. She was still a convinced Marxist, but she'd always say, "This is a terrible place because all these people are a bunch of peasants, and they don't really know what Marxism is," and things like that. We'd have long talks.

But getting back to the Armenians. One day a group came in and they had a suitcase. I mean not a valise, but a regular suitcase. They opened it up in front of me, and it was filled with 100 ruble notes. This is one of these that you see in the movies, a suitcase full of money, stacks about that high. I don't know how many thousands of rubles were in there. At first I thought, "Boy, this is one of these KGB things." I thought, "This is pretty stupid." That's when I learned in Armenia about this underground black market economy. And these people were making money hand over fist down there. They were able to immigrate because a lot of them had kept their American citizenship and after a time the Russians would let them go, and they wanted to take their money with them. They wanted me to change the money to dollars. Well, in the first place I didn't have money to do this. And secondly, what would I ever do with stacks of rubles so high that it would take me a hundred years living in the Soviet Union, at that time, to ever spend it. Plus, of course, its illegal, but the whole thing was rather silly.

Q: I was going to say, the ruble wasn't convertible.

KLEMSTINE: Well, that's why they wanted me to change it. And the Russians wouldn't let them take the money out. The first case I thought this was a KGB plant, and I said, "Oh, my God." I just said, I couldn't do anything, I'm sorry, blab-blab-blab. Then about the second or third time I began to realize what was going on, and it finally got across to me this wasn't a game that the KGB was playing. These people really wanted to take their money out, and there was no way to take it out. And as a result I came up with one idea and it evidently worked, at least for a while. I told these people to go down to the GUM, that's the Russian department store, and buy fur coats with this money, and they could take it out as clothing -- sables, or fur hats, things like that. At least some of them did it because I remember getting a letter from one of them cryptically saying, "We had a nice fur sale in New York," something like that.

But the point I want to really get across is that in this socialist economy, I learned by talking to these people, that there was a separate economy underneath where evidently a helluva lot of money was being made.

Q: I wanted to ask you. You traveled around and talked to a lot of Russians. What was your general impression of living standards, or quality of life in the parts of the Soviet Union that you visited?

KLEMSTINE: It was low. You can't get around it. The thing that really surprised me in some places were the factory conditions. I thought they looked more to me like what you read in Charles Dickens of the working conditions: the dirt, and the lack of standards and safety than anything that I ever saw in the west; and anything that I ever saw subsequently in the orient.

Q: Did you sense much discontent with the government?

KLEMSTINE: No, this was the '60s, this was Khrushchev's time. This is when the Russian economy was growing. This was when a lot of our own people, including CIA, were fooled. The Russian growth rates were actually a quite good 5-6%, and Khrushchev himself you may remember, was predicting that by 1980 they would reach pure communism, and that they'd surpass the U.S. in production -- more milk and all that sort of thing. No real discontent with the regime that I ever came across, as I said, except for dissatisfied Americans, the Americans that immigrated into the Soviet Union. But most of the Russians, I think, in the 1960s were seeing an increase in their standards compared to the immediate post-war years. It was evidently not until the late '70s that things turned around, and started to go back down as they threw money into armaments.

I went over there just after the Cuban missile crisis, and the Russians had not yet started their big rearmament program at that time. So a lot of money was going into the civilian economy, and Khrushchev in a sense tried to help the Russians out in consumer goods compared to what happened in the 1970s when they started the rearmament, and things were shuttled away from the consumer. So, no, not in the 1960s was there any real discontent, just occasional grumbling.

Q: Were you in the Soviet Union in October '64 when Khrushchev was ousted?

KLEMSTINE: Yes, I was there.

Q: What did you think about that at the time?

KLEMSTINE: Well, it came as a surprise. Any yet a couple of days before it happened...I didn't know what was going on, but things weren't right. I would sense this when I went to the Foreign Ministry. I remember about two days before the ouster, I went to the Foreign Ministry, and at that time I had a sense that something was wrong because they just put everything off. I couldn't get any answers, "Well, come back next week." "We can't really make a decision now," and things like that. And there were some people whose visas were being held up. Their permission from OVIR, that was the office that gave them permission to leave the Soviet Union, they had got it and then suddenly at the last minute canceled. At least I had a feeling that something was going on, but I mean I

didn't know what it was, but I just felt that the Russian bureaucracies that I had to deal with at that time, seemed somewhat preoccupied. They didn't want to take any decisions. They wouldn't do anything. And even some of the decisions they had made a couple of days before, they suddenly said no, or wait a week or so. I remember saying something upstairs but there was not really that much to substantiate it. It was more of an impression I got by dealing with these people that they were not in a position to do anything or else didn't want to.

And shortly after that came the coup, which came as a surprise.

Q: Then you left and returned to Washington shortly after that, in '65, and stayed in Washington until '70 and you worked at the Soviet Exchange.

KLEMSTINE: That was a dead end.

Q: What was that?

KLEMSTINE: When I was there it was nothing going on as the result of Vietnam. There was an exchange agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to exchange scientists, artists, agricultural technicians, and others, back and forth. But as a result of Vietnam at the end of '65, the Soviets shut it down. So for about two years I was sitting there doing nothing, or next to that. This was bureaucracy at its worst. Occasionally there would be a few people coming or going, but there was nothing like there was supposed to be under a large exchange program. And as a consequence, I have to confess, I spent most of the time reading books. There was really very little to do. I made myself unpopular by advocating the whole section be disbanded and put on the Soviet desk. Actually, this has subsequently been done. There had been a big exchange program up until '65. I guess they revived it sometime later, but when I was there I was unfortunate in having very little to do except, as I say, a few exchanges in the technical field and scientific fields.

R. KEITH SEVERIN
Assistant Agricultural Attaché
Moscow (1963-1966)

Mr. Severin was born in Texas and raised in California. He was educated at Chaffee College, the University of California at Davis and Stanford University. Joining the US Department of Agriculture in 1951, Mr. Severin began his career as an Agriculture Instructor in American Samoa, after which he served in Moscow as Assistant Agricultural Attaché. In the Department in Washington, Mr. Severin held senior positions dealing with Foreign Agriculture Relations and Grain Export Subsidies. Mr. Severin was interviewed by Allan Mustard in 2006.

SEVERIN: But while there with Dr. Volin in that shop, Stan Brown and Don Krisler and Mil Davis, and I was doing some work on East European agriculture, and at the same

time seeing the importance of the Soviet Union and, particularly, having become interested in it because of Dr. Volin, and that all he had done and was doing. I started learning to read some Russian and learned to read *Sel'skaya zhizn'* and that. And, lo and behold, early part of 1963, I was asked whether I would be interested in going to Moscow as the assistant agricultural attaché because the fellow who had been there in that position, Rod Carlson, had been asked by the Soviets to kindly leave.

So in June of 1963 – wait, let me back up just a second. Like I say, I'd begun to learn to read some Russian, but if I was going to be over there, I needed to be able to speak a little bit of it. And so while there wasn't a lot of time for it, I had maybe one month of Russian language, conversational, instruction. Anyway, in June of 1963, early June of 1963, Barbara, Kenneth and Bailey and I showed up over there.

Our son, Ken, was eight years old, and Bailey was an 11-week-old bird dog, German short-haired pointer puppy. And, in fact, his momma, Keck, was already in whelp at the time that we had been asked whether we wanted to go to Moscow. And Bailey was the last of the litter to go, so what the heck, why not? And it was a good thing to do. What great icebreakers Kenneth and Bailey turned out to be.

We rented our house in Vienna and Charlie, Barbara, the fellow who ran the local Esso station bought our old 1956 Chevy station wagon. He took us down to National Airport, Kenneth, Bailey, Barb and I. We got on the airplane that morning and flew up to Idlewild. Bailey was in his pet pack, as it were, so we left him there because, not knowing what the Soviets were going to be doing to us, and that was 1963, Cold War times, didn't know what all we might be subjected to.

We had a day there in New York City, so we went to the United Nations and we certainly went off to the Statue of Liberty, Kenneth, Barbara and I. We got back to the airport late that afternoon, early evening, and went to check on Bailey, and we saw his pet pack was opened. Where is the puppy?

Looked up on the desk there, and someone had taken the pup and put his coat out on the desk there and Bailey was lying up there, sleeping. So, that evening, Barb and Ken and Bailey and I got on Pan Am, first class. That's the way to go, Bailey in his pet pack under our seat. And we took off and we flew and landed in Stockholm, Oslo, the next morning. I've forgotten which and, anyway, just to refuel.

So I took Bailey outside and walked him around the airplane and he emptied out and we got back on the airplane, flew on to Helsinki, not very far away. And then Barb and Ken and I and Bailey spent a couple of days there in Helsinki. We had a nice hotel, gratefully just across the street from a park.

So I would get up quietly in the morning, get dressed. Then I'd wake Bailey up and pick him up, get him across the street, into the park, before he was permitted to put his feet down. Then, in Helsinki, we got onboard a train and, as you know, the rail line between Helsinki and Leningrad, or the Soviet border, Russian border, is kind of crooked and

back and forth for one reason. But we got on over there and went straight on into Moscow and went to the *Leningradskiy vokzal* [Leningrad Railstation in Moscow, the terminus for trains from Leningrad -- now St. Petersburg]. And Bill Horbaly was there to meet us, and maybe he was a little bit surprised to see Bailey, but, the heck, I had a diplomatic passport. Doesn't everybody travel with a bird dog puppy, as well as family?

So we went on and got ensconced in the third-floor apartment of the embassy building and we were on the third floor and there was a balcony off Kenneth's bedroom. And that balcony, our apartment was right over what was the exit. There was one way into the embassy compound and one way out. Our apartment was right over the exit way. It was nice to have that balcony there off Kenneth's bedroom and, yes, we grew a few Kentucky wonder beans and that and it was just a nice place to have some light.

And, incidentally, it was in probably November of 1964, shortly before we left there, that was the only demonstration outside the embassy that there was while we were there, and an ink bottle was thrown through one of the windows in Kenneth's bedroom, just off that balcony. We'd been warned that there was going to be the demonstration, and it was because the Soviets were not happy with some action that the United States was taking in the Congo, if I remember correctly.

But that balcony, too, was also interesting, because Kenneth went to Soviet public school. P.S. 69 is the elementary school, the grammar school, just down the street on the right-hand side, as you come out of Spaso House. But Kenneth would come on home and maybe some of his little Soviet classmates would be with him, and he needed to get something to them, so he would go up and write a note or whatever it was and fold up a piece of paper, airplane, and fly it off the balcony there, and the militiamen would wonder what was going on with those youngsters doing that.

And in this same vein, too – Kenneth was a great icebreaker in that regard, as I've said, and so was Bailey, but Bailey was more than that in some regards, because Bailey had very good ears and our apartment had parquet flooring. And Bailey would sometimes sit around and cock his head, what am I hearing, what am I hearing? Like the RCA Victor dog, Nipper. He was hearing things and, of course, it was Cold War times and so we were very circumspect about what we said there in the embassy, anywhere, anywhere, because you just didn't know what was being picked up.

We saw the reason, certainly, for having stainless steel sinks. You go ahead and write out what you need to say to your wife or to whomever and burn it in the sink. But, anyway, we got there in June of 1963 and almost immediately after we got there, it was one of the highlights, almost immediately it was – I'm sure not later than the end of June – we showed up there, but Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, and his entourage, Dorothy Jacobson, who was his assistant secretary, a lady who also came from Minnesota, as Mr. Freeman did, and Dr. Volin. Grand to see him, not only again, but kind of an old stomping grounds. And then there were Gene Olson and Jack McDonald, too, who was a speechwriter.

I later on saw Jack a long time afterwards in Brazil, where he was the ag attaché in Rio. But, anyway, they came and of course Bill Horbaly was very busy taking care of them and he had a dinner party, I remember one evening, for the secretary. That was fine, because that meant that Barbara and I were able to take care of our good friend Dr. Volin and Dorothy Jacobson and Gene Olson and Jack McDonald.

But that was a good time, and then, after the secretary left – and just for context here, you may remember that it was Orville Freeman who made the nominating speech for John Kennedy to become President of the United States. There was some banter going back, that Mr. Freeman, who had been in the Marine Corps in World War II and had had part of has jaw shot away. I saw him lots of times thereafter, and what a nice fellow he was, but, anyway, there was some banter going back and forth that in thanks for and in return for that nominating speech, what job would you like within the administration? "Anything except being Secretary of Agriculture," which is where he showed up, of course.

And we had not been in Moscow but a couple of days, until Barbara developed a bit of a tooth problem, and we had it checked out, dentally and all the rest of that before we left, but she developed a tooth problem. Well, what do you know? She got a ride back to the United States on a U.S. Air Force. And so she was able to go back to the United States, go to our local dentist here. It was still Dr. Bosco in Vienna, and get it taken care of and she was back within three days. Well, how did she do that?

Well, an airplane had come in, brought at whole slug of United States senators, including Hubert Humphrey. They came over for the signing of the Test Ban Treaty. Then the airplane came back a few days later to take them home, so Barb hitchhiked a ride back and forth, but it was the signing of the Test Ban Treaty.

One of the fellows, one of the State Department officers, I've forgotten his name, but Bob something. I can still see him, but, anyway, he was the one who escorted Mr. Humphrey and he said it was kind of embarrassing, because Mr. Humphrey would walk up to some Soviet military guy, "Hey, what are you going to do? Y'know, we just signed the Test Ban Treaty. You're going to be out of a job. What are you going to be doing?" But the brashest of the American politicians, all right, fine. That was one of the things that happened early on.

And then, two, you remember what the ambassador's 4th of July parties are. Well, we had a group of veterinarians there on the 4th of July of 1963. We had the head of the – I've forgotten his name, but he was head of Communicable Diseases Center in Atlanta. He was head of the delegation. Dunn, Dr. Dunn, I believe he was head of the vet school in Pennsylvania and then we had the head of the vet school from Illinois, and then there was somebody else from the Communicable Diseases Center who spoke Russian.

But, anyway, those four fellows were there, and three high-powered vets. And so after the 4th of July party, Ambassador Kohler, Foy Kohler, at his place there, Spaso House, we all had tired feet. So we thought that the fellows should be taken care of. I don't think Horbaly was there. Otherwise, I couldn't have gotten away with it, I reckon.

But, anyway, those four fellows all came to our apartment. We took our shoes off, sat down, put our feet up. Well, Bailey at that juncture, Bailey was whelped in March, I believe it was, so Bailey was about four months old and he needed his shots and inoculations and that, and I had all the material there.

So here it is, here are these high-flown vets and we get a hold of Bailey and get him down and these high-flown vets give Bailey his shots. We had a grand time. We just had a grand time, and, again, it's getting along with people. It's working with them and being not only a little bit knowledgeable of what they're about and what they're interested in, but having a sincere appreciation for it.

GREG THIELMANN
Russian Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1987-1988)

Political/Military Affairs Officer
Moscow (1988-1990)

Mr. Thielmann was born and raised in Iowa and was educated at Grinnell College and Princeton University. A specialist in Political-Military Affairs, he held a number of positions dealing with such matters as Strategic Proliferation, Arms Control and Missile Programs. He also served abroad at several posts in the capacity of Political Officer and Consular Officer. His last position was Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Mr. Thielmann was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004

Q: You were there from eighty—what '88?

THIELMANN: '88 to 1990.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

THIELMANN: The ambassador was Jack Matlock. He arrived a few months before I did and then served another year after I left.

Q: Well, what was the, in '88 when you got there, what was the sort of Soviet-American situation?

THIELMANN: It was a fascinating time to be there because in general our relations were improving with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev was in charge. He was sort of solidifying his power base at the time, much less tentative than when he first took over in nineteen, as head of the Communist Party in 1985. It was, in 1988 the CIA was still fighting a

rearguard action to say that Gorbachev was just like all the others. There was nothing new here. He was just a little bit smarter. Our evidence on the ground from Moscow I think showed a different picture that there were a lot of very encouraging and interesting things going on in the Soviet Union. I was right in the middle of one of the most promising changes in Soviet arms control policy.

Q: You're job, what was your job?

THIELMANN: My job, I was the political section's political military affairs officer. So interestingly that portfolio for a number of years before had been handled by one person. It was handled by one person when I was there. Although during the time when I was there, there was also a new office opening up to run the new arms control implementation functions of having inspectors coming into the Soviet Union and everything. So they had several people on that staff, but it was still one person to engage the Soviets on arms control matters to report on what Soviet thinking was both official thinking and in the institutes that wrote on policy and from which some of the ideas derived. It was an overwhelmingly heavy burden. I mean, early on when I arrived there I said we've got to have at least two officers here to take advantage of the new opportunities that were opening up. Because it was only shortly before I arrived that if the embassy political officer wanted to make a demarche on his counterpart on the Soviet foreign ministry, you would write a letter, say what you wanted to talk about, send it over and then wait for days or weeks for a response. There were all kinds of other meetings that you would arrange with similar difficulty or you couldn't arrange them at all. But during that two years that I was there, everything opened up. I mean, when I was there, it was much like in the arms control it was much like serving in a western European embassy. I would call up the phone, ask to talk with my Soviet foreign ministry counterpart, request a meeting, often get it the same day, walk down the street, go into the office and conduct business.

Q: I mean there's a story that I've heard from several sources at some of these arms control meetings between the Soviets and the United States that we would say well, we understand that you have so many war heads and you have this and that. The Soviet military would sort of get white and basically go over and say, "look, our people, these civilians over here, aren't cleared to have this information" even though we had gotten it. They weren't passing it on. So my question is how well plugged into the Soviet military affairs were your counterparts in the foreign ministry?

THIELMANN: This evolved over time. It's certainly true that it was frustrating from the point of view of a military specialist at the State Department because we knew so much more about both our own military force posture and the Soviet military force posture than our Soviet diplomatic counterparts did. So in a lot of ways it was the military that was the more interesting to talk to about these issues. Yet there is a big cultural divide there. The Soviet military did not feel comfortable talking to American diplomats for the most part. They felt much more comfortable talking to their U.S. military counterparts. So we were going through a period of time when one could actually talk with a relative degree of quality from a same general vantage point talking to one of the members of the institutes like Alexei or Bartov, one of the defense specialists.

Q: This is Canadian-American Institute.

THIELMANN: USA and Canada, and then there was another one, ENEMO (European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations?). I can't even remember now what that Soviet acronym stands for, but there were basically two different institutes that had kind of well rounded staffs on a number of foreign policy and international theater questions. Those people would study our own literature pretty extensively. So they knew a lot about Soviet military forces through our literature. Then through their own means they would buttress that with a little bit of knowledge of the Soviet order of battle. But it was a very fascinating time because of all the new things opening, the new possibilities. As a mid-level foreign service officer, much of our work was made more interesting and new opportunities created by both Matlock's efforts as ambassador and also the high level officials coming from the United States, like Defense Secretary Aspen who came to the Soviet Union when I was there. He came actually from the East as I recall, going to Soviet test site in Kazakhstan as well as the space launch Cosmodrome, gaining access to ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missiles) sites, all kinds of things that the U.S. had never done before. I also went with Ambassador Matlock to the Crimea for the first visit of U.S. war ships since World War II to a Soviet port. So all those sort of new experiences were there to be reported on and chronicled by political officers.

Q: What role did the military attachés play? Were you both working on the same thing or how did that work?

THIELMANN: It actually worked very well in Embassy Moscow. I served enough that I've seen that defense attachés sometimes don't work very well with their political section counterparts. The embassy in Moscow at least during my two year window seemed to get some of the most impressive officers. There were two generals who were head of the defense unit in Moscow when I was there, first General Rock and then General Gavin, very different kind of individuals with different kinds of strengths but both very impressive representatives of the military who had good contacts, who were respected by their Soviet counterparts and who would have access to a different kind of things than we would have access to. So once we gained mutual respect, I thought it was a very smooth working relationship in which we both sort of specialized even though the overall subject matter was very similar. We both specialized in making our own individual contributions, and I think I feel pretty good about reporting coming out of Embassy Moscow on the Defense side and the State Department side during that period.

Q: My impression of that period is "trust but verify," Things were really changing in attitude. But the whole idea is okay, but we'll go out there and take a look on the ground. I think this would be very difficult for Soviet officials to adjust to.

THIELMANN: Very difficult. It was a completely different way of life for them. I mean, they were much more indoctrinated with secrecy and secrecy from their own society. I mean the spending amounts, none of those things were anyone's business except the Soviet military. That meant that when later on, when the Duma was introduced, it was an

enormous hurdle to get over the idea that members of Congress should know something about what the Soviet military wanted to do or actually fund it. That was really revolutionary.

Q: Well, when you arrived there in 1988, was there any feeling about what would happen in the end of 1989? I mean, the Berlin Wall going and essentially the Soviet bloc falling apart. Was anybody saying oh boy, they're on the brink? What were you getting?

THIELMANN: I think Ambassador Matlock was probably a better authority on this because of his senior position and the kind of correspondence he would have with the top level of the State Department and his being privy to meetings with high level Soviet figures. Not all of that stuff was transparent to us at the time as I've seen from reading some of the things Matlock has written since. I would have to say in general that we did not have a sense of imminent collapse. We had a sense that very important, very significant changes were taking place and that there was some tectonic shifts going on, and I was amazed at the time. I remember being amazed contemporaneously at the kind of things that Shevardnadze would say as Soviet foreign minister. I mean he would say things, he would kind of ridicule the notion, which was really the official Soviet propaganda line, that the NATO countries were looking for opportunities to invade the Soviet Union. I mean, he would more or less say, "Why would they want to do that? There's nothing we have here for them." He would talk fairly openly about the disaster represented by Afghanistan and the deployment of SS-20 missiles as being things which showed the bankruptcy of the Soviet decision making process. Well, this was incredibly sharp and open criticism. This would be quite sharp for a democratic society let alone the kind of the Soviet society represented. So all that was actually going on at the time, and I think a lot of us were saying that because of all that there were more real opportunities here for making arrangements with and dealing differently with the Soviet Union then we had before. I don't think very many people envisioned the speed with which this would happen and what happened in Eastern Europe in the couple months leading up to the fall of the wall. One can certainly point to memos and other things being done only months before the fall of the wall to document that feeling that this really did come out of the blue.

Q: Was there a feeling of comfort with President Reagan at the end of his time and a feeling that here is a man who'd come out of the quite far right in the American political spectrum dealing with the Soviet Union. I'm talking about among you officers there and all that. How did you feel about all this?

THIELMANN: Well, just speaking personally, I mean I was disconcerted from early on at how little interest Reagan had in the details of defense and foreign policy. So I saw him as representing a profound sort of bottomless pit of ignorance which left me feeling very insecure. The thing that made me feel much more calm about Reagan--and I think this extended to many of my colleagues--was that, once he did develop a personal relationship with Gorbachev, after his own demonization of the Soviets as simply being part of an evil empire and as some sort of broodish automatons as part of this Soviet monolith or whatever, Reagan himself developed a different mental image of his negotiating partners.

That made a big difference because one got the feeling that now this Administration at the highest level actually wanted to establish a modus vivendi with the Soviet Union, whereas before it seemed like the administration wanted only to intimidate and vanquish this country. So I think the IMF agreement, the signing of that agreement, and the personal relationship that Reagan and Gorbachev developed made everyone feel a little safer and a little more hopeful about the future directions of policy.

Q: Well, now the foreign ministry of any country usually consists of more sophisticated people particularly in a totalitarian, closed society like the Soviets because they've had to deal with the outside. Did you find sort of a relaxation and kind of a sense of fun and enjoyment of doing the job there among your equivalents in the Foreign Ministry?

THIELMANN: I really did. That was one of the most pleasant and satisfying parts of the job. Obviously in the back of my mind was the knowledge about the great divide between the Soviet Union and America. The ideological hostility, the sort of the zero sum notion about U.S.-Soviet relations and all of that very heavy Cold War baggage was in the back of my mind. So it was a special thrill when you thought that you were actually connecting with a Soviet diplomat and that together you were actually advancing the relationship in a way that would benefit both countries and third parties. That was really among the most satisfying parts of my career. I had the good fortune to be dealing with a portfolio that allowed me to engage with some of the most Americanized of all the Soviet diplomats, people who had been engaged with the United States and arms control negotiations previously, some of whom who had served in the United States. Those who had both a good command of English but also -- I wouldn't want to overstate this -- a more western way of thinking than some of the other diplomats. So I actually went through that time with close contacts with, well, people like Pavel Polischenko the bald-headed face you would see as Gorbachev's interpreter everywhere he went.

Q: Oh yes, the moustache.

THIELMANN: He was actually a Soviet diplomat as well. I would be able to talk to them. With these people I developed a level of trust, which I think is really the prerequisite for effective relations between diplomats. Not to say that one would share all of ones secrets but enough understanding and information that you could rely on what they were saying about making arrangements, or if you could get insight into what the real reasons for a country doing something was going beyond what you were reading in the paper, that kind of relationship. So that was something that I really treasured from the experience, and then of course there was what we would call the "institutniki," the people at the institute, Alexei Bartov, Andrei (inaudible) who were more or less contemporaries in terms of age and had similar professional interests. That too made it a special relationship. I had my fortieth birthday party in Moscow and was able to invite professional contacts to a birthday party in the American embassy compound. I actually felt I was inviting friends who were representing the Soviet government as well as people who were important for me to have as contacts. That just is a little parenthetical aside. That party apparently created fits for the diplomatic security because they were very worried about any Soviet visitors committing a technical attack on the American

compound even though our instructions were that we should assume that everything from our bedrooms to our houses was all bugged on the compound. So I don't know if they were worried if the Soviets were going to change their batteries or something, but we actually had to escort them to the bathroom and everything.

Q: This sounds like in a way you were almost viewing the diplomatic security as the equivalent to the KGB. I mean it was almost the enemy.

THIELMANN: They were working for us, and I did at least have sympathy for what they were trying to do. But I didn't have much sympathy for the way they executed it or their degree of sophistication. I mean we got the strong feeling that diplomatic security would be most happy if we would just shut down the embassy and go home or else that we would never leave the embassy. That is, you didn't get a very strong sense that they understood what we were there for, what our mission was. Obviously their mission was to protect our safety and protect our secrets from migrating to the Soviets, but I would argue an important part of their job too was to remember the prime reason we were there. So yeah, it was at times a not terribly cooperative relationship. I spent a lot of time arguing over who should pay the extra guards hired for my birthday party, and diplomatic security wanted to represent it as something that I had requested. I didn't request it at all. They're the ones who insisted that there be special guards hired and paid overtime to protect the bathrooms while this party was going on and to keep the Soviets from going to the Saint Patrick's Day dance that was just a few feet away in another area of the embassy compound. So we sent memos back and forth about who should pay for this for a long time. It was quite an episode.

Q: I served five years in Belgrade where probably the degree of observance was not as heavy, but it was still there. At a certain point you get to realize how little of what you do really, I mean our phone was tapped and I must say the Serb security service learned a great deal about organizing a Girl Scout troop by my wife in the international community. Most of what we do really is trying to communicate our ideas anyway.

THIELMANN: That's right. If you're having an affair with someone or you have some deep family problem, that's obviously the kind of thing that can be exploited by the other side. But, I don't think that if, as diplomatic security requests of us, any time you want to discuss finances you must be sure to do it in the bubble of the embassy. I think that's going a little bit overboard, and I noticed that, whenever we would want to schedule the bubble, it seemed like diplomatic security was always in it meeting. It was kind of hard to find time. So you have to use some commonsense in these things and realize that, as you say, most of your business is not sensitive at all and not really of use to the other side. Part of being a professional is understanding what is really sensitive and where you have to be careful, talking at home to your wife and others about it. So I think the reminders that many of our conversations were vulnerable to interception were good, but we weren't really given as much credit as we should have been for our professionalism and our ability to use commonsense.

Q: Well, was this security a result of the Sergeant Lonetree affair?

THIELMANN: Much of it was. That was the whole other element of our life in Moscow, which was much more difficult because of the events that started with Lonetree. The combination of the penetration of the Soviet embassy.

Q: You mean the American embassy.

THIELMANN: Yes, I'm sorry. The American embassy. The facts of this are still sort of murky. I don't really know to this day how much of it was penetrated, but clearly there had been some connivance between some of the Marines, and some Soviets did get to places in the American embassy they were not supposed to. So the consequence of that and the discovery that the new chancellery had been wired in a way that our technical experts had not anticipated or understood -- those two things together left a very sort of heavy security cloud over the embassy and much more stringent demands on us than there would have been otherwise. Then to add to all of that, we had expelled Soviet diplomats from the mission in New York in great numbers a couple of years before I arrived there -- at least one year before I arrived. So the Soviets then retaliated by pulling out all of their Soviet employees from our embassy, which meant for a while there we were the only embassy in the world that had no nationals from the host country working in the embassy. Because labor is very cheap in the Soviet Union and there was much to be done, of course there was a lot of work that all of a sudden American embassy members had to worry about. So the year before I arrived there were all kinds of horror stories about diplomats maintaining boilers and doing a lot of manual labor whether it was snow removal or other things that significantly kept them away from doing the jobs for which they had been sent to Moscow. By the time I had gotten there, the U.S. had started hiring contract Americans to come and do some of these critical tasks. For example we had a few American embassy drivers who had some minimal Russian language training. So they were considered secure and could take us around town unlike the previous Soviet drivers that we had to assume were working for the KGB. The problem here was there were very few, and so as a first secretary in the embassy, I always had to drive myself everywhere. This meant, if I had to make a demarche or go to a reception or to one of the institutes, I had to get out my CIA-made Moscow map and get in my Sputnik, my Russian car and drive on roads, which were usually not cleared during blizzards and had inadequate signage and bizarre Stalin-era traffic rules. This required a significant skill and caused stress. That of course only added to some of the other things like even cleaning the political section. We were the ones who had to vacuum, clean windows or whatever else needed cleaning. These private contractors couldn't bother doing something like that.

Q: We're talking about the working conditions. What was happening while you were there in the political-military section?

THIELMANN: Because of the inspections opened up under the INF treaty and some other …

Q: This is prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that.

THIELMANN: That's right. When I arrived the INF treaty was already being implemented. It was a 1987 treaty. So the unit in the embassy that was interfacing with the Soviets was up and running. We had a port of entry at Ulan-Ude deep in Siberia, and there were American military personnel and other inspectors going in and out and a whole series of exchanges with the Soviet military, which were a new thing. I mentioned the Sixth Fleet visit to Sevastopol, homeport of the Soviet Black Sea fleet. There was a lot of interaction with members of the Soviet military that had not occurred before, and they would be receiving high level delegations in ways that they had not done before.

…

Q: Did you also come away with a feeling that "God this place doesn't work" or did you feel that maybe economically it may not work, but it's certainly a strong, strongly held society through military force, political force, that sort of thing? How did you feel about it?

THIELMANN: I definitely had the feeling that this is a very dysfunctional country. This is sort of a pathetic place that even in the summertime can't come up with decent produce. What kind of a place is it that we bought our vegetables all year round at the Polish frozen food store or ordered things from Stockman's in Helsinki to be delivered on the train. I mean, a city of Moscow's size, a city where there were just starting to be some co-op restaurants where you could get some decent food. It was just starting. But it was still the kind of place where, when we went to Leningrad our first fall there in 1988, the city still had a lot of the decaying splendor of Catherine the Great who built most of the building that remained and the canals and everything, a great potential for beauty and a candy for the eye. But the whole city was just extremely hostile to tourists and had no place to sit and have a tea, no place to walk and get in out of the cold, just that sort of a feeling of just barren wasteland where all these millions of people are living. Then there was a kind of brutality of society. One of my favorite metaphors is right outside the U.S. embassy there was a ring road there with like seventeen lanes of traffic. They had the pedestrian stoplights timed so that people literally had to run across the street. To see like old babushkas with grocery bags in both hands walking who knows how many miles sort of slipping and sliding on the ice across the street before the completely unforgiving huge trucks would gun their way through this intersection. I thought, what a society this is! Then in spite of the fact that there were little pockets of great beauty from the past, there was the incredible ugliness of the housing stock, the decay of everything. I mean the average apartment building's door, the sort of decrepit condition of the entryways, all of this stuff was depressing to the spirit, and one got the feeling that hardly anything really works very well in this whole country.

Yet one remembers World War Two and the German underestimation of the determination of the Soviet people. One remember the space program. I mean they did beat us in putting a cosmonaut into orbit. They beat us in landing a robot on the moon, I think, or at least the far side of the moon. There were some aspects of the space race that the Soviets did first, and then of course they developed ICBM missiles before the United States and to this day have a record of reliability in their space launch vehicles which exceeds our own. So what a contrast and how hard it was to put the evidence of

incompetence and lethargy and decay together with those genuine achievements in the society.

ROBERT S. STRAUSS
Ambassador
USSR (1991-1992)

Ambassador Strauss was born and raised in Texas and educated at the University of Texas. After a stint as Field Agent with the FBI, he formed his own law firm in Dallas, where he became engaged in Democratic Party politics, eventually becoming Chairman of the Party. This brought him in close contact with both Democrat and Republican leaders and Presidents, who sought his advice and used his talents in Trade Negotiations and Middle Peace Negotiations. In 1991 President George Bush, a Republican, appointed him Ambassador to the Soviet Union, where he served until 1992. Ambassador Strauss was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, we left the last time when you were in, could you tell us how this appointment to Moscow go, and when did this happen and come about.

STRAUSS: One day I got a call in my office from an old friend who was Secretary of State, Jim Baker. He said, "Bob, come over and have lunch with me today." I said, "Jim, I can't today. I have a date already." He said, "Well break it and come over here and have lunch with me. I need to talk to you." I said, "Jim, I don't break dates. If I can be with you, I don't like to break dates." He said, "This is important, very important. I promised the President that I would talk to you about a matter before he gets back in town from a trip he is on. He will be back in mid afternoon, and he is going to want to talk to you."

Q: This is President George Bush.

STRAUSS: George Bush senior. That piqued my curiosity, so I said, "Well I will cancel it and come over." I went over and sat down. We had a nice lunch. Before we got really started I said, "What the hell is this all about." He said, "Well, you know we have been looking for an ambassador to the Soviet Union for over a year, and nothing satisfies the President. He called me this morning about seven o'clock and said, 'I have got our man; now all we have got to do is land him."' I said, "Well what can I do to help?" He said, "Well, you can accept. You are the man." I said, "Are you out of your damn mind, and is the President out of his damn mind." He said, "No, he said he had been thinking about it and didn't know why he didn't think about it earlier. You are a perfect person to go for him. You know Gorbachev." I said, "I couldn't consider that. I am in my seventies, as is Helen. It is just not something we can think about." He called in the woman who worked for him, did his press stuff.

Q: Margaret Tutwiler.

STRAUSS: Tutwiler.

Q: I have interviewed her.

STRAUSS: Yes, she is splendid.

Q: Boy is she professional.

STRAUSS: Yes, she is a real pro. I said to them after I, Bush knew, I mean Baker knew that Margaret and I were good friends. I had been helpful to her, and she has been helpful to me. So he had her come in as we were having lunch. The three of us talked about it. I just really didn't seriously consider it. I remember Baker saying to me, "At least you will go over and meet with the President about it." "Well of course I would. I didn't want to be arrogant about it. I just think I am the wrong person. I don't know much about Russia. I don't know anything about this. I am too old. Baker said, "Fine." So at three o'clock that afternoon I went over to speak with George Bush. He told me how much he wanted, he said he wanted me to do this. I told him I couldn't consider it. He pushed some more, a long meeting. I was uncomfortable saying no to a President. Finally I said to him, "Hell Mr. President," keep in mind George Bush senior who was president then, and I are old friends. We chaired our respective parties at the same time. We were very close, good close friends, very good friends. Anyway, I finally said, "Hell, Mr. President, I didn't even vote for you. You don't want me." He looked back and said, "I cannot believe you voted for that other fellow." I said, "Damn sure believe it because I did. I didn't have a bit of trouble. I never considered voting for you." I laughed and he laughed. He said, "Well you just blew it, Strauss." I said, "Why?" He said, "You are the only person since I have been president who sat in that chair at this desk and looked me in the face and said he didn't vote for me. Now a lot of them sat there and said they did. I know that, but you are the only one who had enough guts to say he didn't and do it with a smile." So he said, "Now I know you have to go over there. I need somebody over there who can do business with Gorbachev.' That would have been his theme. He needed it. He said, "The limit to what we can do over there now; we don't have a budget; we don't have this; we don't have that, but if you know, you have been in Europe a lot. You have worked in Europe, and you know the heads of the government in most of those countries. The signal that you are leaving at your age and stature in life, station in life, that you are going to Russia for me will send the right signal. We are serious about really helping the Russians. It will really send the right signal to President Gorbachev." So he said, "Tell you what. Why don't you and Helen come to Camp David with me for the weekend. We will talk about it." I said, "No, Mr. President, I wouldn't consider doing that. That place is too seductive. You get up there; you can't use your good judgment. There is no chance. I have got to stay here." We laughed some more. He said, "Think about it overnight. Let me call Helen. I will talk to Helen about it." "Don't call Helen; I will talk to her about it." He said, "Let me talk to Helen," and told his secretary to get her on the phone. I said, "Not now. Give me 24 hours on this." I was worried about Helen saying, agreeing to anything he asked her to do. But anyway we had a couple of meetings over there, and I finally decided I ought to go. Larry Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft both had considerable influence on me. I ran into them in the hallway when I went in for my second or third

visit with the president. Eagleburger said, "You know, Strauss, the main reason that you ought to go is it does send a signal. Nobody else is sending it as well as your going. People have more background more knowledge, but this sends a signal and it will be well received. So I eventually before that week was out, I called him and said that, told the President I would go. I said, "I just have two conditions. One is that Helen goes with me, and the second is that I can take Vera Murray as my assistant. She has done everything with me for so long." He said, "Strauss, if Vera won't go with you, I don't want you over there. You can't work without her." We laughed some more. That's how the appointment came about.

Q: Let me just go back a bit. you said you knew Gorbachev. Can you talk about up to this point, we are talking about what year now?

STRAUSS: Well, we had to be talking about this was very early '71.

Q: '81.

STRAUSS: '81 yes.

Q: What about, not '81, '91.

STRAUSS: '91.

Q: Boy, this shows our joint ages here that these decades sort of get, yes, '91. Prior to this in '91, what had been your contact with sort of European leaders, particularly Gorbachev. We are still talking about the Soviet Union.

STRAUSS: I had, Nancy Reagan had called me to get an invitation to sit at the table with Gorbachev when Gorbachev made his first visit over here. I have told you this story about going upstairs at the White House. We discussed Don Regan and the fact that she wanted to get rid of him and wanted me to convince the president he needed to do it for his own political survival. That is on tape here we have. She, you remember the last thing I said in there when I sat down at the table with Gorbachev with that big state dinner and all those Republicans in the room. I knew a thousand people in there who wanted to be sitting next to Gorbachev, one of the leading Democrats in the country, how stunned they all were. So I had met him then and I had spent a little time with Gorbachev on that visit. Later I had, the office had come over. No, I hadn't seen the office; I hadn't gotten to know the office then. So that was about the only thing I had.

Q: When you met Gorbachev at that time, was he at all interested in the American political situation?

STRAUSS: He knew a good deal about it form our conversation, mostly our dinner conversation that one night. I don't remember having any other...

Q: I was just wondering whether you had the feeling, as you say he knew, he understood. The fact that you were a Democrat was important.

STRAUSS: Oh yes, he understood very vividly. I had been to Russia and had dinner with him, a small dinner of about 12 people in connection with the Russian Business council. I had gone over with about a dozen business people who were doing business in Russia at the time or trying to. So I had that evening with Gorbachev, a small dinner. So I had limited experience, but it was something, and it got press. So President Bush knew about it. I liked Gorbachev a lot then. Everyone did. Gorbachev was real I think.

Q: I recall just being on the street by happenstance, and all of a sudden this limousine came by and there he was waving at everyone. I mean he seemed to be having a delightful time.

STRAUSS: An amusing the story, he stopped right, the traffic, got out and greeted people. It happened to be in the building where Duke Ziebert had his restaurant, Duke's. I used to eat in Duke's regularly, and the mob around there. I said later to Duke, "You know why he stopped here and got out and all the people got around him?" He said, "No, why?" I said, "They had planned to go in and have lunch there and all these people got around him and were saying, 'whatever you do, don't eat that lousy food in that lousy place."' Duke didn't think that was as funny as I did, but we had a good laugh out of it. But anyway, I had another condition on that for the President. I said, "You know, my daughter, our only daughter is approaching the age of 40 or is 40, and she is pregnant. My wife is not about to leave here until that baby is born the first of September." I think I said the first of September, something like that. He said, "We can work that out. I know you are not going to go without her." I said, "No, I am going to stay here with Helen on that." So he didn't have any trouble with that. Strange that story didn't break. Bush called a press conference which he had out in the garden there and had a couple of hundred press people show up for it. They didn't know what it was about. I walked out. He announced that I was ambassador to the Soviet Union that morning. It was a big story for a lot of reasons. Number one, our relationship with the Soviet Union then, primarily here is a leading former Democrat, who was one, being offered and accepting a job as ambassador to the Soviet Union in this Republican administration. So it made for a good story. It was very well received. The press has always been kind to me, overly kind. I am about the only fellow I know in public life who never cusses the press. They have always been generous with me, overly so. Helen and I started to get ready, and one thing we needed to do was take some Russian lessons and briefings over at the State Department. So I started getting briefings with various people at the State Department on Russian, Soviet issues. I also started language lessons; Helen and I both did that with a very good man that they provided. The time came for our summer vacation. We always spent about a month, half of July and half of August, most of August out on the west coast in a little cottage we have out there.

Q: Where is that?

STRAUSS: Del Mar, California. So Helen and I had been out. I had the man, the language tutor, come out at my expense, not the government's, and stay there for two weeks to give us both some intense Russian lessons. Two or three hours in the morning. That is wearing.

Q: That is very wearing.

STRAUSS: And at our age it was even more wearing.

Q: That is one of the things we all learn. The older you get, the harder it is.

STRAUSS: Exactly. So we spent, we were in the middle of the lessons when the coup came in August.

Q: The coup in the Soviet Union.

STRAUSS: Soviet Union.

Q: When the military and other groups tried to oust Gorbachev.

STRAUSS: Tried their best, exactly. In fact they took him physically. I guess he was in his home on the Black Sea there when they took over the home and stayed a house prisoner of theirs. So the phone rang. We were out for dinner with our tutor as a matter of fact. When we got back the phone was ringing. It was the White House calling saying that this coup had taken place. The President wanted me over there the next day, to leave the next morning. It was 9:00 at night I guess, when the phone rang in California, so midnight here. It was Brent Scowcroft who said the President wants you to come in tomorrow and stop and pick up Jim Baker, Secretary of State Baker who is fishing in Wyoming or Montana. I forget which. They can pick him up and bring you all back here, and you can get the last briefing and get sworn in. I had been sworn in, I had already been confirmed by the Senate.

Q: I assumed there was no problem there.

STRAUSS: I had no problem at all. So we did that, but Helen didn't go over. I went over without her, and stayed about five or six or seven days. About that time the baby was born. I rushed back home to be with my daughter when she had her child, and stayed there a couple of days. Then Helen and I went back together. A funny story happened when we went back. We got there, and of course tanks were in the street. We flew overnight to get there, and then the drive in the morning, worn out. It was a sight, bombs everywhere, tanks still in the street, Gorbachev still in captivity. They call house arrest captivity, and he did. I remember I went straight to the embassy and met with the staff. Jim Collins was out there, my deputy. I hadn't known him before, but he was very highly recommended by everyone. I had just met him; I had no experience with him. They suggested that rather than stay at the residence for the ambassador I ought to stay in the compound at Collins' house which I did. We started to work. The first thing that

happened when I got there, Collins said to me, "The staff is here. They have been waiting. They are waiting for instructions and advice. The White House has called, and they are waiting for your impressions." I thought to myself this is a nice start for a fellow who doesn't know anything about Russia and even less about the Soviet Union. I said to somebody there, Collins I think, I said, "Why don't you see, I am sure we won't reach him, but why don't you see if you can get through on the phone system and we can get Ambassador Dobrynin." Who you are going to call, and he was the longest serving ambassador to this country, represents the Soviet Union and was a key player I think. As a matter of fact, I think Ambassador Dobrynin had much to do with keeping Russia, the Soviet Union and the U.S. from coming to grips with each other. It was the kind of communication they our presidents had with the Soviet Union through Dobrynin who told each side what they need to hear to keep then from each other's throats. I'll be damned if two minutes later, you rarely get anybody on the phone in those days when you tried because the system wouldn't work, and the phone books, but I'll be damned if in two minutes they didn't have Anatoly Dobrynin on the phone.

Q: By that time Dobrynin had moved. He was part of the Politburo at that time.

STRAUSS: Yes he moved back. He had given up his ambassadorship to this country. He was very close to the government but not in it. I said, "Anatoly," and he started laughing, sort of chuckled the way he did. "I thought I would hear from you, and I am glad to hear from you. What can I do for you?" I said, "Anatoly, I have got to tell our government, give our government some advice on how to play this thing. You know, I don't have to tell you, I am going to have to get that good advice based on other people's judgment better than mine. I would like to know what you think I ought to do." He said, "Bob, the best thing to do is do nothing. I think in 48 hours this coup will all be over. It has no leadership. What little leadership it has, they are petrified and drugged." He just was very critical of the whole thing. He said, "I think the best thing you can do is nothing." That made more sense to me than anything. I went up and told Jim Collins that. He said, "I think he is exactly right." That is what we did. I called and talked to Jim Baker as I recall. It could have been Brent Scowcroft. I think Baker had gone back out on his vacation, maybe he hadn't. Anyway I called either Baker or Scowcroft or both. I remember talking to Scowcroft. I had a long relationship already, and gave him that advice, the best thing to do is nothing. He approved course B. The best advice I could give him, don't say anything; don't do anything. Let it play out.

Q: Well this is like the three ton elephant. If you start tramping around you often do more harm than good.

STRAUSS: Oh yes, no question about it.

Q: I would like to go back just a bit. When you got together, I mean here is a coup. You go to the White house. What was the impression? What was the mood and the analysis that you were getting from the people in the White House about what the hell was happening and what did this mean?

STRAUSS: They obviously were terribly concerned about it, and the best advice they had was that these people simply despised Gorbachev and his reforms, and would do their utmost to get rid of him. But they had serious doubts that they would end up successful, be a successful coup. As a matter of fact, that very day while we were talking, a group of people were going down and thought they could get access to Gorbachev to talk with him, people representing various institutions in the government including several ambassadors, a couple of ambassadors from foreign countries. I was to go. I hadn't been there, but I was on their list to fly down and see him. Jim Collins was to go, my deputy in my place. But there was - consternation is not a strong enough term. There was no panic. George Bush was very calm about it, very cool about it.

Q: Did you get the feeling that this was a, I mean obviously you knew most of the players, but did you have the feeling that here was a, in foreign affairs here was a White House with a president that really understood situations, when to let go and when not to. I mean you know, in other words, a White House that was comfortable with the crisis.

STRAUSS: Yes, I guess I would agree, that is right.

Q: I don't want to put words in your mouth.

STRAUSS: I think that is right. I think George Bush was, generally speaking, comfortable. You see, this was the second year of his presidency and going into his third year really. He was comfortable, and he had good people. Jim Baker he had tremendous confidence in. They both had confidence in Larry Eagleburger, the Secretary of State and the deputy secretary respectively. Brent Scowcroft had a world of experience and sophistication. So he had a first rate team at that time.

Q: Well now, during this time, I mean this is before you went out. There had been people in the White House, kind of within the staff who tended to put their money on Gorbachev and in doing so, this is a staff problem often sort of denigrating Yeltsin and all that. Were you picking up any of this?

STRAUSS: No question there was a great deal of that there. There were people in the Bush administration at the highest levels who did not want him to have anything to do with Boris Yeltsin. As a matter of fact after I was appointed, and before I served, went over to start my service, Yeltsin came to town. They didn't want him to see the president. They were concerned it would send Gorbachev. As a matter of fact Yeltsin couldn't even get in to, he was going in a space bowl in Houston. They couldn't get him permission to do that. You could drive in off the highway. If he had just driven in off the highway and not asked, he would have been fine, but he asked, and they turned him down. I had to call Brent Scowcroft. He said, "I'll take care of that. That is dumb." He arranged for it. So that was the time...

Q: I mean this often picks up in a lower level. Policy can sometimes be affected by people who are just closing doors and all that.

STRAUSS: Oh, not sometimes; frequently I would say, more often than that sometimes, no question about that. There was a negative reaction to Yeltsin from top to bottom, just sort of a left wing radical. You remember there was the press saying at the time, they began to say that Bush was staying with Gorbachev too long because Gorbachev is already beginning to get in trouble. Just about the time I arrived Gorbachev was getting into trouble, so it was just beginning that. There was no big story yet.

Q: Were you picking up before you went out there, was anybody at the State Department or National Security Council saying power may be moving you know. Don't discount Yeltsin.

STRAUSS: Yes of course that was there, but people thought Gorbachev was a lot more secure than Gorbachev was is a better way of putting it. And Gorbachev was not as secure as he thought he was. Yeltsin was a major player already. What had gone on after that, I think he had not shortly after he became president of Russia. He may have been already.

Q: Just put this, in the Soviet Union there were presidents of the various republics. Russia of course was the major republic.

STRAUSS: The major republic. Yeltsin and Gorbachev at that time still on the surface still had some semblance of cordial relationship, but it deteriorated quickly. Keep in mind I am talking about August. By the end of the year on Christmas Day, Gorbachev gave up his job. Yeltsin pushed him out of his job is a better way of putting it.

Q: Well Yeltsin had, I mean when you got there at the embassy you were finding a different mood than say in Washington about this Yeltsin-Gorbachev power relationship, because Yeltsin by the time you arrived had already stood up on top of a tank and said no. I mean...

STRAUSS: Yeltsin was the popular figure in the country, no question about that. An interesting thing happened about that. I guess it was about my third day there or fourth day there. They had a big memorial service for three young men who had been killed in the coup. One of them was Russian Orthodox; one was, I think, Baptist, and one was Jewish. They had people from three different faiths there at this big memorial service. When I went over there, Collins didn't go with me. But Jim Billington of the Library of Congress happened to be in town, and he went along with me.

Q: Quite a scholar in Russian culture.

STRAUSS: Great scholar, yes, and was very helpful in what to say when we had a chance. When we got there, there must have been, hell I don't know how many hundred thousand people. Biggest crowd I have ever seen. I would have estimated a quarter of a million people they had in this big place. They had all the ambassadors from various countries who were going to meet and sit together during this service to show their support for Gorbachev, who had been out of captivity now two days. When Billington

and Vera and I and the security guys started walking toward where the ambassadors were supposed to meet, there was something way over towards the edge of part of that crowd, and I turned behind and I looked around. I saw a flat bed truck with some type of microphone on top of it. Just a flat bed truck out there, that was the stage. I said to Vera, "Vera I think that is the stage. I bet you that is where things are going to take place. I don't want to go over there and sit in the bleachers. The action is going to be up on that truck." I told the security people, "Let's go over there." I turned to some of the ambassadors and said, "Do you want to go with me?" The Italian ambassador said he would like to go. So he and I and I think Billington went with us, I am not certain. But we all went over towards that flat bed truck. We got within 50 yards of it, and there were ropes. The security people said, "These are ropes here, Mr. Ambassador." I said, "Well lift the damn rope up and let's go under it, or push it down and let's get over it." I turned to Vera and said, "Vera, this is just like a Democratic convention. Everybody is in charge, and nobody is in charge, so if you act like you are in charge, you will be in charge." She laughed. Of course I was exactly right, and we then got right up to the edge of the truck. There were a lot of security people there and heavier ropes. We had the same discussion. I said, "Lift them up and go on." So we did. When I got to the end of that flat bed truck, the whole Russian power establishment, what little there was left of it was back there. The first person I saw, one of the persons was Gorbachev. I went over to greet him, and he greeted me. Very warm, and he said he was glad I was there, that he had been expecting me and was glad I showed up. I said, "Well so am I. Who is going to speak here today, Mr. President?" He said, "Well, I am going to speak. The mayor is going to speak, and each member of the clergy is going to speak for two minutes. It will just be a 40 minute program," something like that. Less than an hour program. I said, "Well I would like to speak. I have a message from President Bush" He looked kind of stunned and kind of said no. I said, "Mr. President, let me tell you what is going on in this world and in your country. People are wondering about you, what is going to happen to you, senior people having just attempted a coup. Nothing could be as important to you as having a representative of the President of the United States stand up and give you his support for you as President of the Soviet Union." His eyes lit up just as if a light went on. He said, "You will speak just before me." I said, "Thank you. President Bush would like that. He wanted to show you his support and the world his support." So before a couple of more minutes had passed down came a kind of a rope ladder. I found myself helping the clergy one by one get up and down on the ladder and helping this one up and that one down. I laughed and said, "Vera it is just another, I told you about the Democratic convention. You never know what is going to happen next." After a half an hour or so, less than that, I spoke. I had a guy Hopkins who was my interpreter. He said he was a nervous wreck. He didn't have time to prepare for this, but we had it all written out. Collins had it prepared for me before I left the embassy. I had marked it up some as we drove over, so it was a fairly scratchy three minute remarks is all it was. Three or four minutes. But I remember getting up and looking over that crowed and thinking hell his crowd is three or four times bigger than I have seen in Times Square during the Democratic convention. We got through it, and it was played over and over on CNN and other networks around the world. It was very meaningful to Gorbachev. The White House was tickled to death. I talked to Brent Scowcroft. I don't think I talked to the

President then. They were delighted that we showed this U.S. support. So my ambassadorship was launched in a very positive way.

Q: I wonder if something here, I wonder if you could talk a little about your working relationship with Vera. She is here today, and here I think it should be for the record.

STRAUSS: Yes, I thought we covered this earlier.

Q: I think maybe we have.

STRAUSS: Well, let's do it anyway. It will be covered twice. When I took over, became treasurer of the Democratic National Committee in Washington in 1970, it was a mess. Fred Harris had been chairman and had no discipline, none, and the staff had none. It was a shambles. They were poorly trained. They were nice people. Some of them were and some of them weren't, but it was obvious we had to get rid of a lot and better utilize and order what was there. About the second or third day I was there, this lovely woman whose name is Louise Roberts, had been Fred Harris' secretary I think, or she had been with Pat O'Connor who was treasurer, his secretary. She was my secretary and I said, "Louise, who is that woman on the switchboard out there? She is the only person out here I have talked to that has any sense." Louise came back in a few minutes and said, "Her name is Vera Murray. She is a temporary employee here; she is filling in." I asked her to come back. I said, "Miss Murray, I need to talk to several hundred people in the next weeks, important people, difficult to reach. I need someone who knows how to talk on the telephone. You are the only one I have seen around here that looks to me like you have a talent for that. How would you like to come back here and work for me?" She sort of in a suspicious way said, "Well what would be expected of me." That was about the time we had the scandals with secretaries who couldn't type. She said, "You know, I am not a secretary. I don't take shorthand. I don't type." I said, "You won't be expected to. It is probably not what you suspect would be expected of you. I would expect you to talk to people for me and get me in touch with them in a professional way." I said, "Why don't you try it for a few days and let's see if it works out." She said, "Well, that is fair enough. I can do that." Well then it was a few days job, and it is 30 odd years and we are still together, been everywhere together.

Q: Well now, when you got to the embassy, who did you find were the major players from your point of view in support and all at the embassy?

STRAUSS: Well, Jim Collins, my deputy, was in a different class than any of the rest of them. There was nobody in his class. I don't remember the other's names. There were staff people around there. If I took time I could dig them out. They were, there was a fellow named Ken Yalowitz I remember who went over and ended up being ambassador to one of the smaller republics after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Several of the fellows were very able. I had a lot of talented and able people around there. So we add names. We had a very substantial CIA operation there that kept to itself that we were responsible for.

Q: Talking about this, I mean obviously this is an unclassified entry, but various ambassadors have had various relations with the station as the CIA establishment is called abroad. In general terms how did you find your support there and its performance?

STRAUSS: Well I was unable to really pass judgment on their competence because I didn't have an opportunity to grade them carefully. I thought that they were fairly good. I never had tremendous confidence in them. I used to go back in their shop they had there, the offices they had in their place. I did it frequently and used to tell them the telephone system was so poor around there, they had a better telephone system... They were nice people. We didn't really monitor them. I got along with them fine, but they didn't ask for anything they shouldn't have, and I didn't volunteer anything I shouldn't have.

Q: I am just wondering, you are looking at this when you arrived there, was there a sense of God, I mean this whole structure that we have dealt with for the past 50 years or so was coming apart, or was this looked upon as well this is one of these glitches, and we are going to end up coming back to sort of the old Soviet-American relationship?

STRAUSS: I don't think there was any question in anybody's mind that it was going to be very tough to hold the Soviet Union together. There was a general feeling that Gorbachev's time was limited. There was criticism in this country that Bush was staying with Gorbachev too long, too close to him and trying to conduct personal diplomacy instead of nation diplomacy. Those were the kinds of things that were going around. I guess I saw Gorbachev every couple of days, which was amazing. No other ambassador did. I did for two reasons. The primary reason was I represented the United States of America. The second reason was he liked me. We got along; we spoke the same language. I came nowhere near a peer of his, but well a person of stature in his own country, and he treated me that way. As Bush said to me at the time he sent me over there, "I am sending you over there for a particular reason, to establish the kind of relationship, warm with Gorbachev, that he needs - that he talks straight to you and you talk straight to him, and that if he speaks to you, he is speaking to me. That is what I need desperately." He said, "We have had an ambassador over there who is a splendid ambassador, but he will never have the kind of personal relationship with Gorbachev that you will have." Of course he was a fine ambassador who preceded me, a career man who knew more about the Soviet Union in his little finger than I knew in my whole body, but he wasn't a particularly personable fellow in terms of relationship. Jack Matlock was his name. I don't know him very well. Whenever I saw him he was always courteous, and I was too. A disappointment came up. I called him. Of course, I had no background over there. I said, "You know my wife really doesn't know anything about this job. The call is to see what we need to take over there, sheets, food? What are the demands made on her?" He said, "Well my wife is very busy now and doesn't like, she is busy with her photography. I will have her call." I said, "Fine." She didn't call, and I called him again in Russia a few weeks later. He said, "I have talked to her, but she just doesn't have time. She is tied up with the fact that we are going to be moving in a month or so, and she has a lot of her photography that is taking a big part of her time." I thought to myself this is the nuttiest thing I have ever heard. She never talked to my wife or me.

Q: It is unfortunate.

STRAUSS: An interesting thing happened on that. Tom Watson who was head of IBM and was ambassador there for awhile...

Q: Yes, he had been put in there by Carter, I think.

STRAUSS: I guess he had, by Carter.

Q: I think the idea was somebody who was a businessman and maybe this is time to do business.

STRAUSS: That is exactly right. But anyway, I got a call one day from his wife that I knew had been with him. He and I talked and then she called and said, "Mr. Strauss, I just returned from Russia recently, and they insisted that we stay at the embassy." She said, "The sheets were torn, weren't clean. I hated to put my head on the pillow case. It was ragged and dirty. You better tell your wife not to count on much of anything over there. I think the ambassador's wife has let this thing run down there terribly. I was sorry we spent the one night there." So we bought a bunch of sheets and pillow cases, everything you can think of and brought them over. I will never forget that lovely lady.

Q: A question, sort of a broad one, but one of the things I have noticed in my interviews that often is lost, and that is a political, and I emphasize political, not just a career person who maybe sold automobiles but somebody who has been involved in politics can often establish a rapport with leaders, maybe quite diverse systems, but no matter how you do it, the leadership is political. Did you find when you were talking with Gorbachev, and later on that your political experience sort of kicked in?

STRAUSS: I think that is an understatement how important it was. It was important to Gorbachev. With Yeltsin it was of vital importance in helping Yeltsin plan his trips to this country and state visits, things like that. We will get into all that. I probably ought to move into that. A couple of stories. When Helen and I came back a couple of weeks later, after I went home and stayed about a week. The baby was born, and we came back.

Q: Was the baby a boy or a girl?

STRAUSS: A girl, thank you.

Q: I think we should allow you to get on, does it have a name?

STRAUSS: Yes, Natalie Strauss is now, I guess, 11 years old, Breen, and the apple of my eye I might add. She is the youngest of our seven grandchildren. Anyway, when we went over there, Helen concerned about the whole venture. Not frightened but concerned. We got to the Spaso House, the ambassador's residence. Before we could get across the threshold, one side, the big double doors swung open just like a scene out of an opera.

There were about six or eight servants on one side and six or eight staff on the other side. The man greeted us in a tux. He said, "Mr. Ambassador, Mrs. Strauss, may I present the staff." He did, one by one. We still had the luggage and the security guy and everything behind us. We hadn't gotten in there yet. He said, "I am sorry I did this so poorly, but," his name was Angelo, he was Italian, but he said, "Mario," I think his name, "always did this. I have never done it before. That is why I did it so poorly." I said, "You did fine, but I expect to see Mario," whatever his name, something like Mario. "I expect to see him. Everybody told me he had run this house perfectly, and I didn't have to worry about it, and he would know how to do everything." He said, "He is dead." I said, "What happened to him? Dead?" I was stunned. I thought he was going to say he was killed in the coup time. He said, "Well he was playing cards and a man came in and accused him of having an affair with his wife and shot and killed him and the fellow he was playing cards with sitting next to him." Helen's mouth popped open, mine too. I turned to Helen and said, "There are two things. You have got all these worries. There are two things you don't have to worry about here. You don't need to worry about me gambling or running around with a wife.' That story cured me about gambling or running around with somebody's wife.

Q: Did when you initially got there, were you looking for a power center or was the idea that we were going to do everything we could to show our support for Gorbachev and all, or were any hedging of the bets looking at Yeltsin?

STRAUSS: None. As a matter of fact, the press was already beginning to say, would be critical of President Bush for being too supportive of President Gorbachev, for staying too long with him. What we were worried about was we didn't have any money to do a damn thing. President Bush was not prepared to go to Congress and ask for a lot of money. They needed help. They needed food badly. They needed other kind of support. We knew we couldn't give it to them, so we had to give them more conversation than cash is the way I used to describe it. That was our biggest problem doing something for them, making the Russian people feel like we were doing more. When we had once sent some food over there, we took the food that was left over from that Mideast Gulf War, all that canned food that had been shipped, was shipped to Russia and Moscow and distributed. We didn't have money to buy foodstuffs.

Q: Why was there this problem? Here we had been spending trillions on defending against the threat of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was beginning to look like maybe it was coming around to being, it had supported us during the Iraq invasion of Kuwait and all. Why all of a sudden was the spigot off, there was no money? What was the problem? How did you see this?

STRAUSS: Well keep in mind this was a Republican administration. They were goosey about the conservative wing of the party thinking they were doing too much for those communists. They weren't prepared to take on a fight to fight for that, and didn't, I might add. Our primary concern did not involve a lot of money. I mean our primary thing we could do for them had to be things that didn't involve a lot of money. We got legislation passed that didn't need much help from me, it did some, but Senator Lugar had enough

going for him. The first thing we were interested in more than anything else was getting our hands on and getting control of nuclear weapons that were scattered around in four different republics over there, get them all in Russian hands, which we were able to do and, interestingly, the Congress were a great help in that. They helped, now we have trouble with them, but then they were our strongest supporters. But that was the climate in which we worked. No one wanted to go to Congress and ask them for anything of any consequence.

Q: Well was the feeling that the conservative wing was so anti communist that they couldn't envisage doing something?

STRAUSS: I don't think that is an overstatement. I think that is the responsive statement. I know President Bush was intimidated to some extent by his right wing as most Republican presidents are, just as the left wing intimidates Democratic presidents. The right wing is structured. They have money and organization and structure. They can crush you. In our party the left wing can drive you crazy. They don't crush you; they buzz around you and sting and end up as I said driving you crazy. They don't have the structure or the organization or the money that the Republican right has.

Q: This would seem to be that ideological cohesiveness.

STRAUSS: No not at all.

Q: During your early days there, were you getting any indications or contacts with the Congress? I am not talking about something beyond the presidency, but I mean this is part of your competence. Excuse me. I want to stop this now, we are really talking about the first few days you were in the Soviet Union at that time. So we will pick it up. I had asked you a question about did you have ties to the political system in the United States? We are talking about Republicans and Democrats, but Congress of trying to get them to come along and understand, Gee things are really happening here and let's not...

STRAUSS: That is a very good point. I came back to this country quite often to go to Congress. I had more credentials, more credibility on both sides of the aisle I think than others in this administration had. A lot of things we were working on getting done, a lot of problems we had been solved for ourselves, I came back and solved it. Whether it was a problem of Representative Snowe or senator this or that, I had those kinds of relationships, and I came back here and lobbied for various things. I forget what particular problem it was. I came back and went before the Republican caucus and the Democratic caucus. I will never forget when I faced the Republican caucus Newt Gingrich came up to me and said, "I think you are right, and I will help you. Anything you need over there, you call me, and I will help you." Now I had doubts about Newt Gingrich, but as far as that went he certainly delivered for me.