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HAROLD KAPLAN

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Lew Schmidt, interviewing Hal Kaplan at his apartment in New York City. I'm asking Hal to start out and give us his background, and then we'll follow his career from that point on.

KAPLAN: Well, as you probably know from the records, I was brought up not far from here, across the river, as a matter of fact, in New Jersey. My parents were immigrants from Poland, part of that great wave that came over at the end of the nineteenth century. I think my father arrived here about 1898.

I was the youngest of seven children. I grew up in the schools of Newark, New Jersey, then went out to the Midwest for my college education, with every intention of becoming a college professor. That was my great ambition in life. After some under-graduate work at the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago people gave me a fellowship, again with the intention of bringing me along and making a professor of me.

We had a very brilliant faculty there. The head of it at the very beginning, although he left very shortly after my arrival, was the father of Paul Nietzsche, the great Professor Nietzsche who, together with another professor named Dargon, constituted a very brilliant

Romance Language Department. There were two French professors there, one named Vigneron, the other Echedron, both of whom are well known in the world of scholarship and literary criticism in France.

I became a teaching fellow there and was preparing my Ph.D. exams when the war was coming on. As a matter of fact, I took my written exams and the orals in the summer of 1940, quite early on, just as the Nazis were preparing to make their breakthrough at Sedan and overwhelm Western Europe, something we couldn't, of course, foresee. So that I had determined that after I took my exams, I would bundle up the notes from my thesis and go off and spend some time in the Ambulance Corps that Professor Vigneron had contacted for me on my behalf, and go to France and see if I could help. Because it looked at that point that we were a long way from joining this war, and I was emotionally, and in every way, a complete warmonger at that point. I wanted very much for us to be in that war, and I felt that the conquest of Europe by the Nazis was a disaster that would befall our civilization and leave it prostrate for years to come.

So I had arranged to do this. I took my exams and went east just about the time when the Nazis were breaking through and making the whole project pointless.

I found myself in New York, then having passed my Ph.D. exams and been copiously congratulated by Professor Vigneron and Professor Echedron, a Phi Beta Kappa key, etc., etc.. They were grooming me to join this department of theirs, which was, for me, the culmination of all my ambitions. I wanted nothing but that.

But it did look as if Europe was going to be totally conquered and there was nothing to be done about it, and somehow that took the stuffing out of me, as far as just teaching French literature and doing things of that kind.

I poked around New York long enough to get in contact with an organization that was being set up to broadcast to occupied Europe and keep the hopes of the people up there, while the country did what it could to sustain the war effort of the British and, I thought, possibly in the end, join the war effort against the Nazis.

At that point we did not know that would happen, and there was a great deal of opposition to it in the country, as you may recall. Generally speaking, Roosevelt, who I think was very much on our side, was nevertheless constrained by both the Neutrality Act and the general atmosphere in the country to proceed with great caution. So that if the Japanese had not attacked us a year later, I don't know when, if ever, we would have got into war.

But in the interim, I found this organization which, under the sponsorship and general patronage of Archibald MacLeish and the Office of Facts and Figures that the president had set up, but directly under the directorship of people like C.D. Jackson of Time and a group of exiles from Europe, were beginning to broadcast to Europe. They got a lot of help from a private radio outfit in Boston, and through that had the cooperation of very distinguished and knowledgeable Americans connected with France, like William Tyler, and Mike

Bessey at that point got very much involved. And these were both people I met and who helped me. They needed some American staff in this outfit that was broadcasting from 57th Street. I don't know where the transmitter was, but that's where the offices were.

I said, "I'd do anything to help you," and I wasn't much use because they were professional journalists at that point and broadcasting in French. My French was very good as far as the eighteenth century comedies of Mariveaux and so forth were concerned, but as far as the colloquial French in which you broadcast, it was a little bit inadequate. But I said, "I'll be your office boy. I'll collect your paper clips. I'll do any- thing," insofar as I wanted to help these people.

Q: Was this the beginning of the OWI then?

KAPLAN: The OWI was then just, I think, getting formed, and they took over this broadcasting operation. I don't recall exactly at what point it was officially brought into being. I don't think it was until after we were in war.

Q: I think that's right. I think it was in early '42 when they actually became the OWI.

KAPLAN: Yes. So during the period I'm talking about, we're still not in the war. The head of the outfit at 57th Street was a French journalist named Pierre Lasalaffe, who had been the head of the most profitable and prestigious and sensationalist French daily newspaper called *Balisoir*, not a very respectable paper, but a very, very lively one, and he was a very lively fellow. He got a team of people here together, who were something of an education for me, because there were already a good many French exiles and so forth. I worked with them, and I learned a great deal from them. I was working with them when, in the fullness of time, the Japanese did attack, we did get into the war, the OWI was formed, and they assimilated me into the OWI at that point.

I found myself part of a little team that was being readied to accompany the landing in North Africa, which was our first big military action, as you recall. On that team was the man I mentioned, Bill Tyler, and Mike Bessey. There were a number of very seasoned old journalists who had worked a great deal in Europe, like Joe Ravoto.

Q: Oh, yes. I remember him.

KAPLAN: He was head of the UPI, I believe, for quite a while. And there was Gene Speck. There was a fellow named Clark. It was quite a good group. Above all, for me, because he sort of took me under his wing, there was an old Parisian journalist who had arrived well before World War I and had been the correspondent of the old *New York World* for years and years. [Laughter] His name was Bill Byrd. He lived through the '20s in Paris and knew all that period of the "lost generation," knew [Ernest] Hemingway and all those people and so forth, and was for me, of course, an object of great veneration. I thought he was the old man of the mountain, and he was very nice to me and helped me a great deal.

I was the youngest and stupidest, I should think, of that crowd, because they were all very knowledgeable about Europe, but I did have a gift for the language, which was appreciated. The odd thing is, there were members of that group who had worked in Europe for years and hardly could speak a word of French, you see. [Laughter]

Q: Not uncommon for Americans.

KAPLAN: Not uncommon for Americans. I remember there was a fellow named Jules France--I forget which outfit he was--also a newspaper type, whose French was extremely rudimentary, and so was Gene Speck's. So they had me.

We were on this huge convoy going to North Africa. We didn't know where we were going at first. There were 120 ships in that convoy holed up on this thing, sailing off to the war. We would have daily language seminars. That was the one place where I could sponsor. They got the young professor. Because Bill Byrd, who, God knows, knew the French language perfectly--his hobby was sort of language and grammar, and he was a walking dictionary. Nobody knew the language better than he, but he still spoke with an accent, an extraordinary American accent, you see, whereas my professors back in Chicago had worked very hard to smooth out mine, so I was able to help in that way.

Anyway, we landed in North Africa, and in the fullness of time, landed near Oran and spread out. I was sent to Algiers; most of us were. Algiers was where we set up the headquarters. I had a period working in the OWI of real practical work in the midst of war.

We had destroyed our own transmitter accidentally, because we put it at the bottom of a cruiser. Off the coast of Oran, there was a little sporadic bit of fighting at the beginning, and I think it fired one salvo and destroyed the whole transmitter. [Laughter] So we needed to use the French facilities, which were capable of reaching France and beyond, well into Europe, and since I was quite fluent in the language very quickly--even though it was rather, as I say, classical French I had begun with, I picked it up very quickly--and they made me a liaison officer with the outfit they called Radio France, which had the transmitter that we needed to do our broadcasting. We set up the first Voice of America broadcast from Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers.

Q: Did you run into any difficulty with the French? Because, of course, the Vichy French were in North Africa at that time. Did you have any trouble getting the transmitters?

KAPLAN: Yes, we had a lot of trouble. We had great, daily troubles, even once they had officially come over to our side, even before [Charles] De Gaulle arrived. De Gaulle was always very sticky to deal with, but even before he arrived. He didn't arrive until August, and I'm talking about the period--we landed in November, you recall--and there's the period before August of the next year in which we were dealing with the Vichy French essentially, but who had come over to our side. Our arrival had triggered the end of the Free Zone in France, the occupation of the entire country, which was now our target in our broadcasts, so that the Vichy officers, those who had family and all the rest back there, most of them

swung over very suddenly to our side. But they remained very independent and frequently politically very opposed to a lot of our points of view, so we had a constant problem. So we had a constant problem with them.

When the problems got the least bit sticky, they had to go well above my head. I was a very junior officer. I was in my twenties, just out of school. So when we got into trouble, it was people like Bill Tyler and C.D. Jackson and our British counterparts, because we formed a thing that was called the Psychological Warfare Branch, of which the OWI was the American component, the OWI and a few other American elements, and the British supplied another component.

The head of the British effort was a man named Richard Crossman, a very brilliant, sarcastic, funny, interesting man who later became a backbencher in the Labor government and then finally very much a front-bencher and even a member of the Cabinet. You must remember Dick Crossman.

Q: I remember the name, yes.

KAPLAN: He and C.D. Jackson were the two civilian heads, and we had military heads, as well, because we were integrated into the Allied Force Headquarters at the Hotel St. George under Eisenhower at the very beginning.

Q: That brings me to another question, because I've understood from some of the people who were there that initially the Eisenhower command was rather skeptical about taking a civilian group on psy war into their bosom and letting them operate. Did you have any difficulty in that extent?

KAPLAN: Well, I think my superior officers did. C.D. Jackson and Bell and the others got to eat on that. I was, again, a spear-carrier, a very lowly operator. They did feel that, I heard.

On the American side, however, we had a rather unusual circumstance that smoothed things over for us. Our military commanding officer was a Colonel Hazeltine, a cavalry officer of the old days who was, if my memory is correct, the highest ranking permanent officer in the whole theater of operations. That is to say he outranked, in the regular Army, everybody there, including Eisenhower himself, because he was an old cavalry officer. Consequently, he had a great deal of prestige, even though, of course, George Marshall had put in charge much younger people and Eisenhower, to begin with, and all his aides.

I can't think of the name of the general, a wonderful old fellow. All these fellows later on went to London and took part in the preparation of the cross-channel invasion. But Hazeltine, who was himself very skeptical about having been handed this mob of eggheads and mixed-up civilians, Englishmen, all kinds of things like that, wondering what he was going to do with it, got very sold by, I think, people like Bill Tyler and C.D. Jackson on the idea of the importance of our mission. He would go up and go to bat for us. This is hearsay, because I was, again, a very lowly officer. I was just told these things.

He would go up to the Hotel St. George where the headquarters were and, you know, Ike would show a great deal of deference to him because Ike was that kind of man. He was very diplomatic and a wonderful handler of people, and if Colonel Hazeltine wanted to see him, he saw him, you see. Because of, I think basically, Eisenhower's native intelligence and his understanding of the importance of this function, and plus the intervention of Hazeltine to smooth things bureaucratically, we got everything we needed really to operate there.

We did the broadcasting, but we also did what they called base propaganda, which was dealing with the local populations who, of course, had several years of almost total cutoff from France and they were penniless and in rags. The Arab population was very miserable. Supplies were very poor, and there was also, amongst the European element, a very strong right-wing Vichiist, so there was a lot to do with these people.

There was a section which I personally had nothing to do with, but there was a section that dealt directly with the Army providing materials for the forward activities. When we began to see the collapse of the Italians first and then Rommel's army under the battering of the Eighth and ours, one began to get a very fertile feel for military psy war. We produced leaflets so that they could surrender more easily and that sort of thing.

So the entire effort under the Psychological Warfare Branch of the Allied Force Headquarters was finally accepted by everybody as an integral part of the war effort. Nobody that I can recall seriously questioned it anymore.

I always remember Hazeltine, this calvary character, you know, as he used to turn up every once in a while and inspect us. He was a holdover from the old peacetime Army, you know, of the old days. It was interesting for me, as a young fellow, to see a situation like that. So that's how I got involved in all this.

Now, much happened afterwards, of course. For one thing, I was stuck there long after most of my colleagues moved up, for accidental reasons which are doubtless too boring for me to go into. For one thing, I was sent back on a brief mission.

Q: To the States?

KAPLAN: To the States, just at the time when they moved into Sicily, so I missed that. We had the most extraordinary improvised sort of war effort. The American way of making war was always very plethoric. We just piled everything into big ware- houses and then when we had to move, we moved, and everything was left there.

So I came back, the very junior officer that I was, and found that all the important people had left and I was in charge. I had this extraordinary period of being in charge of a vast operation, the inventory of which was not in my hands. I didn't even know! There was a senatorial investigation group that came on the scene after the departure of all my colleagues, who sat me down. They had set up a consulate there, a civilian consulate. They

sat me down for a full day and put me through the worst day of my life, I think, saying, "Well, Mr. Kaplan, will you tell us about your warehouse at Blida?" I'd never heard of it. "Well, it's in this warehouse." They said, "You mean you are in charge here, and you don't even know how many transmitters you have?" They kept, in short, asking questions which, on the record, must show me to be the worst idiot that has ever served the American Government, because I had no answers to all their questions. [Laughter] And somewhere that's preserved. God knows I hope it's turned to dust by now.

Q: I'm surprised it didn't become congressional report. Maybe it did.

KAPLAN: Oh, it did! It did. A senator from Maryland, the father of another senator.

Q: I know who you mean. Tydings, I think.

KAPLAN: Yes, the senior Tydings. He was the head of that, and he gave his name to the group. And they just made mincemeat, not only of us. They didn't blame the OWI more than the whole establishment which had left the North African countryside from Casablanca to Tunis--that is to say, an area as great as from Paris to Moscow--strewn with warehouses, inventories, material, so forth and so on, and hardly turned its back to look and see what was there. I've never forgotten that experience. It was a real shocker for me because I felt terrible about it. The highest ranking naval type was a young Captain Morris--I remember his name--from New York, very top drawer, I think of the family of Governor Morris, who went through something of the same thing. He was the highest ranking, and we had all these port installations and all the rest. Really, he didn't have the answers either, and everybody felt very bad about this. [Laughter] So I was kept on quite long.

Q: You were still broadcasting to France?

KAPLAN: Yes. We still had a broadcasting thing going, but it was tapering off a great deal and we were turning things over more and more to the French, De Gaulle, by that time having come and taken over. They had a provisional government established there.

Q: You were personally voicing some of these broadcasts?

KAPLAN: Yes. I actually wrote them, spoke them, got up at four o'clock in the morning sometimes to put them on the air. I sometimes wondered, because although my French by that time was quite good, I sometimes wondered what horrors I perpetrated against the French language. [Laughter] Because there was, by that time, very little way of controlling, you know. But anyway, it was an interesting experience and a very good learning experience for me. I learned a great deal and got very fascinated by the whole thing.

Then in the fullness of time, I was sent to Paris, intending, as a matter of fact, to join what was no longer the Psychological Warfare Branch, but the Psychological Warfare Division, I think it was.

Q: In other words, you remained in North Africa then until after the Normandy invasion?

KAPLAN: Yes. I didn't get sent to Paris until the winter of '45, the invasion having taken place in '44 and Paris falling in August. Of course, I was dying to go up there and chafing at the bit and bombarding everybody with requests, and being stiff-armed by everybody. They decided to create a permanent structure in North Africa, and they sent a Colonel Sedley Peck and various other people to organize that, but they needed somebody to make the transition, so they said, "Just wait a little while, and you'll join your old colleagues in a little while." The "little while" got longer and longer and longer and longer.

This was all fulsomely documented in my complaining letters to my wife, which went up in flames for the most part in that little accident I told you about that happened in 1972 in Creteil (Incident was described off the record, and never got on tape.). No, I guess I haven't told you about it on tape, anyway.

Q: It isn't on tape. We'll get to it later.

KAPLAN: Anyway, I lost all those papers. But as I say, I bombarded Washington and anybody who would listen to me, and my poor wife, of course, had to listen to me, with complaints about being held over there when all the action was in Italy and General Patch was beginning to move up from the south.

I had a lot of French colleagues, because this one function I had for years with Radio France remained all through my work there, doing the broadcasting and so forth, but I was left, also, to do the diplomatic liaison with them. Bill Tyler and Mike Bessey and C.D. Jackson, of course, and all the top people had gone off to London or somewhere else, you see, and I was left to do that, too. So I got to be very friendly with a lot of the French.

When we invaded in the south and they moved the Seventh Army up the Rhone, a lot of my French types that I was liaising with, went. That was a final humiliation, you see.

Q: They all went off to Italy.

KAPLAN: They had been back and forth to Italy, but then they went up, and they would still use Algiers as a base for some of them. I remember one very good friend named Pistor, who worked for the France Combatante, it was called, the Fighting French, but he was a correspondent, basically. He was one of the unfortunate very few casualties that they took. When they landed on the beach near Marseille, some sniper got him. He was standing in a jeep and he got killed.

There was practically no German rear-guard action there when we landed in the south. They moved back with very little. There were a few places on the way up where they had some very sharp little engagements, but fundamentally the Germans were under orders to make an orderly retreat. They were probably the best army in the entire world. In that whole

war, I don't think there was anything like the German Army, and they did their retreat very well.

The movement up the Rhone, once it started, just about took the last of my French, vis-à-vis, and then I really felt bad about being left. At last, they sent me up to Paris. That was very early, I think somewhere about March 1, in Paris, landing in Marseille. Marseille was another disaster, I must say, from the point of view of my papers. I seem to have some sort of fate that has pursued me and will ensure that the world will not be burdened by memoirs of this period, because I had a footlocker full of papers which was lost in Marseille. I also had a draft--this is significant--of a Ph.D. thesis that I had brought from Paris in the early days and I'd done nothing with, but nevertheless was sort of laid out and agreed with Professor Vigneron, who was going to be my thesis person. Because the assumption was always that the war would be over, and I'd go back to Chicago. I think in some unconscious way I got the idea that God was telling me something when He did away with the draft of my Ph.D. thesis, because I never went back to Chicago, as you know.

I got to Paris, and then did not move forward into Germany for another reason, because I got scarlet fever, and they kept me there for a month in isolation, along with a lot of other guys. There was a little mini-epidemic. I can't remember whether at that point it was scarlet fever or hepatitis. One or the other, because I remember having them both at the American Hospital at different times. But I think this first one was scarlet fever.

Meanwhile, some of my old colleagues, including Bill Tyler, who was our greatest French expert, and Mike Bessey, who was also very, very learned and had much pre-war experience in France and so forth, were organizing, with Cass Canfield, the publisher of *Harper's*, and a few other distinguished gents, what would later turn out to be the USIS France. The term "USIA" did not yet exist.

Q: No, it didn't. USIS existed long before USIA existed.

KAPLAN: Exactly. We called it the USIS then, although the home office was still the OWI until about '47, wasn't it?

Q: Yes, about that time. Then things died for about a year, and then they came back with the Smith-Mundt Act.

KAPLAN: That's right. So they were organizing USIS in the embassy. The embassy was being put together in a way that was probably unique in the sense that in the years to come, you would never do the kind of recruitment that occurred then. The embassy people were desperate for help. So a young American who was being shipped back to the States and decided he would like to stay in Europe for a while, or almost anybody who was literate and had the proper background, had a chance to get at least a temporary job at the embassy. I'm not talking really about the proper diplomatic work and the people in the Foreign Service, but all the ancillary services that we were putting together, such as our cultural and

information services. They just couldn't get people over from the States fast enough, so people were hired right there on the spot.

Q: Probably didn't have enough of them with French, either.

KAPLAN: That's right. This was later, of course, maybe a year or two later, I worked in the press office when the war had come to an end. I was helping out there and doing all sorts of odd jobs there, and a young Marine, who had been demobilized, came over and came to see me. His name was Art Buchwald, and he said, "How about a job?" [Laughter] Art Buchwald was out of the Marines, adventurous, and wanted to stay in Europe for a while.

It just happened that at that particular point, when Congress did away with the OWI there was a short period where they just threw everything out. This coincided more or less with that period, if I recall correctly. I'm probably mixing the dates up. But in any event, I asked around. There was nothing for Art there. He seemed to be very amusing and prepossessing, a good guy, you know, and I said, "Well, God, here's a man we could surely use." I said, "Why don't you go over and see Jeff Parsons?" who was running a resuscitated *New York Herald Tribune*.

Q: Was that the same Jeff Parsons who stayed on in the diplomatic service, or is this a different Jeff Parsons? I had a Jeff Parsons who was my DCM in Japan in about '53 to '56. I'm not sure it's the same Jeff Parsons.

KAPLAN: No, I don't think it could be. It might have been. About what age would he have been?

Q: He would have been in his late forties or early fifties at that time.

KAPLAN: Well, my Jeff Parsons would have been a little younger then, and he was a side of the Parsons family that had owned the *Herald Tribune*.

Q: I don't think it's the same one.

KAPLAN: After he left, he was the man who set the *Herald Tribune* going again and ran it for a good many years. Then he joined a big aircraft company.

Q: Northrop?

KAPLAN: Northrop it was. But he was in charge of the *Herald Tribune* when I sent Art Buchwald over there, and he was in the same situation the embassy was in. They needed anybody who could push a pencil, you know, and spell a word correctly. He said, "You're going to cover the restaurants," because Art was a pudgy fellow and looked like a man who liked food, and he did a marvelous job.

Q: He started his column over there, as a matter of fact, during that time.

KAPLAN: That's right. He started his column covering restaurants. You know, there were other examples of people who were temporarily taken on and put in the Foreign Service Reserve, but very shortly, Washington clamped down on that and said, "No. We're in the process of working out an orderly system."

Everybody was beginning to realize, or had already realized, in Washington, that the Foreign Service establishment could not even remotely resemble the pre-war affair, that we now had taken over responsibility for the reconstruction of all of Europe, we had Japan on our hands, we had the whole world on our hands, and nothing from the former great powers but ruins and needs and very few resources. So it was dawning on people at home that we would have to have services that we had never had before, and one of the them was our kind of thing.

It took a while, some backing and filling. I remember when they abolished the OWI and replaced it with nothing at first, leaving the embassy high and dry, and gutting USIS. My wife said, "Well, now it's time to do what you intended doing all your life. Go back and become a professor of literature at the University of Chicago."

I was going to do that and they were still waiting for me there, but I was offered a job at UNESCO, and I was very excited and taken by the whole spectacle of Europe and its future and what was going to come. It was a very exciting place to be at that time. I remember discussing this with my wife and saying, "Next year. Let's do a little more here. It's too interesting, what's happening here."

We had the Conference of the Palais Rose. The premises of the Cold War were evolving. It was becoming evident that we were going to be in a huge battle for the soul of Europe--the soul and body of Europe, I should say--and somehow I had been so filled with all this, the idea of just going back and teaching Mariveaux again seemed unimportant, so I said, "Let's wait a while." And UNESCO was a way of doing that. We still had a lot of illusions about the possibility of operating in the fields of education, science, and culture in a manner that ignored the political rifts developing in the world. We could somehow find bridges there, and Julian Huxley was a very attractive--he was the first.

I became connected with UNESCO, oddly enough, by being seconded to the delegation during the great general conference that founded the organization in Paris, I believe in '46 or '47, somewhere in there. They had a sort of official founding conference in London, but the really big one was in Paris. The delegation that came over needed help, obviously. Who was the head of our first delegation? That was well before the time of Benton. It could have been Archibald MacLeish.

Anyway, whoever ran that, they needed help and they sent me, again a very junior, young fellow from the embassy, to help them. So I got a look at UNESCO in this first founding conference.

Q: By this time, then, you were taken into UNESCO and you were dropped from the embassy?

KAPLAN: No, I was still in the embassy then.

Q: You were seconded to this.

KAPLAN: Seconded to this to help them there. That conference, after all, only lasted a month or so.

So I went back to the embassy, whereupon OWI shut down. I think our leader then was Doug Schneider. I think he had replaced Bill Tyler.

Q: Tyler went off and joined the official service of the Department of State.

KAPLAN: He took his lateral entry into State, but maybe a little later than this. I'm not quite sure. In any case, Doug was in charge, and he had the sad task of liquidating this little USIS we had begun to build. He was left with nothing but a press attaché (I can't remember who that was) and maybe one or two others, but everybody else had to go home.

Q: What happened to you?

KAPLAN: I was terminated. Well, I was told to go home. Full termination, I think this was.

Instead of that, meanwhile, these people from UNESCO whom I had been in contact with every day for a month, you see, said, "We're building a secretariat here." The conference had just then decided to establish its headquarters in Paris. They put in charge of a thing called mass communication at UNESCO a Scottish madman, a film maker named Greerson, a wonderful fellow in his way, but he was really quite loony. He recruited a skeleton staff--a fellow named Farr from England; a Frenchman who later became director general of UNESCO, a man named De Jardin; and me. They said, "We want an American in this team." And I was, again, the youngest and the least senior of these people, but they put me in charge of what was called the Bureau of Public Information.

The mass communications program was a substantive program for the exchange of materials in mass communications amongst the member states, but there was also a small public information bureau which was supposed to tell the world about what UNESCO was doing, and it had no staff at all. He said, "You're going to be that."

Q: You're the staff.

KAPLAN: "You're the staff." I said, "Well, I'm interested in what they're doing here. I'm interested in staying in Europe in this very exciting time, and my friends in Chicago can wait another year or so." Meanwhile, of course, the department in Chicago was changing considerably. As I think I mentioned before, Nietzsche had gone off to California and

Dargon had retired. They were both very elderly gents. I forget who was actually running the department now. It may have been my friend Vigneron, the Frenchman. But there was room, in short, in Chicago. They wanted to build up again, and I could have gone back, but I begged off again for a while.

The UNESCO experience was a whole other story. I won't bore you with all that. It lasted a couple of years. It was interesting in its own way, very frustrating, but I was plunged in the middle of that. It was a very political experience in many ways. UNESCO is a very political organization.

I was up to my ears in that when somebody came to me and said, "You know, while you're at all this, Congress has turned around and recreated an information setup. And on top of that, we have a new problem. We're building a big French mission here for the Marshall Aid Program, and we'd like you to come back and work for us again."

Q: Before you discuss that, you said you didn't want to bore me with the UNESCO experience, but that it was a very frustrating one. I can understand it, because I had some exposure to UNESCO a number of years later. In what sense was it frustrating? What were you trying to do for UNESCO, and in UNESCO, that you felt you were being frustrated in attempting to accomplish?

KAPLAN: The Cold War crept into UNESCO very early on. It was impossible, really, to project a program for the organization without every single national representative of one of the member states having a say about it. Consequently, any kind of movement in UNESCO, it was impossible to say anything without having eighteen censors on your back. That was one thing.

Another thing was that the program itself was already being tilted in a way that I found absolutely indigestible towards some of the--we were still an organization of basically Western orientation during the period I'm talking about. The real influx of the former colonial countries and, consequently, the Third World and "non-aligned" element that came in, and by supporting the Soviet communist thrust in there, made the place politically unbreathable, hadn't quite happened yet. So my frustration was not comparable to what happened in the '50s.

Q: When it became quite a leftist organization.

KAPLAN: When it really became leftist. It was, rather, just being stuck and unable to say anything or do anything without everybody looking over your shoulder. I found that the substantive achievements of the organization, which I was intended to tell the world about, were also stymied in that way. The frustration of having thirty-six bosses, of having to cope, if you wish, with the diplomatic sensibilities of everybody every time you said anything about what UNESCO did or wanted to do, was perhaps secondary to the general feeling that the organization itself was going deeper and deeper into a mire of bureaucracy and inaction because the various bureaucracies of the member states absorbed the

overwhelming majority of the organization's funds in endless palaver and meetings and discussions and so forth.

We were constantly *talking* about increasing the availability of mass communications. We were constantly *talking* about doing something to increase literacy and so forth. We had a worldwide literacy campaign. We were *talking* about programs of scientific exchange and so forth. But the real work was always done outside of UNESCO, and it was very hard to identify any areas where significant and useful exchanges in the fields of education or science or culture were taking place because UNESCO existed.

These were all channels that were knitting together from before the war, in any event, where people had an intrinsic interest in exchanging materials and working together and so forth, and it was very difficult to see how the organization, even when it satisfied all the diplomatic problems and were sure not to raise the hackles of anybody on the east or west side, even when it was being very careful and feathered back from that point of view, managed to do anything really substantive.

Later on, I can't say. Now, I'm rather exaggerating the picture in a sense that special funds within the UNESCO purview, if not actually part of the UNESCO budget, were finally raised in order to do substantive things, so that some, at least, pump-priming money was provided to save the great temples of Dendur, for example, in Egypt, or to do one or another of the great things that we wanted to do. But in almost every case, the best we could point to and say, "Well, we held a meeting which got people started"--you must remember that our budget in the first years was really a very tiny budget. As I recall, the first budget of UNESCO was something on the order of \$7 million. We were talking about things that really cost immensely more money than that, even if you think of dollars in the terms of the 1945, '46, '47 range, which, of course, you'd have to multiply that by at least ten to get to what that dollar represented. But even so, the funds were manifestly insufficient to do much in a substantive way. This was frustrating, too.

My last big job in UNESCO was going to Beirut, spending several months there to organize an annual conference, which was, I believe, the third. After the one in Paris, they went to Mexico City. The practice at UNESCO was to hold one general conference out of two at the headquarters in Paris, and the other one would be held in one of the member states. There was an interest in holding them in member states that were not European, so we went to Mexico City and then we went to Beirut.

I had a great deal to do with the organization of the one in Beirut, and that was interesting simply from a logistical point of view. I'm not an administrative type and I'm not very good at these sort of things, but I had to learn a lot about it, and I discovered that there was a great deal of substance in administrative work, if you wish.

Q: There is.

KAPLAN: Yes. So it was interesting. That was an interesting job, and I came back with a sort of glow about that and I thought, "Well, at least I've done something useful in UNESCO."

It was at that point that embassy people came after me and said, "Look, that's all very well, your UNESCO thing, but we need"--they were setting up a huge organization branch, which I didn't realize. Governor [Averell] Harriman came over to oversee this from a European-wide basis. But on the French side, they put somebody in charge. I think the first one was General Parkman, wasn't he? Or was that Barry Bingman? I can't remember.

Q: I don't remember, because I was in the Far East and not in the European picture at all.

KAPLAN: Whoever did the first French mission had a person in charge of their public information, which was a very important part of the Marshall Plan, for obvious reasons, because we were doing an enormous effort in Europe, against what was the beginning of a great deal of Cold War propaganda. The Russians were throwing out all the stops, and we were being vilified and denounced everywhere.

It seems, in retrospect, it's going to be very difficult to explain to our children that we had a problem when we were in the process of giving the Europeans the wherewithal to start their economies up, and we were making these enormous sacrifices and having this extremely forward-looking economic policy, and yet we had to argue with the Europeans and explain it.

Q: To persuade them to take it.

KAPLAN: You know, it seems, on the face of it, a very difficult thing to understand. But if you put yourself back in that era, if you look at 1952, for example, about the time I'm talking, all of Paris, the walls were covered with these great whitewash slogans, "Ridgeway, la peste!" *La peste* was the bubonic plague. The Korean War had come and the Berlin blockade had happened, and there was a terrible shudder of apprehension throughout all Europe. The communists had broken with their erstwhile partners that had come back to restore the [French] Republic after the liberation and were engaged in an all-out war against the Republic, and we were in it up to our ears.

So, hastily, the United States Government reacted to all this by undoing what they had done in the suppression of the OWI, building a new organization, trying to put things together again. My entry back into all that was through the Marshall Plan, because General Parkman (I think it was Parkman), our first director, and Barry Bingman fought hard upon him, hired as the chief information person in the French mission Helen Kirkpatrick, who had been one of the younger correspondents, with Bill Stoneman as the boss, of the--which midwestern paper? I've forgotten now. Stoneman's paper was the *Chicago*--

Q: The Chicago Tribune?

KAPLAN: No.

Q: The Chicago Daily News?

KAPLAN: For goodness sake, to think I've forgotten which paper he represented! Anyway, Stoneman had on his staff this young, tall, intelligent, energetic woman named Helen Kirkpatrick, and she left the paper in order to join the government then as the information officer of the first head of the French mission, and she built a staff. She's the one who came to me and said, "You've got to come back to the government."

So I went back and entered as an FSR, and I can't recall whether I was then relayed straight back to the OWI or stayed with the--

Q: It would have been by that time, probably, a State Department FSR. What later became USIA was still in the State Department at that time.

KAPLAN: Yes. I've sort of forgotten that side of things. In any event, my work was there on the ground. In France all through those years, they maintained something called the USIS, whatever there was at home, and I did not, of course, as a member of the Marshall Plan, belong to the USIS, but I was, of course, working very closely with them.

Q: Was either Bill Cody or Lee Brady in Paris at that time, do you recall? They were over there very early in USIS.

KAPLAN: Yes. I'm just trying to remember which came when and so forth. Cody is the one who took me back into the embassy, so that must have been around '53 or '54--'53, maybe '52.

Q: It might have been even a little earlier than that.

KAPLAN: Maybe you're right. Yes, it would have been earlier.

Q: He went back over to France, I think in late '51 or early '52, right around Christmas time. Of course, he might have been there a year before he took you back in.

KAPLAN: Yes. Had Brady been there a brief time before him?

Q: Brady, I think, had had some experience in France before.

KAPLAN: Yes, he had some experience. It seems to me he was working under Tyler for a while as the cultural officer, then left. Then he had a very brief period, I think, in charge.

Q: Yes, I think he did.

KAPLAN: Then Cody replaced him. I joined the USIS, properly speaking, left the Marshall Plan thing, with Cody.

Q: Let's go back to your Marshall Plan experience. What was your position in the Marshall Plan program? How long were you in it, and what were you trying to get across? I think you've given us some advance information, an idea about that before.

KAPLAN: I was Helen Kirkpatrick's general deputy in the Marshall Plan, and we had an organization that helped the substantive people, mainly economists, in their work with the interministerial commission that the French set up in order to whack up the sums of money that were allotted to France by the overall European setup.

The structure, you will recall, generally involved a European setup, which was the OEEC, that whacked out the large sums for France, Britain, Germany, Italy, and so forth. Then within each country, there was a country plan worked out by the inter-ministerial committee. There was a great deal of haggling about that, about how to do it. Our young economists had studied the French economy and had their idea of what was needed, the priorities and so forth and so on, but generally they worked in relative harmony about allocating the French needs to fill the so-called dollar gap, which were clear enough and there was not a great deal of argument about that.

There came to be a good deal more argument about the so-called counterpart funds, because the system involved giving the French the dollars to import what they needed to prime the pump of their industry and get things started. Those dollars were then transformed by selling them to private industry--you know, raw materials, machines, whatever--they were paid for in francs. The francs were put in escrow, and that was called the counterpart fund.

Q: The U.S. controlled the counterpart, more or less.

KAPLAN: The U.S. controlled it with the help of the interministerial committee. In fact, you could say we had a veto power on the use of the counterpart. I think it's probably a bit too much to say we just controlled them, because the French had a commissariat, which sat over on the Rue Martigny, under Monnet in those first years, which was called the Commissariat Du Plan, and which really had the initiative in deciding where those counterpart funds were going to go. Our people would horn in and look over their plan and say, "No, you shouldn't do this, you ought not do this." I was on the information side and not deeply involved in all this, except they used everybody for everything in that we were a small group and we all sat in a country team. It was interesting to me because I wasn't just being an information and press guy; I was involved in some of the substantive discussions. The impression I've come away with is that it was a cooperative effort, where the French were the instigators and initiators and we were the control group.

Now, in those counterpart funds, of course, there was a percentage put aside for information work, which gave us a very generous budget, you might say. My feeling now,

in retrospect, is that we had more money than we needed, that we did a lot of things we wouldn't have done otherwise that were extremely expensive, simply because we had so much money.

Q: Did you have any contact with Al Hemsing and Larry Hall and maybe Mickey Boerner and Ned Nordness at that time?

KAPLAN: Well, we did from time to time, but they were in other countries and I was on the French mission.

Q: Yes. I think they were on the European level and you were in the French mission.

KAPLAN: I was in the French mission. On the European level, they would come and look over our shoulders from time to time. I would attend meetings. I once went to Germany for one, I remember, where we'd compare notes. But the European level worked quite separately. They were the source for us. In addition to the funds we got out of our counterpart fund, they were the source of a great deal. That's another reason why I thought we had more money than we needed, frankly.

There was an extremely dynamic exhibits program, for example. Herndon was a very brilliant fellow in this field, and he created these very razzle-dazzle big exhibits that he paraded all over Europe.

KAPLAN: Meanwhile, Mickey Boerner was with the High Commission, along with Shep Stone and people like that in Germany. Hemsing, I think, worked out of the European office. We knew all these people, but we were sort of maniacally intent on the French, who were a terrific psychological challenge, you might say, and they absorbed all my waking moments. I used to talk to myself and I'd be arguing with the French all the time, because they were so ornery. They were so difficult.

Q: So what's new? [Laughter]

KAPLAN: That's right. [Laughter] After all, we were in a country that was giving 25 percent of the popular vote in every election to the communists. And along with the communists, there were all these fellow travelers and so forth, so we sometimes felt there was *nobody* on our side. Because on the right, you had the Gaullists, who were often anti-American. So the French were a very absorbing problem, and I spent a lot of time thinking and worrying about them.

When I say that the Marshall Plan gave us more funds than we needed, I think of some of the programs that we did, probably we would never have undertaken if there weren't any counterpart funds and Congress never would have funded. I, for example, edited for a couple of years a magazine that was distributed almost up to a million copies free.

Q: Do you think it was generally used and read?

KAPLAN: It was loved! The French just loved it. It was an illustrated magazine. It was the first contact that the French had with something like what we call photojournalism. After that, they had their commercial things. They began to create them along. As a matter of fact, when we put *Rapport*, it was called, to bed, a lot of people came around and wanted to buy it. They thought it was tremendously valuable, and I had mountains of mail every day to prove to me that it was read. But it was a very expensive thing to produce, and we gave it to people. All they had to pay was the postage stamp. We insisted that they write to us and ask for it, but that's all.

Periodically we would have these discussions with the administrative people about some way of charging for this magazine, and for one reason or another, the idea was always turned down. So we spent an incredible amount of money on this thing, because it was in four colors and lavishly illustrated. It was a photo magazine, essentially, and it cost a lot of money.

Q: Were you using just general themes in it, or were you actually, in subtle or unsubtle terms, trying to counter some of the communist type of left-wingism that was getting into France at that time?

KAPLAN: Yes. I couldn't state it better than you just have what we were doing on the magazine. We were doing general themes, but general themes meant things of hope and optimism for the rebirth of French industry, telling the French that they could come back, because we had analyzed the situation there and decided that a great deal of the communist appeal was an appeal to despair.

People said, "This system won't work anymore. We can't really ever build a modern industry. We can't ever do it this way. It has to be done in some other way." They had this bizarre idea that it could be done by government planning and socialism, in short. We know how bizarre it is now, but in those days, it didn't seem so bizarre to a lot of people. There's an old tradition in France of socialist thinking.

Then we had the direct business of dealing with the communists. Lies that were being told, that we dealt with very gently in the magazine. As I say, the two themes that you've just defined were basically what we were trying to do in the magazine.

Q: Would you say that this was your chief vehicle of getting those ideas across, or did you have a widespread press utilization and also cultural activities that promoted the same themes?

KAPLAN: In the Marshall Plan mission, this was our biggest single project, but we also had a fairly extensive exhibits program.

Q: You just mentioned that a while ago.

KAPLAN: Largely exhibits created by Herndon. He was very good at this. He was very lavish. He, too, was dealing with counterpart funds from all over Europe, and so he would make these really knock-out exhibits that we would take from Lyon to Marseille, to Nice and so forth, and would require big hauls. The effect of them was something I had some reservations about, but they certainly attracted crowds. We got a lot of visitation. We had a lecture program. We had a normal press program, in the sense of press releases. Our principals were encouraged and helped to give press conferences or interviews, because newsmen would come over. That was, of course, of great use, particularly at home. But the newsmen would come over and say, "How are we doing over here? How's the French economy doing?" and so forth and so on. We helped in that respect, too.

We also tried to get into the French press. We did all the things that you, as a professional, can imagine. For example, the counterpart funds' investment program would open a new hydro- electric station down near Foix and, say, in the mountain region near the Spanish border. So that was done with hundreds of millions of francs that came out of our fund. It was Marshall Plan funds. Counterpart funds were always ticketed as Marshall Plan funds. We made a great point of that, putting the American stamp on all the stuff that went out. So when the hydroelectric station, which would provide a whole area with electricity which the French desperately needed down there, was opened up, we would parade our chief of mission down there. We'd do the things that public relations organizations always do. Helen Kirkpatrick or I would make a speech, and the local prefect would make a speech, and everybody would say nice things about the Marshall Plan. You do the things that obviously you do when you're trying.

You've got a big substantive program which is rebuilding the country. It is relatively easy to say, "Look, fellows, this is what we are doing, and we're not asking you to get down on your knees and thank the great American people, but we want you to know that we're doing these things."

Q: You have gone into this to some extent before, but the reason I'm going to ask the question is that, of course, as we went on in the years after the Marshall Plan and later through the Cold War era, we were often accused of being far too anticommunist to the point of being almost paranoid about it.

Although you've already said some things about the extent to which you faced an extremely serious problem in France at this time, I think perhaps more almost than you did in any European country that did not actually go under the communist domination.

Did you think that you were getting across your message fairly well, and did you get a lot of counterpropaganda from the Soviet side, the communist side, trying to combat what you were doing?

KAPLAN: Well, you know, France had a communist party that emerged from the war as the biggest single party in the country. In the election statistics, I think at the high water

mark, they pushed close to 27 percent. That was in one election. But generally, you could find them in a range between 20 percent and 25 percent for the first post-war years.

That in itself is very considerable when you think that behind that vote, there is a corps of activists who have created an entire communist infrastructure. They've got sports clubs and they've got theater groups and they've got insurance to bury the elderly, the old people, with. There was a whole communist culture in France. It was deeply engraved, and the communists did an enormous job at organizing that.

When you think, after all, they've been through the war forced to act clandestinely, they'd been smashed several times as an apparatus and so forth and so on, and, that before the war, the biggest single party on the left was not the communists, but the socialists, to emerge from the war that way and build this kind of organization required an incredible effort on the communists' part.

It also required--this is something I cannot prove to this day; I don't know if anybody can; I'm sure somebody in the CIA could--an enormous amount of money, which they got from the East. [From the USSR] I'm sure they got it. I know they got it. I could see the effects of it and so forth, but it was very difficult to persuade, even the French who were on our side, that the Soviet Union was actually the source.

They said, "Well, Moscow gold." That's nonsense. You don't need that in any way to explain, because you've got such a large following of the communists here, anyway. But I am absolutely sure that the Russians poured millions and millions of dollars.

Q: I'm sure they did.

KAPLAN: I had good friends on the extreme right, you might say, who were considered on the extreme right, like Barry Suverin, ex-Russian, author of the first big biography of Stalin, who had been a member of the first communist international. I knew people of that kind who really could cite it chapter and verse. They said, "I know that So-and-so is Moscow's current treasury man." And, of course, in our embassy, we had very knowledgeable people who followed this very closely. I remember there was a fellow named Chapman. I think he was a Foreign Service officer, but I think he worked with the CIA.

So we knew that we had an opposition that was extremely well implanted in the country, practically without limit to its financial resources, because the Russians considered the French thing very important, had every conceivable sort of advantage over us because they had all these French agents, you see. So this was a tremendous battle for us, and we thought about it night and day and how best to counter it. We countered it, you know, in terms of substance, of argument and so forth. We wanted to counter it organizationally, too. It's on the second score that I think we didn't do so well.

We would establish libraries, but they had to be libraries of our type. We were not propagandists of the communist nature. In short, "to thine own self be true" was also something that applied to us. You couldn't set up widely propagandistic things that were somehow not representative of the sort of people we were.

Q: You were inhibited by the truth.

KAPLAN: That's right. So we had these reading rooms and we had these rather genteel things. We had lectures and we'd bring over cultural people. It was a way of keeping above water the heads of all the French who were not poisoned by the other side. That was the best we could do, you might say, in that respect.

There were also people doing sharp political work, but they had to do that clandestinely. So the CIA, I'm sure, had programs of one kind. Of course, at a certain moment, the CIA had, I think, the idea of genius for France, anyway, an idea of genius which was the Cultural Freedom Congress. But, obviously, we in the official services stayed very far away from all that, because the CIA was doing this clandestinely for a while.

I think those things were extraordinarily effective in France. It's very hard to measure, but simply the provision of rallying grounds to which people who were resistant to the communist thing were immensely important.

Q: Had to have some material base on which to argue their point.

KAPLAN: Exactly. Somewhere to go, somewhere to print their prose, some publishing houses that were not infested by communists and so forth. Just to provide that was very, very important. So you might say the Cold War thing, through the middle '50s, well into the '60s, was really the essence of our work there.

Meanwhile, a lot of people were doing cultural programs of a much more genteel nature and so forth. I think that that was extremely important. But it's the long-term stuff that, as I say, keeps people's heads above water, gives them the feeling that the country is going to survive, and that reason is going to prevail, but does not address the immediate problem. The immediate problem our noses were rubbed in it frequently by these damn congressional people who would come over, look at the statistics, and say, "Well, if we keep you here a few years more, maybe the communists will get to 30 percent, 35 percent." You know, they'd be constantly needling us, as if the work we were doing were to be judged by the immediate electoral statistics. I remember Senator Allen Ellender from Louisiana, and there were others, who would come over and rub our noses in all this and say, "Well, you guys are . . ." and so forth and so on. Sometimes someone would say, "Senator, I'd like you to get a notion of what it would be if we weren't here." But in the end, those people did support us year in and year out. They did continue to vote our funds, so you have to say that even though they were frequently nasty to us when they came to see us, in the end they supported us.

Q: Well, Ellender did his best not to support us, but he had enough counterparts in the Senate committees so that he didn't get away with it.

KAPLAN: I didn't realize that.

Q: He was bitterly against us. I want to go off the record here and tell you more about my experience with him. He just fought USIA tooth and nail. In every hearing, he took it upon himself to say, "You know, I don't believe in your program. I think it's just a bunch of poppycock and you don't accomplish a thing. Don't try to tell me that you're doing any kind of work over there that has any effect on the European population. They have their media. They're doing everything that's necessary. You guys aren't responsible for anything."

KAPLAN: Oh, really? It was as bad as that? I always thought he just said those things to *us*.

Q: He said it for the record in press conferences and everywhere else. He was a bitter man.

KAPLAN: Well, anyway, we worked our way in God's vineyard, and I think did a lot of extremely useful work. It's very difficult to measure now, but if we had not been there, I feel that there are elements in the French cultural, political, sociological situation that might have fought their way through, anyway, somehow survived, but would have been, it seems to me, much weaker and much slower to make their points. I think of single individuals who have emerged as the most influential in the French intellectual situation after the [Jean-Paul] Sartrean period, after the period of fellow traveling, of people of that kind--Raymond Aron.

Now, Raymond was a genius and a great man. I've got a shelf full of his books. He would have done his work anyway, but we did a great deal to facilitate his work and made it easier for him and for the second layer of people around him who attended his seminars and then wanted to go off to the United States to follow a particular point at Harvard or at this or that other university. If our cultural people hadn't made that possible for them, everything would have been more difficult and much more slow to take its course.

And I feel that we carried the torch until we got the great reinforcement from the East when the Russian dissidents began getting out and confirming what we had been saying, that their confirmation of information was the thing that finally really turned the French around so that the French became as anti-communist, or more, so, than we are.

Q: And their Communist Party virtually died.

KAPLAN: Virtually died, yes. It was the [Aleksandr] Solzhenitsyns and the Plyusches and the people of that kind who came out. But we laid the basis for their confirmation in the early years by supporting such things as David Rousset's commission against the concentration camp. Now, I think the CIA did most of that. They provided funds. The trial that was held with Kravchenko [phonetic], I think there were a certain number of stepping stones over the years. If you were in France all those years, you realize that there were great

moments when French awareness of what we were really dealing with in the East was ratcheted up a bit. And I think of those moments in terms of the trial that Rousset had to sustain against *Les Lettres Francaises*, the Kravchenko trial.

Then the arrival in France of the first of the dissidents who were vilified and so forth, but in each case we would try to help these people and give them platforms. Now, in the case of Kravchenko and David Rousset's effort on the concentration camps--you may have forgotten that, but that was a very big show trial in France. Rousset was an author of books about his experience in the German concentration camps. He was very famous in France, a friend and neighbor of mine. He was an ex-communist. He began saying, "The same experience we've been through still exists in the Soviet Union. There are concentration camps there, and this is intolerable." He had created a tremendous effect with his study of the concentration camps in Germany, and he created an international commission which was headquartered in Brussels, I believe, with a great many, very distinguished French people. It was called the International Commission Against the Concentration Camp.

At a given point, he published a statement of a woman who had come out of the extreme north of the Soviet Union. She somehow had been able to work her way out of there. He was denounced as a liar and a thief and a crook by a communist literary journal called *Les Lettres Francaises*. This led to a big public trial. Now, that trial was *the* page-one headline in France for weeks and weeks and weeks. It was a tremendous thing. And Rousset was able to parade a succession of absolutely authentic witnesses that nobody could possibly deny, to show the existence of what years later Solzhenitsyn called the gulag. But that time, they didn't use that term and they didn't know what it was, and even for an ordinary French communist voter who had these extraordinary illusions about Russia, who thought it was the land of milk and honey, for him it was an unbelievable idea that you could have something like Dachau and Buchenwald and Auschwitz in this great land of the workers' and peasants' paradise. And Rousset was able to prove that over and over again in the most gruesome testimony you got from these people.

Well, I mentioned the CIA, who financed the Congress for Cultural Freedom, published a magazine, did all these wonderful things that I think were very useful. I also believe the CIA must have helped. I don't know how it happened.

Q: They probably did.

KAPLAN: Because this commission, his international commission, had enormous expenses. They had to find these people and bring them to France. The CIA was enormously effective in stuff of this sort, and it's been vilified in our country so much that it's time somebody really stood up and said, "They did a tremendous job in the Cold War in Europe." There's no question about it.

Q: The CIA has gotten a very bad name for its black activities, and, of course, they have bumbled terribly in a number of these cases. I'm very glad, therefore, that you have put on

tape what you think their effectiveness was in the information and cultural field, which was more in the white areas, even though they were doing them clandestinely.

The other thing that you have already said, on which I simply want to put a period, is that it was almost impossible in the years that it was going on, to prove that the long-range cultural and informational activities you were performing were laying a groundwork, a climate of receptivity, for what ultimately the French came to believe. I agree with you, and I think you have made the point marvelously well, that France might have turned in a completely different direction or been much longer coming back to normality had it not been for those long-range practices and programmings which we could not prove at the time were worth anything. You were trying to tell the congressmen visiting you what your specific effects as of yesterday and today are, whereas, the long-term effects were a decade down the line.

KAPLAN: Of course. There were all these people who came back from their American experience, disciples of Raymond Aron, for example, who, when they went to Bordeaux or went to Lyon, went to one of the universities. They began to turn out students of their own and created in the country an atmosphere which, when the great revelations came and the country swung politically, meant that there was a reception of it. There were people who said, "Of course, we know about this," and so were able to come out and assert themselves.

That is why when the communists began to go in France, when they began to decline, it was catastrophic, because the terrain had been very thoroughly prepared. Once you remove the fear element, which played a considerable role, by the way, in the early years, in some cases it wasn't just conviction on the part of all the people who fought, they really frightened people, and they said, "These are people who are going to win."

Q: "If they win, we're in the doghouse."

KAPLAN: That's right, so we better be careful. And there was a great deal of that in the early years. I think when history looks back at that whole period, the whole so-called Cold War period, it will be recognized that this fear existed until the time when the Russians finally threw in the towel and said, "Look, we can't run this anymore. We can't even feed our people anymore, and we can't keep up this pretense anymore," we held the fort during that period. It was terribly important that we did. You might say, in retrospect, "We made too much of it. They [the Communists] never had a chance. They never had the economy of a world program. They couldn't have done it anyway even if we had just sat back." But the fact is that during the Stalin period and immediately after, if you look at what they did in the way of taxing themselves and bleeding themselves to build a military installation, and what they did in terms of their propaganda work outside, the amount of money they spent, you have to believe that there was a very important party, perhaps the dominant party amongst them, that said, "We can't do this thing at home. We can't create the kind of society we've promised. The world revolution is the only answer for us. We've got to break through. If we won Europe, with the resources of the Germans and all the rest--"

Q: "Then we could do it."

KAPLAN: "Then we can do it." So they had to be contained. According to the original analysis of containment, they had to be contained and shown that they couldn't do it, until finally they said, "No, it's impossible. We can't go on taking a quarter of our GNP and putting it in these missiles that are never going to be used when we can't even feed our own people or produce a bar of soap for our miners." And they finally gave up.

Q: If they had converted France and Germany and the Western world generally to their view--

KAPLAN: Just imagine!

Q: --you would have had stolen resources which would have disguised the impossibility and impudence for probably another quarter of a century.

KAPLAN: Exactly. We would have really been pushed back into Fortress America, and it's hard to imagine what you would have had. It's an extraordinary thing. I feel that we played our little part in that. Obviously, the military forces that we set up in NATO, finally, and the economic bulwark that we created were the first things that really saved Europe, but along with that had to go the kind of cultural and informational effort that we were making. And we did it. I just don't see how anybody can quarrel with that anymore.

Q: Well, there are still people who will quarrel with it, but nevertheless, I agree with you. At what point in this effort did you move back from the Marshall Plan into the regular embassy operations, and how long did you stay in the embassy thereafter in France?

KAPLAN: I'm afraid the dates are rather hazy, and as I've said, I've lost all my papers and I'd have to go back and do some research. But it seems to me that I was back with Bill Cody in the embassy by about '52, '53, and I even seem to recall going somewhere, I think it was Bad Godesberg, and taking the Foreign Service exams.

Q: They were giving it then, so it probably was about that time.

KAPLAN: There will be a record of that somewhere at home, because I entered the Foreign Service, in short. I left the Marshall Plan setup and became a FSIO. That must have been about '52, '53. I worked with Bill, who was a very effective, dictatorial, difficult PAO. He was a difficult guy to work with if I ever saw one, but he really left his imprint on that operation. I stayed with Bill until about '57, when I was transferred home for a tour of duty.

Q: You had just come back to the States.

KAPLAN: I guess it was '57. You can imagine how interesting that would be for me, because I had literally never served in the Agency. The war just picked me right up from where I was. I'd been back and forth for a couple of things. I was back on a medical thing. I

had to have an operation at one point while the war was still going on. But I had never actually served in old 1776.

Q: It was 1778 until [Theodore] Streibert changed it to coincide with the Declaration of Independence date.

KAPLAN: Yes. So this was a whole new world for me, and I sort of learned the agency that way. I was just beginning to know it, and they picked my brains about being the oldest living inhabitant of France. I lectured around the agency about what the French were up to.

Q: What assignment did they give you at that time?

KAPLAN: I was in the Europe, the Regional Office.

Q: Was Bill Clark then head?

KAPLAN: Yes.

Q: You had Walter Roberts as a deputy.

KAPLAN: That's right. I did a great deal of work on policy with the news desk that was under Joyce. So I was back and forth constantly, I remember, between Bill Clark and Walter Roberts' office, and they held a meeting every day at noon.

Q: Policy guidance to the media.

KAPLAN: That's right. They were the people who sent out the wireless file and all that sort of thing. That, combined with a number of special projects of a European nature, mostly directed towards France, occupied my time until they decided that I was wanted in Germany. I had no German.

Q: You had not had German at that time?

KAPLAN: No. So I did a pressure cooker, very rapid fling at German, and learned enough so I could pass a test in reading, but still was woefully inadequate in German. I learned it over there early in 1959, so I was not home very long. I served with Jim Hoofnagle as his deputy until the wall went up in Berlin in 1961. I was supposed to go on from there to Vienna.

Q: You were deputy to Hoofnagle?

KAPLAN: Jim's deputy, a sort of across-the-board deputy, but because of my background, much more involved in informational programs than the cultural ones. The cultural program, under Jim, was much more autonomous, you might say.

Q: That wasn't Jim's particular forte.

KAPLAN: Yes. He left that to the cultural attaché. I found myself doing mostly information work with the various press attachés. We had Bill Stearman as press attaché and other types. We were quite active with the German press.

Q: Did you have Brooks McClure at that time?

KAPLAN: He came on towards the end, just as I was leaving.

I enjoyed my German tour, and I found Germany fascinating. I wanted to go on with that, and they decided that since I had been promoted to a class one officer sometime in the midst of all this, they said, "Jim doesn't rate a Class 1 deputy, and consequently you have to become a PAO." They sent me to Vienna as PAO. Gordon Ewing had been PAO there once, and he filled me in on what to expect. That's why I asked about him. I thought he was a terrific guy. I was very fond of him. You sort of planted a knife in me by telling me how sick he was at the end.

This was all settled, and the ambassador had agreed. I think that was Matthews at the time.

Q: "Doc" Matthews.

KAPLAN: Yes. We had his agreement, and I was supposed to go. I even had, with the help of Gordon, found a house to live in. The wall had gone up in Berlin. You may remember that the President [John F. Kennedy] first sent [Vice President] Lyndon Johnson over there. I went to Berlin with Johnson. He did his public relations things until the President came over and made his famous speech.

Q: Al Hemsing was the PAO in Berlin at that time.

KAPLAN: Yes. There was a great feeling that something very special had to be done about the Berlin situation. They created (to my since and eternal regret) a thing called the Berlin Task Force.

Q: I remember that.

KAPLAN: Instead of going to Vienna, where I desperately wanted to go to complete my education not only in German, but in Middle Europa, as the Germans call it, because it would have added a very important part to my education, Ed Murrow, in his wisdom, decided I had to come sit on his damn task force. The task force was supposed to show the world that we were going to do something about the Berlin wall; we weren't going to just take it lying down. So Foy Kohler and, I think, General Clay, the two of them together organized all these very distinguished gents and a few undistinguished ones like me sitting at the bottom of the table, and we called it the task force.

Meanwhile, "Doc" Matthews said, "Where's my PAO?" Months went by, more months went by, and I went to Ed Murrow several times and said, "I'm supposed to be in Vienna." The task force, at first, met every day, believe it or not, then every week, and it was beginning to meet every few weeks.

Ed Murrow said, "Kappy, you'll go to Vienna when I tell you. You can't see it from where I see it. It's important to the President that we have this thing. I'm responsible to the President and I want to do this."

So "Doc" Matthews finally said, "Send me a PAO," and they sent somebody else. So I missed Vienna. That's my sad story. [Laughter]

I stayed on, and as I had told Ed Murrow time and time again, the task force was making no impact on the world and would mean nothing either to the Russians or anybody else. It's one of these damn things we do which I think is very mistaken politically. It is a very big mistake for us ever, as a great power, to say that something is intolerable and we won't take it, and then take it! That's what we were doing; we *were* taking it, because the decision had been made at the highest level to take it. Instead of saying to the world, "Sorry, folks, you've got to understand. We are not going to go to war over this thing." Really, the measures that we discussed in the Berlin Task Force, the retaliatory things, the little pinpricks that we gave them, were so incommensurate with what this damn thing meant that it was all absurd. I'm sure Ed Murrow agreed with me about that, because he was very intelligent politically.

Q: I think he was constrained by his relationship with Kennedy, and he just felt that he couldn't do it.

KAPLAN: Exactly. Nevertheless, the task force fizzled out. Foy Kohler was a very important man, a very good man, and I think they sent him to Moscow shortly thereafter as ambassador. Everybody else went about his business and I couldn't go back to Vienna, because somebody else had been sent there. So they sent me to the Senior Seminar.

Q: At the State Department.

KAPLAN: I had a great year at the Senior Seminar.

Q: Was this about 1962?

KAPLAN: Yes, 1961-62. I have to say I had such a good time, I felt guilty about it. I said, "You can't call this work." It was fascinating. I spent a fascinating year.

Q: You probably had a lot to contribute to it, too, because of your experiences.

KAPLAN: We were a good group, I felt, lively people, and we went at it hammer and tong. In the midst of all this, the Cuban Missile Crisis happened, so we had something to work on, you might say. Everybody came over from the White House to tell us how that

happened and what happened. We lived through it, like most of the country, without any notion of how close we came to real disaster. We had a very interesting time there.

I wrote a paper on a subject that was interesting to me, on Tunisian students and why they were being pushed leftward, and what to do about them. It was a typical Third World student group, and I wrote a paper that I thought would be useful to anybody who ever served out there or served in any country like that. I spent a little time in Tunis studying the very interesting situation there, because you had basically a pro-Western leader in that anti-colonial situation. It was not at all like Algeria, where they were taken over by a gang of roughnecks oriented toward the Soviet Union. They were taken over by a man named [Habib] Bourguiba. He was a very intelligent, charismatic guy, who was determined that Tunisia was not going to become a socialist basket case, which is what the revolutionaries in Algeria proceeded to make of Algeria immediately. They had an extremely rich country, much richer than Tunisia, and they've turned it into an economic Bangladesh because they were so ideological, so imbued with the socialist-Bolshevik notion of how you do this. Bourguiba was a very intelligent man who understood how important it was. Although he didn't have anything like the resources of the Algerians, he managed to keep that country's head up. I thought it was interesting. That's why I chose this as a subject, because there's the French angle, and I had had all that French background. But there was one problem in the country, and that was with its youth, who tended to become communist. I said, "Here again, we're back at the old problem. How does this happen? What have these guys got?" I did my paper on the Tunisian youth. So I left that in the files of the Seminar, and they must have a big collection of papers, because everybody did a paper for them.

Q: They all do. That's part of the course.

KAPLAN: Yes. There must be quite a library there.

Q: Yes, for research projects. You travel around to wherever you want to go, to get the data.

KAPLAN: Then I went on to Geneva after the Seminar was over. We were received in the White House by Kennedy, the whole class, and we had a very good class, about twenty-three or twenty-four people, all of whom had distinguished careers afterwards, except me. [Laughter] We spent a few minutes with the President and he asked us, "Where are you going?" I already knew I was being sent to Geneva. He said, "Aha! The Kennedy Round!"

I said, "Yes, sir. That's going to be very high on our agenda." [Laughter] Actually, the Kennedy Round didn't start until 1964. We had a lot of other things going on in Geneva.

The idea was to see whether Geneva was a real post for a PAO. I was of the opinion at the time, which I've somewhat modified, that it was, because there was the happy accident of the Kennedy Round, the UNCTAD Conference, and a big nuclear thing--the initial

Conference on setting up the International Atomic Energy organization. It was a very big, important nuclear thing.

Q: You also had all the European representatives of the different U.N. organizations located there, too.

KAPLAN: Yes. That was the basic day-in and day-out work. That's what you had to begin with, when we only had an attaché with the American ambassador there. The problem for the Agency was the question: Do we upgrade this and make a counselor of embassy? I was a Class 1 officer. I'd been through the Seminar. There was a real question as to whether we ought to do that. They were asking me, in a way, to scout it. I sent a very enthusiastic response after a very short time, saying, "Obviously we need me and other Class 1 guys, because we have these tremendously important things."

The problem, however, was that when they'd done the Kennedy Round and there was no other significant activity; the day-to-day stuff there was perhaps not really--Walter Roberts did that job after I did, after he'd been PAO in Yugoslavia, and he came back and said, "You are absolutely full of you know what. This job is for the birds. There's just nothing here." He was bored stiff. One should have taken a longer view. He was quite right.

Q: There was nothing wrong with creating a Class 1 job at the time.

KAPLAN: That's right. They should have reacted and adapted to the changed situation later.

Q: The significance of information work there is more ad hoc--it comes in splurges, and doesn't require top officers on a continuing basis.

KAPLAN: That was the real answer from the point of view of somebody who really followed the situation.

Q: But inertia prevails. Once you set something up, it takes a year or two to get it knocked off.

KAPLAN: That's right. I had an extremely interesting time there and I wasn't at all enthralled, because the Kennedy Round was really getting into its stride--this was 1964, when I had a call from Washington. "Sorry, old fellow, but we need you in Vietnam."

I said, "I don't even know where Vietnam is. All my training has really led up to this job. The ambassador loves me. Both ambassadors love me." There was an ambassador in charge of the Kennedy Round, too.

Q: In Berne, too.

KAPLAN: There was one in Berne, but I didn't work with him. My two ambassadors loved me. George Ball was here and loved me. I said, "I'm really feeling useful for once in my life. Why in the hell are you sending me off to this Southeast Asian place that I know nothing about?" Of course, I read the newspapers. I knew that things had heated up there considerably and the Diem assassination thing had happened, and it was getting to be a big headache. But at the end of 1964, we didn't quite foresee what happened later; at least I didn't.

Q: I don't think anybody really did. When Lyndon Johnson went in, I think he felt that this was going to be a six-month proposition and we would take care of it and get out of it.

KAPLAN: Exactly. I thought I was once again being cheated out of my Vienna, except I was in my Vienna already, Geneva, doing something very interesting, fascinated by something new to me, which was the old GATT and trade issue, and working with a guy who was fascinating. I thought it was very interesting.

In addition, I had other problems which gave me a sprinkling of the whole U.N. system, and I was quite happy there, but you're in the Army now, you know. I was a professional by then. They said, "Go," and I went. I went to Vietnam, and I don't regret that either, although I have to regret it as an American, regret the whole experience. It was an awful, awful business for us all.

Q: Were you ever in charge of the so-called Five O'clock Follies?

KAPLAN: Yes. I set them up and created them. Of course, the meat and substance of the briefing was military, so I just presided over it. It was in order to assert the primacy that we tried desperately to keep going at the beginning. It was under my auspices and I set it up. The fact is, however, that the military took over Vietnam very shortly. All through 1965, a great deal of traffic went through Saigon and Washington on this issue. I was Cabot Lodge's counselor of embassy. I wanted to be in the embassy. I wanted to be part of that. I felt this was in our national interest. I wanted everybody to understand that Vietnam was a country and we were accredited to it. But the more they piled troops in there, the more Lyndon Johnson sent these people, the more this became impossible. Although I won on paper, I had a big fight about this with Barry Zorthian, and he finally said, "All right. You win."

Q: Let me get this straight. When you first went there, was Barry there already?

KAPLAN: Yes.

Q: Had they set up JUSPAO at that time?

KAPLAN: No, they were in the process of setting it up. I was drafted into JUSPAO, and all the while kicking and screaming. With the support of Cabot Lodge, I said, "I am Cabot Lodge's counselor. I think we ought to have our setup." After Maxwell Taylor left, and with

the consent of Cabot Lodge, who went both ways on this, there was created a thing called the Mission Council. The Mission Council set up a joint U.S. Public Affairs Office under Barry, and although I was recognized by Washington as independent and Cabot's man, in fact, Barry controlled my budget, my office, my secretary, everything. I was working for Barry. I ended by just saying I had to accept it.

Q: That's a point I wanted to establish, because this has come up on several other occasions in which it was indicated that the press activity, in effect, the spokesman for the non-military side of the picture was supposedly completely outside of JUSPAO and was independent of them. I think later even their budget became independent.

KAPLAN: I established the principle of that. I got them, on paper, to send a telegram saying this is the way it was. I put it under Barry's nose. He's a very tough guy to deal with! [Laughter] With a little smile, he said, "Okay, Kappy. You win." But, of course, he knew very well that I didn't win. [Laughter]

So we had the principle, but it didn't work. People totally forgot the embassy existed after a while. The war took the whole thing over, and you couldn't do anything about it; it was just too big. When the Big Red One came over, the Air Mobile Division, the whole thing, pretty soon the country was sagging under the weight of our armor and our men. This little embassy, with its few remaining political people, people just brushed it aside; it didn't mean a thing. This was one of the many great political mistakes we made, because it enhanced the sense we gave to the entire world that South Vietnam did not exist except as sort of a sort of--

Q: A military fief.

KAPLAN: That's right. I have written on this subject, and I won't go any further on this. I wrote "Farewell to Vietnam," our way of negotiating our way out of that. I'll give you a copy if you want to put it in the archives. That was published in *Commentary*. Before that, I had written a number of little pieces on the whole press setup there when I was out of government by then. I swore, when I left the government, that I would not dump on it and write about how wrong we were about everything, and I didn't. I did write one piece for a French magazine after I retired from the delegation on the theme that the South Vietnamese, unencumbered by us, rid of us at least after the agreement was signed in 1973, would give a better account than the whole world expected and might even be able to survive. I published this in a magazine in France called *Preuve*. I believe that, and still believe it.

Q: I believe that it could have happened if Nixon hadn't been so besieged.

KAPLAN: That's right.

Q: And with Congress going the other way, cut off virtually all aid to them.

KAPLAN: Absolutely.

Q: That killed the morale.

KAPLAN: They proved it could be done in the offensive of 1972, after we were gone.

Q: They withstood the first attempt.

KAPLAN: The Easter Offensive was a tremendous success. Half of the North Vietnamese attacking force was destroyed. They took a terrific beating in that. The South Vietnamese lost a great deal, too. Don't forget there was not a single American ground soldier involved in that. It was a terrific thing. But what we did give them was the air support to compensate for the fact that the first time the North Vietnamese were bringing tanks and things like that down. That was an extremely interesting operation.

After that, the U.S. and Vietnam concluded the thing they'd been negotiating about, and by that time all our troops were out. The North Vietnamese simply waited until the Watergate situation got deeper and deeper, and it became clear that we would not lift one finger, not even for the air. Then they did the whole thing. I have described that very graphically in a piece called "Farewell to Vietnam," which I must give you, in *Commentary* magazine, which started out as a review of a book called *The Palace Revolution* by a Vietnamese, a very interesting book. It was a tragic business. The South Vietnamese would have had a much harder time without any American troops than the South Koreans had, because we'd get those divisions. But they would have, I believe, a fighting chance of surviving if we had kept the Air Force, which was, after all, there.

Q: Also the materiel and economic support.

KAPLAN: That's right. When the collapse came, nobody would lift a finger. One of the most poignant and awful things in the *Commentary* article about this book, *The Palace Revolution*, is the story of these people coming back to Washington, where everything is falling apart, and buttonholing people in Congress, pleading with them just to allow a plane to take off from Thailand and hit these people, just to send in another shipment of ammunition. It was tragic, tragic.

Q: Somebody else whom I've interviewed had talked to somebody over there and subsequently also talked to some of the North Vietnamese, who said, "If you had come back in and laid down another carpet of bombing on North Vietnam at that time, the whole thing probably would have collapsed." These were North Vietnamese saying this!

KAPLAN: Lew, you had a situation like the Egyptian Army suffered in the Sinai. You know how very few highways the North Vietnamese had going from north to south. They had the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but you couldn't take tanks over that. So you had twenty-four divisions strung out from North Vietnam to Saigon on an open highway. It was exactly the situation that the Israeli Air Force had against the Egyptian Army. The Israelis just filled

the desert with the carcasses of those tanks and trucks. It was a tragic thing. That was the one time the North Vietnamese were not able to move. There were a few planes in the sky. At the beginning, there were a few South Vietnamese planes, too. But they never had a bombing force or a fighter force.

This just left me wrung out and dead. I was, of course, long gone and out of there. I had served in the negotiating group in Paris. I was out of government by then. But I watched all this with a sinking heart and thought of all the people I knew. It was just the most painful thing I've ever lived through.

Q: It was apparently very painful for [Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger, too, because in another interview the officer being interviewed said he was in a meeting at the State Department at the time that Vietnam was coming apart, and the U.S. was refusing to send any further help. Kissinger just stopped and said, "I wonder sometimes just what kind of a country we are." Then left the room.

KAPLAN: When you think of the promises we made to those people, the speeches we made, the endless things, you couldn't have this attitude in Congress just because they so hated Nixon, or whatever, this cowardly, miserable--these people refused even to talk to the people who were pleading with them. They said, "Go away." It's something that just kills you. You say, "What kind of a country are we?" The political thing meant to these people that promises made, even in our name, solemnly, by people who were elected by the American people--solemnly--didn't count for them, because they were just another country. No country can operate that way. It was just disgraceful.

KAPLAN: The Vietnam experience led straight back to Europe. My wife was in Hong Kong while I was in Saigon. I went back to Europe on a lecture tour that the Agency had asked me to do.

Q: When they were trying to get some of the PAOs and other people in Europe educated to what was really going on in Vietnam, sending people like you around to say, "This is the way it really is."

KAPLAN: That's right. So I lectured in Paris and in Germany and in Brussels and Geneva before I came back home. I came back home to a job that sounded very grand by that time. Having quite a few gray hairs, I still thought that it sounded very grand. I was called Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

Q: Seconded to the State Department.

KAPLAN: Yes. Of course, once in that job, I realized that an Assistant Secretary of State wasn't necessarily such a grandiose person, and a Deputy Assistant Secretary is certainly not a grandiose person. [Laughter] But, you know, having served all my life abroad, these sounded like big titles to me.

My objection, in any case, was not to the title at all. My only objection to that job is that it was, again, exclusively Vietnam. By that time the country had developed an understandable national neurosis about this. It was eating us away. It was dividing the country. It was occupying all our thoughts and weighing on all our decisions. Consequently, to be in the department dealing with public affairs, with my immediate background meant necessarily doing nothing but Vietnam. I spent all my time on it. So I felt that I hadn't left the country at all, in a sense. I'm afraid that was going to be my fate for a long time to come, for a very simple reason. I, at one point, said, "Very well." This was about 1967, I guess. You must remember that the Agency and the government invested a lot of money on my European education, and this is where I came from and really what I thought I ought to be doing. I said, "I think my next post should be in Europe." Particularly I was interested in NATO. People, for once, listened to me. I don't remember where you were at the time, Lew.

Q: In 1967, I had just gone to Thailand.

KAPLAN: The people on top were kind enough to say, "Okay, you can go to NATO." The ambassador there was Harlan Cleveland, who wanted me. Tom Wilson, political counselor, was a good friend. I thought it would work very nicely, and I had learned, really, something about the European defense thing and so forth. So I started off towards NATO, sent my family off in the summer.

But before I left, Walt Rostow asked me to come to the White House for a while--two weeks, he said--because the President was getting so neurotic about the atmosphere in the country about Vietnam. He wanted to set up a special office to handle his Vietnam public relations problem there. I said, "But it's being handled in a dozen different places. The President, himself, with all the television sets in his office, and everything else, he's his own PAO on Vietnam. What in the world can we do?"

"No, no." The President has decided, according to Walt, that somebody had to do this.

I went over to the White House and they gave me a little office. I created a little facility. I can't remember it very clearly. It was under Walt Rostow's general purview, attached to the National Security Council, and supposed to disengage from the mass of stuff that we got out of Vietnam things that needed to be disseminated by the President's press operation, everybody else in government, etc. I tried to think what we could usefully do in that respect and set up some things.

A few weeks went by, and I wrote a couple of speeches. When you're in that job, you have to do whatever they ask you to do. I began going to see Rostow and saying, "When can I go to Europe? Harlan Cleveland is expecting me there as his counselor. And my wife is there and my youngest child." The other two were at school. "I think I've set up this office. I think I know what you mean. It's working. We've got young Sven What's-his-name here, who will carry on." Rostow had a lot of people. Again, he himself was constantly talking to the press about these various things.

He kept saying, "Another week," and so forth. This became very irritating, because I was sure that Ambassador Cleveland, although he's a very nice guy and I knew him, would be patient up to a point, but that he would finally do the same thing. And I wanted that job. So at one point I got Rostow so riled up with my insistence on this, he said, "Oh, for Christ's sake, if you want to go, go!" And that's all he had to say. [Laughter]

I cleaned up my desk the next morning. I wish I could think of the name of this young man from the Defense Department who was my sort of understudy, who was very good, as a matter of fact. I can remember his first name, which was Sven. I said, "Look. You're in charge now. I'm taking a plane." I sent a telegram through to the European office at USIA, to Harlan Cleveland, "I am coming," and they told my wife, and I left. So I think I'm the only one to have made my escape from Lyndon Johnson without his-- [Laughter]

One time in the course of all this, in order to make me patient, they trotted him out. He had this legendary, but absolutely real, facility for putting the arm on you, as they say.

Q: Often grabbing your lapel in the process.

KAPLAN: Yes. George Christian, who was his press secretary, at the behest of Walt, organized a lunch in the Fish Room, in which I had lunch with Johnson and George. Rostow wasn't there. There was another person, a fellow named Chamberlain, a newsman. It's a rather small room, the Fish Room, and Johnson filled it with his presence. He put the arm on me and told stories about the old days, characters in Texas, mostly off-color stories and so forth. He was just as charming as he could be, and I can tell you he could be charming. I walked out of there, and for several weeks, at least, I felt, "How can you possibly say no to this man?" I did finally, after some weeks went by, make my escape.

I was just settling into the NATO job, which was a fascinating one for me. I was learning everything. The whole NATO situation was interesting. I had been away from Europe for so long. Nobody who had ever touched the Vietnam thing could possibly get it out of his system, of course. I followed everything that was going on there, but nevertheless, I was in, finally, and I was doing my European thing again. That lasted from about November to February or March.

Clark Clifford came over. I remember we had a nuclear conference in The Hague with Harlan Cleveland. I was beginning to function, really, as the NATO counselor, beginning to learn where the bodies were buried, as they say, and where things were, and how to do this thing, getting some ideas about it.

I got a call from Washington. I think it was from Phil Habib. It might have been Bill Jorden, saying, "Harriman's going to organize a delegation in Paris, and we've decided you're on it."

I said, "Phil, the ambassador will tear me limb from limb. He waited and took very good care of my wife, and he's a very sweet person. We're finally functioning here. You can't do this to me." That sort of thing.

Phil Habib says, "Kappy, don't argue with me. Governor Harriman has more clout than Harlan Cleveland, and that's that."

Sure enough, they put me on that damn delegation. I went down to Paris to prepare for the arrival of the governor, who arrived on May 12 or 13, as I recall. I was there a few days before. I went to the offices, saw Sargent Shriver. I was supposed to be the press officer in the delegation, but I was helping out with some of the administrative stuff. The governor arrived, and we were off and running. We were doing the Vietnam thing. Bill Jordan was the main press man at first, but he was very senior, and the President was going to send him off after a while.

The President put that delegation together in a very odd way, because he only half-trusted Harriman, as I began to understand, in the sense that Harriman was anxious to get rid of the Vietnam thing in almost any way, and he was ready to be much more forthcoming to the North Vietnamese than the President was about to be at the beginning. So he sort of surrounded Harriman with other people, of whom Bill Jordan was one of the toughest. Bill had worked very closely with Walt in the National Security Council. Of course, we had Cy Vance, too, who was a good soldier and also very devilish, but, nevertheless, without the independent crowd that the President feared Harriman would use from time to time and pushing him a little further than he wanted. I won't go into all the politics of that delegation. All I know is that it was fascinating.

At first it was an interesting job, but my heart was broken and my wife was still in Brussels, and I had been separated from my wife for a long time. During the Vietnam period, she was in Hong Kong, but I think I made it up there about three times in the whole time I was there, for a day at a time. We worked night and day in Saigon. And now we were separated again, and she was there in Brussels. The ambassador was mad, she was mad, everybody was mad. It was a very miserable situation.

But at least the Vietnam talks were fascinating. Every newsman in the world came to them, as if we were really going to settle that Vietnam situation. Of course, they didn't understand the terms of reference that we were really just setting up what was to be the negotiation later, so they all came. I think we accredited 1,800 newsmen from the United States alone in the first weeks. It was just an incredible number. Of course, Bill Jordan and I were taking care of these people. It was really something. Then we had the rest of the world there, and it was a circus.

When it became clear that the governor wouldn't let me go and it wasn't going to settle down, Harlan Cleveland said, "I need a counselor and I'm going to get somebody else." My wife came down and joined me. So I spent all of 1968, through the election, and then into 1969, when Kissinger took over, and we were still holding the meetings with the North Vietnamese, including some secret meetings. It was a fascinating thing in many ways. The real negotiation became, finally, the business of Henry [Kissinger], and, if you read that piece of mine, you will get some account of what he did and how he started all that. He was

a brilliant negotiator, as always, but this was one that he did all wrong, for reasons that were not entirely his fault. The result was, as all the world knows, a total collapse of the whole thing.

Q: How long were you there?

KAPLAN: I stayed there until the autumn of 1969, kicking and screaming more and more as time went on, because we were literally being used as a decoy. We would go to the Hotel Majestic, which the French called the Centre des Conferences Internationales, the old Hotel Majestic, which, curiously enough, in my experience, went all the way back to that first conference of UNESCO in 1946, which was held there. That's where the UNESCO headquarters were before they built their offices. So I knew that place very well.

Now I was attending these meetings there, but as a pure decoy. We'd go out, a newsman would come around, I'd make some sort of statement. I was on French television all the time. That was my one moment of celebrity, because television has that effect on things. So everywhere I'd go in the streets, people would recognize me. They'd say, "Ah! You're the American spokesman!" But it was very humiliating, in a way, because we weren't able to say anything and nothing was happening. It was a purely phony thing while Henry was doing the real negotiating in secret.

So I began going back to our benighted colleagues at 1776 and said, "I love Paris. It's my old hometown. My children were brought up here. I'm having a great vacation, but there's such a thing as vacations that last too long. I think you ought to give me a real job."

They kept saying, "Wait, wait, wait."

I finally said, "All right, I'm going to take my retirement." So that's the story of my USIA career.

Q: You retired in 1969?

KAPLAN: I retired on November 1, 1969.

End of interview