

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROLAND K. KUCHEL

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is February 21, 1997. This is an interview with Ambassador Roland K. Kuchel. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin, tell me a little bit about when and where you were born and a bit about your family.

KUCHEL: Sure. I was born in 1939 in Salem, Massachusetts, son of a German father and an Italian mother. My parents had come to this country in the mid-'30s. My father was a specialist in leather and had gone to Milwaukee. He eventually ended up in the Salem area which at that time was one of the great centers for tanning in the United States.

Q: It was all part of making leather.

KUCHEL: Yes. My father was the eleventh-straight generation in tanning in his family, dating to the first recorded Kuchel who appeared in Butzbach (a small Oberhessen town north of Frankfurt) in the 1540s. My two brothers and I were the first to break this off, I think reflecting the liberation of coming to the United States and being able to be open to whatever profession, whatever interest. I think because of this background, growing up in a small town outside of Salem, I felt American but also realized that my foreign-born parents connected me to a wider world. We had no relatives at all in the United States. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, everybody lived in Germany or Italy. I was always interested and connected with foreign affairs. In fact my earliest memories were making Red Cross packages with my parents to send to Europe both during and after the war.

Q: You were born again when?

KUCHEL: March of '39.

Q: So you would have been too young to remember the war.

KUCHEL: My earliest memories are of that time -- planting a "victory garden" and collecting ten cans for the war effort. Both of my parents were German citizens, and they

became American citizens in 1943, right in the middle of the war. So I remember the fact that my dad's Leica camera was taken into custody by the FBI, concerned that German U-boats off Salem might be in touch with my dad. My dad had an old Philco radio, short wave, and the FBI came in and removed that. I think it was amazing that although my father was a national of an enemy state, he was involved very much with the war effort in terms of making leather for the navy. I am digressing, but I think it is this kind of a background in terms of very connected with Europe in one sense, and yet my parents insisted from the very beginning that English was going to be the language spoken on our house. I speak Italian; I can manage some German, but it wasn't really the language of our family. From the very beginning my parents insisted that we were going to speak English, and that our life was going to be in the States.

Q: You went to public schools in Salem?

KUCHEL: We moved when I was about seven years old to a village outside of Salem called Topsfield, which is near Ipswich. I went to school there until I was about 15. There were only 17 in my class, but I was inspired by two great teachers -- one who taught French and Latin, and the other social studies. Prompted by a sense that what I really wanted to do in life was to learn languages and work overseas, find some occupation that would allow travel, perhaps international business, I convinced my dad to send me to a school in Switzerland, the equivalent of a tenth year in high school. So I spent that year when I was between 15 and 16 years of age in one of these private boarding schools near Lausanne in Switzerland. Learned French and grew up quite a deal..

Q: This was what year?

KUCHEL: This was 1955 to '56. I took the ship over and back. It was a great experience for a teen.

KUCHEL: So I spent that year in Europe, did a lot of traveling in Europe seeing relatives both in Italy and traveling with the school to Spain and other places. I had earlier gone to Germany as well. My dad had taken me when I was eleven years old in 1950, the first time he was able to get back and see relatives after the war, and I went to Germany, Italy, and France in that time.

Q: How did the German family make out, and the Italian side during the war?

KUCHEL: Well, very fortunately, my German grandparents had moved to Italy in 1928, so they lived near Florence and went through the war mostly untouched by the war. The villa that they had south of Florence was first headquarters for the German army for that part of Italy, and later for the allied troops, first the British and then the Americans. Joe Louis was there, all kinds of family stories associated with that period. As German citizens they were later interned in Terni, near Rome, but fairly treated. In Germany itself, we had cousins and uncles and so forth. All of our family comes from a small town about 30 or 40 miles north of Frankfurt. Most of them survived the war with the exception of

the younger generation. Some were sent to the Russian front and died. Some died in bombing, for example in Darmstadt and Stuttgart. In Italy itself my mother had three brothers; two were on the Russian front but somehow survived. One was left stranded in the Balkans in the confusion following the Allied occupation of Rome and Mussolini fleeing to Northern Italy. He somehow made his way back through Yugoslavia with the tattered Italian army. My aunt, about 18 at the time, was detained by German soldiers after getting off a tram in Milan to be executed in reprisal for the partisan killing of a German soldier, ten for one. But after counting off ten, they let her go. So they all had experiences during the war.

Q: Did this experience at age 15 still fix in your mind that you wanted to get out and around?

KUCHEL: It sure did. I was in a small village. I wanted to see the world. I wanted to go to an urban area, and so when I came back somebody had convinced my parents who knew very little about the American education system, that having gone to Europe and being an alert student, I really couldn't go back to that small high school and graduate with a class of seventeen. They said, "Why don't you apply to Phillips-Andover which is about ten miles away?" I knew nothing about it, but filled out the application forms. They took me as a senior year student. It was the most rigorous and challenging education experience of my life, because I found out I knew very little about math and algebra. My whole life has been a struggle with the science and the math.

Q: Who was your science teacher? Do you remember?

KUCHEL: I don't remember.

Q: The only reason I ask is I took physics there one summer in '45. I was sent there my senior year with the idea I could get some physics so I could join the navy.

KUCHEL: I don't know, but I remember very distinctly that when I got there, I had to take Algebra II in senior year with most of the students being sophomores, simply because I was so deficient in math. The first test I took I scored a 22 out of 100. I felt that I was not going to last there very long. Well, I think it was one of my great life achievements that I managed to graduate with the class, got a B in algebra, What I really did well in was what I always liked, history. I graduated with honors in history. Again I knew very little about and was very innocent about higher education in the United States. When I was applying for colleges and universities in my senior year, I was so sure that I was probably not going to do well at Andover because I had this very rough beginning. It was a constant struggle academically to catch up, so I felt, OK, what I really probably ought to do is go to a business school. Somebody suggested the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania was a good possibility. Somehow I had the idea that business school was sort of an easy thing to get into, that is if you failed to get into Harvard or Yale or Princeton. It was sort of like a technical school that I might get into. So I said OK, why not just apply anyway. So I applied to Princeton as one application for where I would

like to go, thinking that it was at least some distance from my home town.

Q: Andover pushes people into Harvard.

KUCHEL: Often into Yale. Exeter went to Harvard. Andover at that time was the funnel for Yale. So, I felt I had to go a little farther away, and Princeton seemed good since it was near New York. In those days, applicants visit or interview for college. I knew very little about it. So I applied to two schools, one to Princeton in the hope that somehow it might happen and two to the Wharton School thinking that my goodness, everybody could get into a business school. I was accepted at both. I ended up at Princeton. That was a very defining thing for me, because I think the university experience for most people is very important.

Q: You were at Princeton from when to when?

KUCHEL: I went to Princeton in '57, graduated in '61. So that was in the years that people describe college education in the United States as the "silent generation." The real active university life in terms of political involvement hadn't begun yet. I was always interested in it however, and I remember Fidel Castro came to Princeton I believe spring of my junior year there which would have been '59 to '60, soon after he had taken over. Well I was on the very liberal side of the political spectrum much unlike many of my peers there, so I was very much taken by the fight against dictatorships and all the nasty things. I had done a lot of work on the Spanish Civil War. In fact at Princeton you are required to do an undergraduate thesis, and my thesis was the role of the Basques, Basque separatism during the Spanish Civil War. So I looked at life very often from the social side and the liberal side that was very much in contrast to the views of my republican parents. So I was terribly interested in Fidel Castro. With a couple of roommates during Easter vacation in 1960 I got it in my head that we were going to hitch hike down to Cuba, and we did. We left Princeton. Hitched down through Washington. In Washington a congressman gave us a ride across the Memorial Bridge and put us on the highway. Went down through the south, got arrested for illegal hitch hiking on a bridge in Jacksonville, Florida. Nonetheless made it down to Key West. At that time there was a strange little airline called "Q" Airways that operated DC-3 flights from Key West to Havana for ten dollars. Got over there and found a weird kind of environment where things were really falling apart. Sanctions had started, and they were terribly interested in American students, particularly from Princeton who might be interested in them. So we met some girls who were in the university. Very soon we met some Cuban fellows who were interested in the national movement, and they squired us around, took us around for about 10 days. So I think the object of this exercise at that age, you know growing up, finding out what was going on between the sexes, but at the same time there was a very heavy political involvement. I remember contributing a buck or two while I was there for the next wave of Cuban liberation that was going to get rid of Somoza in Nicaragua. All that was such fun. I came back and remember practically not being able to be allowed back into the country because the INS felt that we were perhaps not American citizens, but people sneaking through Cuba into the United States. We hitch hiked back to

Princeton and graduated.

Q: Your major was history?

KUCHEL: Major was history, minored in French literature.

Q: Any contact with the foreign service while you were at Princeton?

KUCHEL: No except in my senior year I began to think what would I do next. I saw a poster for the foreign service. You could take the written exam. You could take it at Princeton. I thought well this is sort of interesting. I took the exam, passed the written. Went to New York for the orals. So before graduating at the age of 21 in the spring of '61, I was told that I was admitted to the foreign service. At the same time I had applied to go on to grad school and study history with the idea of perhaps becoming a history professor and teacher. So I had a Woodrow Wilson fellowship, all expenses were paid, to go out to Berkeley and do a masters program. I was sort of undecided as to what I should do. My dad died that year, and I decided that it would probably be an appropriate time to go and get a job, and the foreign service sounded wonderful. So I accepted that, and came in in September of the year I graduated at the age of 22. Very inexperienced with the work world.

Q: Can you tell me do you remember anything about the oral exam?

KUCHEL: I remember that I think there were two or three people on the panel. I had never taken an interview before, and somehow as I took the bus into New York, I bought the New York times, and somehow there was an article about something going on in Korea. One of the questions that I was asked was obviously designed to see whether I had read, was a person that enjoyed reading the paper or looked at the paper beyond the sports page or something like that. So I was struck by the fact that at some point in the conversation, something that was not connected, I was asked about what I thought about this event in Korea that was reported in the paper that day. I guess I was able to respond in somewhat intelligent fashion. But that is about the only thing I remember about the exam.

Q: You came into the foreign service in what year now?

KUCHEL: September of '61.

Q: You went into the A-100 course.

KUCHEL: Went into A-100. We had a number of people in that class. It was a fairly large class of 40. Almost all male. There were one or two females, Harriet Isom being one of them. I think this was one of the first classes that they integrated the USIA people in that class because there were a few people from USIA as well. Lannon Walker was in the class, Peter Tarnoff. Those were a few of the number of people that were along. At the

time I got engaged to a Swedish national who I had met while at Princeton. She came down to Washington with me. We were terrified of the security concerns. I guess this reflects the moral atmosphere that was prevailing in the Kennedy era, the beginning of, the end of the '50s early '60s. It was impressed on us that if you went into the foreign service, you had to be really morally clean and a person of great integrity. We had very little money, but we felt we couldn't live together, even though we were living together, and we had to have separate apartments, which was very expensive. So you think about how far we have come. So, Marianne shared an apartment near Thomas Circle, not an elegant neighborhood at the time, with various girls to make our relationship appear morally acceptable given the standards of the time. One of her roommates was a secretary; another was a student, but two were strippers on 14th street. So it always was a very interesting place to bring my fellow A-100 course colleagues. You never knew what was happening in the bathroom. I remember also the security questions. Many of them referred at that time to why I had traveled to Cuba. Obviously they had picked that up from something that showed up from being detained in Jacksonville. So that all came out in the security briefing. More importantly, I was told that if I were to marry a foreign national, this would really harm my career in almost all certainty. I should think about that really very carefully. I was told that if I did persist in doing this, I couldn't serve in the country of my wife's birth. She would be required of course, to become an American citizen, which she had no problem with. But more than anything it would certainly hurt my career prospects. Little did I know at the time that perhaps at that time more than 50% of the people in the foreign service had foreign born wives.

Q: Well I mean you just have to look at George Kennan and Robert Murphy and Roy Henderson and all that.

KUCHEL: Well there were plenty around I soon found out. On the other hand I said, "Look I am certainly not going to walk away from the love of my life, and if this meant a career choice, then I was going to end up doing something else." I did get married, but it did mean that coming out of the A-100 course, I was not sent overseas as a first assignment which was the predictable course at that time, but was assigned instead to the department. I was assigned to the newly established Bureau of African affairs which at that time was a very interesting place to be assigned.

Q: Just to back up a little bit. Coming in in '61, this was the first year of the Kennedy administration. Was your class and you yourself infected with sort of the Kennedy enthusiasm for getting out and doing good in the world?

KUCHEL: It certainly was. Kennedy continues to be one of the most inspirational figures for me even today. My whole life was deeply influenced by what went on in Washington at that time, and what Kennedy represented for me. I think almost everybody in my generation, and particularly coming to Washington and being involved in the foreign service at that time, felt that enthusiastic and optimistic atmosphere. I recall Kennedy visiting the Department and also having Jacqueline Kennedy visit the building. It was just so exciting to have the Peace Corps established at that time -- the feeling that the world

was a dangerous place, that we were in a Cold War struggle, but that individuals could make a difference. Sometimes I have gone back to Arlington Cemetery and read the words that are inscribed on Kennedy's grave there. I am struck by in many ways how bellicose they are, how assertive they are in terms of American leadership, and the optimism and the feeling that somehow there were no barriers to accomplishing almost anything. In many ways, when I look back on it now, it was rather naive, sort of a sense that the right policies or the right people or the right motivation of people, if you just wanted to do good and wanted to do right, you could change so many things in the world. Now I think that is a very positive and important American attitude, and I think it was something that really colored and permeated every facet of how American foreign policy was being applied in those days. I think there are always the more realpolitik and the more cynical aspects of it. But if you look particularly until Vietnam really made things fall apart, the whole period from say '61 until events in Vietnam soured and the country was thrown into social turmoil which started all the recriminations and re-examinations, this was a period of tremendous optimism, despite the fact that we had the threat of nuclear disaster on us. We had the Cuban missile crisis. We had some of the most frightening moments of the Cold War.

Q: The Berlin Wall. I mean we were really thinking in terms of, I was in Washington at the time. I was thinking maybe I should get my wife and kid out of Washington and send them off to North Dakota or something like that.

KUCHEL: Well, we were in Washington during the Cuban missile crisis, and I remember very much the raids on the Safeway for food and working in the building knowing my wife was at home. Our first born was an infant just born. I agree with you. It was a terrifying time, but at the same time so exhilarating in terms of inspiration and feeling that you could make a difference, that you could get involved. Most of these problems of the world, whether they were of development or poverty or communism or threats to security could be worked out, could be dealt with on a human level. I think now looking back, I had an extremely optimistic, had in many ways not a very realistic way of looking at life. I have changed considerably I think from that time. On the other hand, I can't let go emotionally of the attachment of that. So even though books like *The Ugly American* sounded very reasonable at the time you were reading them, if you read them today, they sound nuts. This theory that one person telling some poor villager that he should use a longer broom or something like that is all of a sudden going to change the world or society. I think we realize now with greater humility that it is a much more difficult thing to change minds, to change people.

Q: We obviously don't want to get into a long thing, but at least it got us up and going, which I think the other side of the process is to sit back and do nothing, a la the Europeans essentially, who with a greater sophistication ended up being a passive, not a very positive force in the world, because we got up and got going, and in the long run it worked. Not well, but it worked.

KUCHEL: Stuart, you are absolutely right. I find in myself sort of a dichotomy. I studied

French literature as I said before. One of my real mentors was a French professor named Maurice Coindreau, who represented everything you are saying, the sort of sarcastic and cynical view of life. I find myself often influenced by that view. I mean I am so imbued with that in some senses, I often have to sort of catch myself and say I am being too negative about this, simply because that was part of my intellectual education. Also coming from a European background, my father and mother had this sort of European attitude that society was divided into classes and that one's behavior should reflect that. You were born to a particular group. I will never forget my dad coming home from work, finding my brother and me at the edge of the road where we had decided we would sell corn. We were about seven or eight years of age. We put a sign up, Corn for Sale, from the garden. He came and instead of finding this was amusing or even a good thing in the American sense, my dad was outraged. I still see him turn red. This was not what somebody in my social caste or group in Europe would do. My parents considered themselves professionals. He pulled that sign down; he pulled us into the car. He said, "This is not what you do." The thing I remember him saying is you know, "There are many poor people in the world who have to do that. You are taking the job of poor people." If you look at this, what happened there, you can see how European this was and how un-American this was. I had this kind of upbringing, and then it was reinforced a lot because I was very much a student of French literature and European literature and European history. I find all the time, there is this pull toward a more cynical view of life. Every so often, for example in my most recent assignment in Zambia, I find that every so often I have to pinch myself and remember the goals and the things that we believed in in terms of ideals, being able to change things. But there is a constant difference, I think, between the cultural values and the world view of Americans and Europeans.

Q: Really this leads up to going into the African bureau under Soapy Williams. This was high Africa time. Can we talk now about the African bureau, I mean going in and the feeling on what you were doing.

KUCHEL: I was assigned as a junior officer to the West African office. Ambassador Fergusson was the director at the time. I think Don Dumont who later was ambassador in Senegal, and I think prior to that perhaps Rwanda or Burundi, was the deputy. I was assigned to Alan Davis who was a very junior officer at the time. He had responsibility for Cameroon, Togo and Malagasy Republic. Alan was my first mentor in the foreign service. We did really in many senses the kinds of donkey work that you would expect.

Q: Could you explain for the record, what is the kind of donkey work you would expect.

KUCHEL: Answering congressionals, doing things that really didn't require a tremendous amount of experience, but nonetheless learning the formats, learning the need for responsiveness to the public, to the congressionals, maintaining liaison with the embassies of these newly emerging countries. So I used to get on the phone and help Togolese or Zairians who had problems in the United States. So even though this was beginners work, I think that it was as you said, one of the most exciting times for the African bureau. First of all the people in it and the leadership. Soapy Williams came with

a Kennedyesque vision of change as an enthusiastic and charming supporter of opening a new phase in US-African relations, of getting rid of colonialism, of apartheid, many other things that plagued that continent, and also support development. He was a tremendous believer in putting the American flag in every capital, so universalism was very much a tenant of African affairs. That started at that time, and I think it continues to this time. There was also a very close relationship evident at that time between working on Africa and the political interest of the administration in tying the promotion of a strong and visible African policy to domestic links with the Black-American community, both socially and economically and politically. So that also was very much a part of the African vision, the African bureau's vision. Soapy Williams brought that as a former governor from Michigan. He brought it with tremendous zest and zeal and excitement. When he talked it was always with a smile, with a great positive view. I think he was instrumental with Kennedy's support in putting Africa on the map. Not that it needed to so much because there was a lot of interest in foreign affairs in what was happening in Africa. This was the time when Nkrumah led the African independence movement. The newly independent African countries were establishing embassies in Washington and missions at the UN, often represented by the same individual. The ambassadors from some of these countries would often travel by car between New York and Washington. I don't think our children could believe it, but Washington in many ways was a very southern city, particularly a segregated area of Maryland around Washington. At that time you didn't have the highways. Old route 1 was the way you came down from New York. Very often the Ghanaian ambassador or the Nigerian ambassador would stop for coffee at Howard Johnson's somewhere out in the vicinity of suburbs of Washington in the Maryland area, find they were rudely treated or kicked off the lunch counter and so forth. So one of my earliest remembrances of those years were the countless times we were interceding and working with Protocol and trying to mitigate the negative effects of the racist environment that existed in the Washington area.

Soapy Williams, I think, did an awful lot to translate to Africa both in Washington and in traveling to Africa the commitment of the Kennedy administration to Africa. That was reinforced later when Robert Kennedy went to Africa. Williams would have regular evenings at his Georgetown house where he would invite all the African ambassadors and always people from the African bureau for informal gatherings. From his Michigan days, he was very fond of square dancing and was a great square dance caller. He would have informal social events that if done in Paris or London people would say that was pretty corny, but this was a very effective American way of relating to Africa. Africans seemed to feel very much at home with that sort of informal social gatherings.

Another thing I remember about the African bureau at that time was that there was a tremendous number of what I would call characters, people who had been in the service in the early '50s, had gone to Africa when many of these places were still not independent, been consul general perhaps at Salisbury or different parts of West Africa. They brought to the African bureau a sort of infectious but old school can-do atmosphere. To a junior officer like me, they made an impression for their eccentricity and stories of life in Africa. Mike Rives, with his Newport, RI pedigree, was in AFW at the time. When

he entertained in his Georgetown home, he received his guests in black tie and wore velvet evening slippers. That was the kind of thing that you found in the African bureau. At the same time you also found people who had spent two or three weeks on a trek in the bush somewhere and had the most fantastic experiences. All this was very stimulating I think.

Q: You were in the bureau from '61 until when?

KUCHEL: I was in the bureau from '61 until '64, when I went overseas for the first time. So I spent the first year and a half or so in AF/W, West African Affairs. Then I spent the next year and a half or so with AF/EX in post management. This gave me a good understanding of the administrative function in the foreign service. In fact, I later served in all four functional capacities (consular, admin, political and economic). There I saw the other side of developing relations with Africa. I mean supporting the new posts, people who went out.

Rwanda and Burundi were the last of the places that were being opened up in my time in AF/EX. So I remember very vividly the people who went there to open up those posts, the way we tried to get supplies, furnishings in. I remember also how George Ball who was undersecretary, had this great fight with Soapy Williams over Rwanda-Burundi, over the status of the missions that were to be opened. Ball took the view that this was getting ridiculous. All these little posts, you put ambassadors and missions in. We had no interests there. That was largely Belgian interests or French interests. This was excessive. We didn't have the money for it and there was no need for it. It didn't help that a Europeanist named David Manby had been transferred from Brussels to open up our first office in Kigali. His famous Telegram No. 6 from Kigali was widely circulated around the Department to great derision in EUR but chagrin in AF. He described how the office he was able to secure was often visited by monkeys swinging through the windows, and that the wife of the new Rwandan president was seen hoeing her yams while he drove, flag flying to her husband's inauguration. So Ball argued that AF should have ambassadors resident in a center such as Dakar, and also accredited to places like Niger and Mali.

Soapy Williams took the diametrically opposite view and insisted on the political importance of having an ambassador representing the US in every African country. Non-resident ambassadors would be seen by newly independent countries as a slight. Well, there was a strange Washington compromise that evolved out of all these positions. I am not sure how it all happened, but in the end neither George Ball nor Soapy Williams got what they wanted. A decision was made to take the middle option, and that was instead of establishing an embassy in Bujumbura, Burundi and in Kigali, Rwanda, they would establish legations, a diplomatic status that has virtually eliminated from the foreign service lexicon. You think of the legations we once had in countries such as Romania. And indeed we had to set up the new posts as legations. I remember ordering the great seal that was going to be sent to Rwanda and Burundi. They read "Legation of the United States of America." The first people that went out were the heads of legation but not

ambassadors. There was later a great spat between the two heads (and their wives) because Bujumbura, a more tropical post, was sent upholstered furnishings, and Kigali, a mountain post, received rattan furnishings. These were eventually switched, but not before Soapy had to send a telegram of remonstrance that the squabble was just making the Ball crowd gleeful.

Q: Well this in a way reflected the background. Ball was a Europeanist. I mean maybe this is way over simplification, but for Ball, these were colonial powers who maybe somehow got a little bit uppity or something. I mean not quite, but there wasn't much interest on his concentration was Europe particularly. This other was... Before we go ahead, I would like to go back to a time when you were in west Africa. Although it wasn't on your plate, were you getting from your colleagues any disquiet on Nkrumah for example at this point? He was considered the first one out on the field, and yet he was beginning to turn a little bit difficult form our point of view. Were you getting any of this?

KUCHEL: Yes. Certainly in terms of, I remember taking African studies course at FSI in preparation for my first African posting and of course read about Nkrumah in very positive terms. The whole nationalist movement, the role that people like Nkrumah and Seiko Toure the Guinean leader. But by the time I joined AFW in 1962, clearly the practitioners saw an awful lot of problems there. The embrace of many new African leaders of "African socialism", as Cold War rivalries influenced every aspect of our foreign and security policy made many people nervous and suspicious of the AF Bureau's optimism. I think this was then and continues to be an issue for the AF Bureau. How do you get high level administration in Africa when the stories coming out of Africa are of unbearable poverty, economic and political failure etc. How to you put out African success stories that are both credible and support policy initiatives in Africa. As you just mentioned, people who work on Africa always have to look behind their shoulder and see if there is some George Ball type, somebody who has a more cynical view of relations with Africa. So you didn't want to give ammunition to your opponents. It is not that the AF leadership didn't squarely face these problems. They saw Seiko Toure start fooling around with the Russians. That was of course, and obvious and very clear case. I remember the story at that time of the Soviets sending snow plows down to Conakry. So already the cold war was being fought on the African scene, both in Guinea in terms of West Africa, and certainly in Ghana. Nkrumah was fooling around with the Russians, sending students to Moscow and the like, and taking both political and economic postures that were certainly not friendly to the United States. Very assertive in terms of African nationalism. I don't have really specific recollections of how this played out in the old AF/W, but certainly it was always an issue that people were very much aware, of how you work this, how do you contain it? They were no fools. But at the same time I think they had to phrase it and write about it in ways that put it in a context of a scenario that was not dismissive of Africa.

Q: I think this is interesting for the historians because when they go back and look at these documents, if they don't understand the context, because the documents they will see were written to achieve something, not just reporters or historians writing about

something. They are designed to get something. If you know in the context that you have to be very careful not to overplay corruption or incompetence or what have you, because you realize that this will just be ammunition in your own organization for those who really don't think much of your geographic area.

KUCHEL: That certainly was the case. I remember at that time, I think I was in AF/C, what was called Central African affairs, but this was the time that the Congo blew up. This was of course an event of global proportions in terms of UN involvement and U.S. policy interests. This was not a small fracas in Guinea. This was something that involved people at the highest levels of government.

Q: Well, what were you getting from the older hands about people like Seiko Toure and increasingly Nkrumah? I mean a feeling like well we have got to work with these people or say well you know they are just learning the game, and a certain amount of indulgence for the new boys coming up or that type of thing.

KUCHEL: Stuart, I don't know. I think that may have been an attitude somewhat earlier, but by the early '60s the scales were off people's eyes. The people in west African affairs at that time saw Seiko Toure as a very volatile person. I think there was always understanding that he was playing one side off to the other. Nkrumah was doing the same. People were working to advantage. I don't think anybody looked at him as we look at a Saddam Hussein today and say some kind of an evil creature. I don't think there was a moral aspersion on Nkrumah's view or Seiko Toure's view. I think there was a sense that coming out of the colonial experience, dealing with poverty, dealing with the issues of development, and finding different alternatives to assistance and to projecting themselves on the African stage and perhaps the world stage. There was a sort of a desire to try to understand them in their context, but at the same time it was very clearly understood that some of the things they were doing were not furthering American interests in Africa or our overall goal of achieving a harmonious political and economic development on that continent. I think people looked at them more or less as problems because of the influence they had on other Africans in the pan African context, and certainly as complicating factors when it came down to dealing with the Congo because of the statements they made and the alliances they had, and the Congo was volatile in terms of the Lumumba experience. The chaos there, the UN, US, and Cold War role. I think that really was the main Africa issue at the time.

Q: Did that come over into your orbit at all, or was this something you were just observing?

KUCHEL: I think it affected the work of everybody in the African bureau. Now I don't have an immediate sense of that other than the fact that Frank Carlucci had come back to be the Congolese desk officer at that time, and I think the way that he handled himself certainly propelled him on his career after that. He had been in Zanzibar, and I recall the various events there that occurred during that revolution when Frank was there. But I remember that since I had 4-4 French coming out of the Swiss boarding school, they were

always looking for people who could translate or interpret or take French-speaking African groups around. One of the things that we were doing with the Congolese at the time was trying to win over as many pro American votes in the parliament. As a result, the embassy in Leopoldville sent once a month a fairly large delegation of Congolese parliamentarians to the United States for a tour intended to influence them toward the American system, the American way. I remember Frank Carlucci meeting them at National Airport. We had a group of about ten. I was asked to assist the contract escort officer and help interpret in French. We took them to the Seattle World's Fair, home hospitality in a Colorado farm community, and Adlai Stevenson received them in his NY UN Ambassadorial office. The parliamentarian I remember most vividly was an outgoing fellow by the improbable name of Emile Zola. He was a rather heavy set person who when we were transferring between places such as Seattle and Denver, he would put on both of the hats that he brought along for the trip so neither would be squished or damaged in his suitcase. He was a rather interesting sight to see him go into the American hinterland with the name of Emile Zola and wearing two hats. I remember that before we left Washington we had some function at the Washington Statler Hotel. He went into the men's room. Americans are friendly, even in the men's room they even sometimes strike up a conversation, particularly when you see a foreigner. A man said, "Oh, what is your name?" "Emile Zola." "Oh, like the famous French author." "Oh, no, I think you are mistaking me for another." So there was this somewhat innocent but charming side of working with Africans at that time. He passed out his calling cards which identified him proudly as "EMILE ZOLA -- Member of Parliament -- Nurse." This was very much the problem of Congo where the Belgians had educated people only up to the first, second or third grade level and brought hardly anybody into higher education. Zola was fairly typical of the first generation of Congolese politicians. He was terribly proud that he had reached the exalted educational level of being a nurse.

Q: Well, you left AF in '64 then.

KUCHEL: I left AF in '64 to go on to Asmara, so I stayed in the African bureau for the next two assignments, two years in Asmara, then part of Ethiopia, and four years in Lagos. So all told, I didn't follow the pattern espoused by the career development specialists at that time where they said you would work in at least two different bureaus and two different continents and see where you were going and where your strengths may lie.. I went to Asmara, assigned to the job of vice consul, consular officer working for Sam Gammon, a highly professional officer who served mostly in EUR. He was an important mentor at my first overseas post.

Q: Okay, we will stop here, and I also put at the end of the tape so we know where to pick it up. We are 1964; you are going to Asmara, and we will start from there.

Still on the 21st in the afternoon. Asmara, could you give me what was Asmara like when you went there in oh '64?

KUCHEL: We went for two years. I would say that Asmara was a surprise in terms of someone coming to Africa even if you had studied and prepared for your post. Surprising

in the sense that despite the fact that WWII was 20 years back, it was still very much an Italian colonial town in Africa, Italian in the sense that even the Eritreans all spoke Italian, liked to speak Italian, and worked in it. Most of the positions in the Consulate General were Italian language-designated. I fortunately benefited from my family fluency in Italian. At the time, Asmara had a large Italian, Greek and Levantine settler and expatriate community. There were Italians who had small businesses or restaurants. Often they were married to Eritreans. There evidently was never a color barrier that one found in former British colonies. And there were large Italian agro-businesses and small industries whose owners and managers were important Consulate contacts. Therefore the contacts of the consulate in the local community were both in the Eritrean establishment and government, but also among advisors and business people who were very much people who were involved with Italian culture.

Q: Well, what was the status of Eritrea at that time. It was in Ethiopia.

KUCHEL: It was a fully incorporated as a part of Ethiopia following the postwar UN trusteeship. There were tensions between the ruling Amhara and the native Eritrean Tigrinya peoples, but the later political and military issues were not yet evident at the time. At the same time Eritrea did enjoy a certain amount of autonomy, but real power was in Addis. The governor general was appointed by the emperor. At that time he was Asrate Kassa, a close relative of the Emperor. This was the pattern for practically everyone in government positions of authority. Haile Selassie would move them around periodically so none of them could build up local power bases.

Q: What was your impression of Haile Selassie and how his family was regarded in Eritrea from some of the people you were meeting?

KUCHEL: Well I think there was a reluctance of people there to address this issue politically even when you got to know them. I think they basically took it as a fait accompli. Eritrea had gone from Italian rule to British rule to UN trusteeship and then part of Ethiopia. The people there, both Eritrean and Ethiopian, I think probably realized that it wasn't a very useful question to discuss or talk about. You did get the sense that the Eritreans felt themselves superior to the Amharas -- the Italians had left them better educated relatively. They enjoyed a better infrastructure than the rest of Ethiopia. An odd situation where the two ethnic groups each felt superior to the other.

Q: Well now, what was the American representation there at this time?

KUCHEL: We had a consulate general.

Q: Who was the consul general?

KUCHEL: Sam Gammon. George Kelly was the deputy; he also had the economic and commercial function. I was the consular officer with the title of Vice Consul. We three families lives in residences on the Consulate General compound which also had a tennis

court, horse stables and a vegetable garden. USIA had two American officers. USAID had a number of projects in Eritrea, the most important and influential being the nursing training school which was actually headed by a USAID nursing specialist, Mary Pavlick. A wonderful project that came to a sad end after Eritrea became independent and descended into chaos. In admin, we had a general services officer. All our communications were done by Kagnew Station, the military/NSA base that was certainly the primary reason for the Consulate General's presence in Asmara. Kagnew was then our primary US interest in Ethiopia, the vital link for all US military and government communications between our facilities in England and Australia. All of this was pre-satellite. All told, we had 6000 Americans at Kagnew. We benefited from their friendships, the hospital (where our second child was born), and the PX/Commissary. The hospital facility was also used by Embassy staff in Addis for serious cases as well as US and USAID staff in Aden -- still under British control -- in the Yemen,

Q: What was the importance of Kagnew Station? What was it doing?

KUCHEL: Kagnew Station was the primary communication relay station for the United States as well as allies, primarily for military communications. It was the most important relay station because of its location. Eritrea is at a very high altitude if I remember correctly, like five or six thousand feet, and located between facilities we had in Europe and India and Australia. It was the most important relay station for all kinds of communications, military ships. It was run by a US Army colonel. It remained incredibly important piece of real estate for us the United States government until the era of satellite communications developed.

Q: Which really moves into the '70s.

KUCHEL: That is right. So during the time that we were there and up until that time, holding on and maintaining our presence at Kagnew Station was critically important for U.S. interests. I think it helps explain why when you go back to the question what were the attitudes toward Eritrea and Eritrean liberation movements which were already beginning to lurk in the background, U.S. policy was so centered on maintaining Kagnew Station, and for that we saw as maintaining the relationship with the emperor and the royal family, that our policy was clearly a policy of maintaining Ethiopian unity of which Eritrea would be a part. Everything was done to maintain our posture and our presence there, and I think it certainly had to be number one on the objectives for our mission in Addis.

Q: Well now, 6,000 Americans, essentially a small town 5000 feet in the African hinterlands. Were the boys getting into trouble? Were there problems? How did it work out?

KUCHEL: I think where ever you had that large a collection of Americans and other people there were the odd difficulties in terms of relations with the local people. I have to say that that station did everything possible to minimize conflict. First of all it did the

usual American thing of having an enormous wall around the place and having a self contained life. There were all kinds of facilities from bowling alleys to PX, car clubs and the like. It didn't mean that you didn't see Americans out on the economy as the phrase went, but those who were living out on the economy were generally the officers, and all the enlisted people were certainly on base. They were health issues at least as perceived by the military, although I thought it was a very healthy place to be. I remember Sam Gammon enjoyed riding. My wife started riding there. We owned one-half of a horse, shared with another officer. Sam would often ride with the Governor General Asrate Kassa, a good contact. The consulate general property itself adjoined a wall with Kagnev Station. One of Kagnev's earlier commanding officers kept his horse there. Concerned that his horse might be drinking putrid water, he had a pipe line built to end up in the horse stall so that his horse might drink Kagnev-treated water. That might give you a picture of how life was on Kagnev Station.

But as a vice consul I certainly got into the middle of any kind of difficulty that you might have had between base and town relations. There were from time to time situations where young people would maybe drink a bit too much, or just the normal car accident. I would say at least an average of about 10 or 15 Americans died each year at Kagnev Station. According to our Status of Forces Agreement and Ethiopian law, it was a requirement at that time for the vice consul to sign the documents that would enable the remains to be flown out of the country. Kagnev arranged the mortuary service. They brought somebody in from Germany to do the work, but we did the paperwork. They respected the Ethiopian requirement that legal documentation be obtained, so we did that in the consulate with the local Eritrean authorities, and it was the vice consul's responsibility to view the remains. Sometimes they were not pretty. Particularly we had a number of very nasty car accidents. The other thing that we did was witness the marriage of Americans to individuals when the marriage occurred in Ethiopia. There was concern that the marriage, even if it took place in the Kagnev Station chapel on base might not be recognized as legal since there was no Ethiopian authority present. What we did then was counsel these people on marriage. Often they met local girls, and we went down and arranged a civil ceremony at the town hall. This was done in Italian. But the marriage document was written in Amhara. I provided them with a Certificate of Witness to Marriage, complete with the Consulate General's seal, which could then serve in the US as proof of marriage.

Q: Was there a problem, we were still in the civil rights period where marriages between races in the south were a problem. Did you run into any problems over this?

KUCHEL: Well I didn't run into any problems, but I thought that many of these young married couples would find it difficult once they got back to the US. Many of them came from the segregated south. Indeed, most of the young men who married young Eritrean or Ethiopian girls came from places like Tennessee or Arkansas, Texas, Alabama. I couldn't help but think what were they getting into. On the other hand it was their choice and their right, and I certainly didn't want to get in the way of that. But you are absolutely right. I would say that is not a completely settled issue in our society today. It certainly was much more difficult then.

Q: What about from your perspective about students. This is the time, I know I was in Yugoslavia at the time, and I was getting following reports from the Soviet Union and particularly Bulgaria where they had gone in and recruited a lot of African students and a lot where Haile Selassie directed particularly the B team to Eastern Europe or the A team went to England or the United States or elsewhere. But were you seeing any reflections of students?

KUCHEL: Not really, although my recollection is exactly what you describe. There were some that were sent off to Yugoslavia and Moscow, the Soviet Union. They were really the B team in terms of where people's aspirations were. The Ethiopian authorities were very wary of two elements, the communist countries, although they felt if they were going to be leaders in Africa and the African Union, they had to welcome all kinds of Africans. This was a way I think of kind of balancing the pro American impression the emperor conveyed. Although Ethiopians in many ways felt they were not really African, descendents of the Queen of Sheba, they aspired politically to make Addis Ababa the capital of Africa. They therefore accepted a certain amount of Soviet bloc activity, relations with the Chinese, sending a few students. But clearly as soon as the students came back, he had his own people following them, and they were suspect and never well integrated into the Ethiopian government or society.

Q: How were relations between the consulate general from your perspective, and the embassy? I mean sometimes when you are off in another place, I mean lots of distance and all.

KUCHEL: Our ambassador at that time was Ed Korry, intelligent, very well liked and well plugged in with the New Frontier. Sheldon Banks was the DCM. As far as I could see the relationship was really very good. I don't really sense major issues that I could recall. Certainly if there were some, Sam Gammon kept them well under control. People from the embassy came up occasionally but not very often. Any conflicts we may have had were more managerial than policy in character.

Q: Did you travel much outside, because I used to hear about the Shiftas who were at one point called bandits, and later they were called freedom fighters.

KUCHEL: At that time they were bandits. The Shifta were of two varieties. I agree they were either outright bandits, or some of them were bandits that belonged to a free political movement, the Eritrean liberation front, and used that means of acquiring the resources to survive and continue their activities. During those years, '64 to '66, their activities became ever more pronounced. Banditry had become very active. We all carried a "Shifta wallet" -- a bit of money and a cheap watch, hiding our real wallet below the floor board of the vehicle. We used to travel around the country very frequently. The infrastructure was excellent. The roads left by the Italians... The roads going between Asmara and Massawa on the Red Sea, built in the thirties, descending 6000 ft. in an hour's drive, is still an engineering marvel. After it was all bombed and so forth during

the Eritrean insurrection, I gather it still survives very well to this day. Our family shared an apartment in old town Massawa with the French vice consul and his family. We would go down to the Red Sea quite often. We went up into the lowlands by the Sudanese border, went up into the area just south of Port Sudan on the Red Sea where the Italians had large farms. I will always remember driving up there with my wife with ConGen's Toyota 4-wheel drive, lost many times trying to fall vehicle tracks by moonlight in the desert. Every so often camel caravans of Moslem Yemeni peoples whose women wore veils decorated with mother of pearl buttons.

My wife and I also participated very frequently on weekends in a group that Kagnev station would organize. It included some of the doctors and nurses from Kagnev's hospital, some military advisors who worked with the Ethiopian military, as well as USAID staff from the Asmara nursing project. It was a volunteer "civic action project" which was a feature of the Kennedy period, later expanded in Vietnam -- winning hearts and minds. Kagnev station at that time had a lot of unneeded medical and other equipment. Some drugs may have been out of date but still usable. The doctors came up with the kinds of things people could use, food items, and we would go off working often with counterparts in the Ethiopian army. The idea was get into the field, get into their own countryside rather than remain in the city. So we were very involved in supporting this effort. It had a humanitarian bent, but also a political agenda of solidifying central government influence in the hinterlands. We would go to areas in northwest Eritrea near the Sudanese border where the Moslem population was extremely impoverished. I tell you we saw tribes and people that come out of National Geographic, just unbelievable in terms of different dress, customs. We would go to a place and generally the Ethiopian army and Ethiopian authorities had gone in the day before and set up tents, and we would do a local clinic, take care of. I used to go along with my wife to help with sandwiches, bring out medicines, things like that, help nurses and medical staff that went along. But in so doing we saw parts of the country that one would normally never see, and we saw people, and we saw health conditions. I remember the doctors often had to remove camel dung from gaping wounds on people's heads because that was the traditional method of stopping bleeding but often caused infections. Also, I will never forget, the attitude of local people toward women. I mean the first people who came to be treated were not the people who were most sick. The first people who came were all the men. Generally they needed placebos and aspirin. Then the women came along. In some areas the women crawled on their knees, possibly to show deference. It was unnerving. All of these experiences were fantastic in my memories. But they had this political objective of supporting and trying to get Ethiopians to demonstrate a positive presence in distant areas. And we also had great fun with a wonderful group of people.

Q: At that time did you feel you were able to make contact basically with the Ethiopian officer corps?

KUCHEL: Yes I think we had a lot of military assistance teams and other advisors. We had a small medic group that was centered in Kagnev Station. . We also had very good relations and worked very closely with the Norwegian navy people who were assigned to

Asmara where Haile Selassie was developing a small navy. We had with very good relations with them. All of these contacts put us into contact with Ethiopian military.

Q: I was saying as you work in civic action, did you find that many in the Ethiopian officer corps would sort of join in?

KUCHEL: Well, they didn't join in in the sense of Americans rolling up their shirts. They are very dignified, proud and somewhat aloof people. They certainly were friendly. They supported the operation, but they were followers rather than doers. Quite clearly again it is the kind of activity that you know as soon as you go away it was not self sustaining. I think that is sort of the sad thing about so many things that we were involved with and people did. When you look back at what Americans did in Ethiopia at that time in terms of building up the health sector, the university structure, not much is left. TWA trained and did and taught maintenance for Ethiopian Airlines. I think that was the one thing that was never wrecked.

Q: Did the dispute with the Somalis over the Ogaden raise anything on your radar while you were there, or were you too far away?

KUCHEL: It was very much part of the embassy's concerns. Clearly being south it was on everybody's minds. I think people drew the conclusion that if you could have a separatist movement in Ogaden, you might have a separatist movement developing in Eritrea.

Q: Was there any Soviet presence or were there communists present in Eritrea and Asmara?

KUCHEL: I am trying to think. I believe there was a Yugoslav consul. Of course. they were not part of the Soviet bloc. Other than that, there were trade offices. The Bulgarians were there with a fishing project in Massawa, and I think maybe Hungarians and Czechs. They were selling or trying to sell Soviet manufactured goods. Quite clearly we had an interest in them as well as the station in trying to figure out what they were doing, who they were seeing. Did they get anywhere? I remember one of my first little duties as first vice consul was being asked by Sam Gammon to attend a Chinese ballet troupe that came through, sort of merge with the crowd and see how people reacted to the ballet.. My wife and I attended it and I wrote a report. We were still doing dispatches at that time on how the Chinese cultural penetration seemed to work. Very amusing from today's perspective.

Q: Well were there any major visits or major problems, hurricanes, typhoons, tidal waves during the time you were there?

KUCHEL: Not in terms of natural disasters. Haile Selassie would come up at least twice a year and spend a week or two at his palace. That always caused a certain amount of commotion. We were introduced as members of the small consular corps. I think in terms of American visitors, the most notable was Robert Kennedy, although he made just an

airport stop after a visit centered on the Peace Corps in Addis. But I remember to this day great crowds of Eritreans who came out to the airport just to see him and shake his hand and listen to him speak at the ramp of the aircraft. He was coming back from South Africa. I think the most exciting and most momentous thing that happened in terms of visits was the visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, who came to Asmara for a couple of days as part of the royal visit to Ethiopia. Everybody wanted an invitation to the reception. I think it was terribly exciting for Maryanne and me to be included in that. How to bow or curtsy, be presented. The British Consul General had to have a plumed Consular uniform sent in from London.

Q: Well you left there in '66, is that right?

KUCHEL: I left there in '66. Asmara was really one of the happiest posts, and I think you always remember that. I had a second daughter born there at Kagnew Station. I still have the fond memories of the place and people there. We were assigned then to Lagos, Nigeria. Even though my hope was to become a political officer, I was assigned to the economic section, a four person section headed by Bob Brand. The deputy was Tom Smith who later served as Ambassador to Ghana and Nigeria. We had a petroleum officer, and I was the junior economic officer.

Q: You were in Lagos from '66 to when?

KUCHEL: '66 to '70, which was a very dramatic period in Nigeria's history in terms of its early independence. The Biafran civil war began less than a year later. We completed our tour there one month before the end of hostilities. So we were in Lagos throughout the Biafran conflict.

Q: Before we get into the Biafran thing, I mean obviously we will come to that. Could you talk a bit about in '66 when you arrived, what did you sort of gather about Nigeria, whither Nigeria, what was the situation when you got there?

KUCHEL: Well, I think professionally I felt very inadequate because I had never done economic work. I questioned why I was being assigned there to do economic work. At the same time in those days you didn't question much, and I said I am going to certainly learn from this experience and do the best I could. We now demand much greater proficiency in these positions, but at the time there was a belief that you could learn the job by doing it.

Q: Did you read Samuelson which I certainly did when I was economic officer in Dhahran sometime before.

KUCHEL: I did re-read Samuelson. I remembered it from my Economics 101 course in my university. That was about the most I had ever gotten out of economics. I have to say that it was about one of the most valuable experiences I had, to have had the experience of doing economic work. It influenced everything I did in the foreign service thereafter.

Because from that time on I recognized and understood how important it is to look at the economic aspect of a political question, or the political side of the economic question. I think it is one of the things that we try to do in the foreign service but often don't do well, that is to integrate economic and political analysis and to when you are looking at objectives, to look at what is happening in the country. I think this is the root of the problem we continue to have in terms of getting officers to think in terms of American economic interests, American commercial interests, how you further them. I think the fact that you have two separate sections and two separate cones, political and economic drives us apart rather than makes us work together.

Q: Well '66 before the Biafran war when you arrived there, how would one describe the situation politically and economically from the perspective of a young American?

KUCHEL: As I arrived there in October 1966, I found a country that was very tense. Things were beginning to fall apart. The great hope of Nigeria as the one solid country, the great population, all the resources. After all petroleum had been discovered, its future seemed assured. It had on the surface a large number of people who could move into leadership positions. It had a very well functioning university structure in Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. It had this wonderful, lively and energetic people. And yet the tribal thing had really come to the fore, and the politics of the situation had become raw. Soon after I arrived there, or about that time, the first riots occurred and killings of Ibo peoples by Moslems took place in the north, events that led directly to the civil war's outbreak. The British had favored the Eastern Ibo people for civil service, railway administration and the like. They were seen as less "tribal", better educated and Christian. The British looked to them to pretty much run Nigeria's civil administration. The northern Moslems resented their dominance. The Ibos fled the North fearing for their lives. Our consul in Kaduna was reporting the situation there in very dire terms. This tensions that were present between the different tribal groups, particularly between the Yoruba people in the west and the Ibo people in the east and the northerners had become explosive. I arrived just as all that was going on. So I never knew a Nigeria that was whole and peaceful. I always saw a Nigeria in a troubled state.

Q: Well what about particularly as an economic officer, this is where it shows up first, about the effectiveness of the government? Corruption, delivery of services, that sort of thing.

KUCHEL: That part of Nigeria was basically working, basically functional. Sure there was corruption, but nothing to the order of the reputation that Nigeria had in the last 20 years. Nigeria became independent in 1960. Superficially, the vestiges of British colonial rule, the polo grounds, tennis clubs, the hotels and the business section, nobody had left. Everything was functioning. The parliament, hospitals, universities, the newspapers. I don't think that if you were in Nigeria in 1966 compared to where it was at independence, you would notice any difference. It was civil war that led to the collapse of so many Nigerian institutions. So we had the end of civilian rule, the beginning of military rule when the civil war began and the disintegration of Nigeria on the tribal and ethnic basis.

But at that time, life was pretty normal. Although we were there throughout the civil war period, life in Lagos with few exceptions was extremely normal. People would think, oh, we are in the middle of a civil war. You saw very little of that with the exception of some roadblocks and drunken soldiers in the middle of the night. They would stop you “Let me see your particulars.” They would take your identity card and turn it upside down, and you would know they were on Indian hemp which is what they called marijuana. But eventually as the civil war went on you saw fewer goods in the shops, and certainly no new movies could be seen. But you still went out. You had the Bagatelle, the local night club favored by young expats and danced all night. You still went to the beach with your family on weekends.

Q: Would you talk about the embassy team when you went out there.

KUCHEL: The ambassador was Elbert (Bert) Mathews, a famous old school pro in our service. He was thoughtful, kind and inclusive, but his dinners were always black tie. Clint Olsen was the DCM. I mentioned that Bob Brand was the economic counselor. Al Wellons was the Political Counselor. This is a team that got into a lot of trouble with Washington as the war went on, with the very strong lobby that was around the world and also in our country that favored the Biafran cause. This was a team that decidedly saw U.S. policy interests in terms of keeping Nigeria an integrated unified state. Often they were second guessed and faced policy objections, especially from key members in our Congress who were seized with what had become an Ibo or Biafran genocide issue. Delegations of people came out from Washington to see if they had their heads screwed on right. I think their careers did not benefit from the fact that they were in Lagos espousing an African policy centered on preventing a possible African balkanization.

Q: Not too long ago I interviewed Clint Olsen from Pennsylvania. He is still bitter about this.

KUCHEL: Clint was a real fighter for keeping Nigeria unified. That meant supporting the Nigerian Federal Government against the charges of the pro-Biafran lobby and relief agencies that the Ibo peoples were victims of deliberate genocide. The Biafran leader, Colonel Ojukwu, had set up a bureau in Geneva to promote the genocide view and gain support for the Biafran cause. The Biafrans received wide support from groups in the US and Europe, including armaments as well as relief supplies. This created a conflict between the Embassy and AF's leadership on the one hand, and some influential members of Congress (eg. Senator Goodell, Representative Lowenstein), human rights groups and relief agencies. Clint was outspokenly in the middle of this.

Q: What about relations with the consulates because these became, I just finished interviewing Bill Mithoefer who was up...

KUCHEL: Bill was in Ibadan there.

Q: Yeah, but particularly the ones down where...

KUCHEL: Enugu was in the east (which was closed when the East seceded as Biafra) and then we had Kaduna up in the north.

Q: But the people in Biafra who were there, I mean this became a real bone of contention.

KUCHEL: If ever we had an issue where people were “where they sat”, this was exactly what happened. One thing I learned from Nigeria was that I began to understand why somebody who served in Da Nang felt the way they did about their experience in Vietnam. You get very close sometimes to your clients.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Roland Kuchel.

KUCHEL: Talking about what the relationships were between the embassy and the consulates in Nigeria in '66. Certainly each of the consulates had people in them that were outspoken. I think did their jobs as diligently. People were committed; people worked hard, but at the same time they often reflected very much the viewpoints of their districts. I can't recall the name of our Consul in Kaduna. In the east, I am not sure I can remember our Consul's name either, but he was extremely dedicated to the Biafran view. So this was just a knockout fight. Everything we would report, the embassy had a counter report and visa versa. The relations between Enugu and Lagos soon disintegrated to the point that I think it was a non-functional relationship, and they were barely civil to one another. The situation in the north was somewhat different. There the Consul espoused the view that the blame for the riots and killings of Ibos was squarely on the northern Moslems. This was certainly true, but he never sought to put Northern behavior in any historical context. Bob Brand made the point that if you don't have somebody espouse a particular view or series of arguments, that view doesn't get heard. . You have to remember the Ibos were in many of the leading positions in the north and throughout the country. They were the tribal group, a “chosen people” so to speak, installed and supported by the British during colonialism. They had what capabilities a modern society needed. And when they were chased out, which of course was a great human tragedy, things fell apart. So who were the friends of our consulate? Who were the people they talked to? They were very rarely Moslem Northerners who were circumspect, wary of foreigners and cloaked in traditional garb up in Kano, the great traditional northern city. The people they talked to were not northerners. The people they had in their house were not northerners. Our consul was a convert to Roman Catholicism. I find persuasive the view of some in the Embassy that this influenced his work and reporting. Many of the Consul's friends and contacts had become victims. He was not prone to take the view that the Ibo tensions in the north were stoked in part by the haughtiness of the Ibos themselves who felt they were talented, educated, and the only ones in the north capable of doing their jobs. They were probably right, but that didn't sit well with the traditional Northern Moslem leadership. The reporting out of our Kaduna Consulate was that the Ibos were victimized by these backward Northerners, Moslem to boot. So I think we had a situation where the reporting out of Biafra or the East was pro-Biafran (pro-Ibo , and the same

point of view was expressed by our consulate in Kaduna, the north. This led, I think, to much of the polarization of views that were going on between the Embassy and those two consulates. After the East seceded as Biafra, we evacuated American citizens when the war began and closed our consulate soon thereafter.

Q: I can't think, I mean I think this perhaps, India-Pakistan and internally our embassy in Greece during the time of the colonels, and maybe Turkey-Cyprus, that whole equation, and I suppose the Arab versus the Israeli, our embassies in those countries. But this one strikes me as here there were no real American interests particularly, and we had a clear policy. Yet the blood that was shed in the corridors of diplomacy over this issue is sort of forgotten today, but I think it is an excellent case in point. The other thing is the Ibo cause, and I wonder if you could talk about this, seemed to catch the attention of the glitterati in show business and all. You had true believers even in our congressional staff. Could you talk about how you were seeing this reflection?

KUCHEL: Well It is very accurate what you are saying, Stuart. The Ibos and the Biafrans had the public relations thing sewed up. Part of it was they were the people in Nigeria who were connected with the world. There are various ways in which you might explain that. As I have said, the Ibos were the British colonial administration's "chosen people" for administering a large territory not conducive to white settlement. The Ibos had had early contact with merchants from the US and Europe (including running the slave trade out of the port of Calabar). But unlike the strong tribal culture maintained by the Yoruba in the west, tribal cohesion had broken down in the east at the historical moment when contact with Europeans began. Similar to the British experience in Malaysia, the British found a people less tied to traditional customs and leadership, readier to accept imported ideas. They were early converts to Catholicism. They went to mission schools. They showed themselves useful to colonial authorities. They came to form the bulk of the Nigerian civil service, railway staff and the like. Therein lay the conflict with the Yoruba in the west, and particularly with traditional Moslem society in the north.

In terms of American connections, Col. Ojukwu, the Ibo leader, had many of his people with strong ties to the US. Many had their education in the US. Many at Lincoln; many sent by USAID to US universities. In addition, many more Ibos had university and business ties, understandably, to Britain.

Q: They had public relations sewed up. They had the Beatles giving concerts for them at the height of their powers.

KUCHEL: Absolutely. And they had a head office in Geneva, and were intelligent in hiring a very effective public relations firm that orchestrated their press releases. They were hooked up with modern media technology, so any little thing happening, a bombing or something, some women who might have been killed, whatever it was, this public relations office served as an immediate public affairs outpost for the Biafran government. It was hooked up worldwide. They organized Save Biafra rallies led by pop stars, humanitarian food airlifts from Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, and a campaign that

compared Biafrans to Jewish genocide victims. They were able to get to the glitterati, to influential politicians like Senator Goodell of New York. Goodell came quite a few times to chastise the embassy for its evaluation of the situation. Now why were they so successful? I mean many people buy public relations firms. The Angolans do, so what? We have all kinds of people who use public relations, but this was extremely successful. I think it was because they were able to play on a number of very emotional themes. First, as I said before, the Ibo were Christian, and they were victims of infidel Moslems. And they were the favored group in Nigeria who enjoyed multi-faceted contacts with Westerners. They were looked upon as the most "evolved" people in a Nigeria of some 250 tribal groups -- a people who could lead the transition in independent Nigeria to a functioning democracy and strong economy. They were also the dominant people in the area where US and Western petroleum interests were located. So economic interests in the West also played a part. They used the imagery of persecuted Jews in the Holocaust greatly to their advantage, a people who were with it, modern, realistic, technical, educated and able versus the dark and old tribal customs of other Nigerians.

able, intelligent, and clever. This resonated with other memories of persecuted peoples, particularly among different humanitarian organizations in Britain and in the United States, making the understandable connection that what was happening was akin to genocide.

The general view in the US and Britain was that the Federal Government in Lagos would fall within months, if not weeks, to the superiorly talented Ibo forces once the civil war broke out. There would be bloodshed and retribution. This led to one of the most curious decisions by the Department in May or June 1967 for a voluntary evacuation of USG dependents from Federal Nigeria. The Embassy took the firm position that such a step was completely unwarranted, that there were no concerns for the security of our personnel outside the war zone near the Biafran border. But together with the families of employees and constant pressure from the Congress, the limited evacuation was declared.

It coincided with the end of the school year. Many of our dependents felt this was a fine opportunity to return to the US, enjoy the summer with family, and return to Nigeria when school would start again, certain that by then the Biafrans would have taken Lagos and the civil war ended. The great majority of our dependents left, but with the understanding that the evacuees, once traveled at government expense, could not return until the civil war was over. Of course, the civil war soon took the character of a stalemate which lasted until the Biafran effort finally collapsed in January 1969.

By the fall of 1967, the evacuated dependents became an increasingly vocal group. Employees complained that they were unnecessarily being separated from their spouses and families. Life in Federal Nigeria was normal and did not present any danger. The Department and Embassy held the line. Those few spouses, such as my wife -- now pregnant with our third child, became in great demand for dinner parties and social occasions. The Embassy doctor told my wife that she would have to be evacuated to Germany or the US to have her baby, since the hospitals in Lagos had deteriorated with

doctors and nurses on the war front. My wife declined, pointing to the problem of where she might go with two small children and another on the way -- and a policy which would prohibit her return to Lagos. The Embassy doctor he would take no responsibility if she didn't leave. Marianne found the solution in a Southern Baptist missionary school and hospital located five hours north of Lagos in Ogbomosh. The doctor she once saw was killed in a motor accident a week before she arrived for her delivery. I had to leave her there as I had been named the control officer for our Assistant Secretary's visit. Two weeks went by; castor oil did not work. Finally our son Thomas was born in June 1968. A sign of the times was that the Southern Baptist hospital had a separate section for whites and blacks. I went up with our girls, but had to get back for the visit. Clint Olson sent his car up for Marianne and the baby who made it safely back over pot-holed roads heavy with dusty truck traffic. Arriving at our house, the entire neighborhood's Nigerian staff let out great whoops when they found out that a boy-child had been born. I arrived later, after finishing with the Washington visit. Hard to think of the Foreign Service being like that today. As to the voluntary evacuation, the pressure from dependents finally got so great that their return was authorized in time for the September 1968 school year.

Q: I remember, I can't remember who but one of our people we interviewed very early on was in AF at the top. At one point Dean Rusk looked at him and said, "You know, I really have got to hand it to you. I have got the Jews, the Protestants, and the Catholics all on my back because of your damn Biafran problem." Well was there sort of a siege mentality in the embassy?

KUCHEL: There was very much of a siege mentality. I think that is true. I try to picture what Central American posts were like during the Reagan period, and I think it was something like that, where people felt they were on course but were reviled by a vocal media which accused them of abetting atrocities and human rights abuses. And within the embassy we had a tearing apart because there were younger officers in the political section who regarded the mission's policy as blind to the atrocities suffered by the Ibos. The political section's junior officer, Ray Wach, was outspoken in his dissent. Ray so identified with the Ibo position that he was in constant conflict with his political counselor and particularly the DCM, Clint Olsen. At the time, I think the Department's mechanisms for dealing with dissent were much weaker than what we have now. Ray became increasingly invested emotionally in the issue. When he left Lagos, he left the service and, I think, joined the Catholic Relief organization. Don Petterson, who later served as ambassador to several African countries and devoted his entire career to Africa, was the political counselor's deputy. Don was sympathetic to Wach's position, or at least felt it should have been expressed, but generally took a more nuanced position.

Q: Did you feel the hand of, I think there was someone on, and I can't think of the name right now, but someone on the NSC, a staff person, and also in Congress. Did you feel the hand of you know, I mean somewhere down at the working but the influential level within the Washington establishment people who were giving you a difficult time?

KUCHEL: Yes that clearly was the case, but I can't recall. Maybe I was just too junior to

feel it directly, but certainly the Congressional view as pro Biafran, led by Senator Goodell in the Senate, but there were a number of people in the House. I don't recall particularly the NSC view, but I know that official Washington, certainly the AF bureau was always under a lot of pressure to try to justify the continued posture of the embassy to try to maintain one Nigeria. There was a concerted effort to try and bring in relief supplies, to intervene in the situation in ways that would have violated, I think, our relationship with federal Nigeria.

Q: Did you find, You know, I am sure there must have been evenings where you sat around and had your gin and tonic or whatever one has there among your fellow officers talking about questioning the American policy of saying all right, these are the African borders. They might not be the greatest, but once it starts unraveling, I mean there is going to be chaos. Was there any real questioning about this?

KUCHEL: I don't think so. I think with the one example I think I gave you of some of the people in the political section. Most of the people had the view that I think, continues to be pretty prevalent although now comes under question, that if you start messing with African borders, you are asking for trouble. The fear that tribal secession in one place would encourage further splintering of colonial borders, new ethnic civil wars, and in the Cold War atmosphere of the day, the creation of economically and politically weak mini-states that could fall prey to communism. The Yoruba for example, were the major tribe in western Nigeria, but they are also the dominant tribe in neighboring Dahomey, now Benin. So that if you started trying to rectify these borders, one felt that there was going to be trouble. In the case of Nigeria, the differences between ethnic and political borders continues to be an issue to this day between Cameroon and Nigeria, the fight over the former British Cameroon.

Q: Did you feel any relationship with the other embassies, particularly the French and the British embassies at that time? Were their countries pursuing different policies, or were they feeling the same heat from home?

KUCHEL: I don't know about the French, but certainly the British were feeling the same. The British high commission there, I think as far as I could see, got along very well with Bert Matthews, our ambassador. I think their policies were quite closely coordinated, but I think they were feeling all of the same pressures out of London. The French I cannot say. I think I was too junior, and I didn't have a good observation point. I know because my wife was Swedish born, that the Swedish embassy was aghast because at one point a group of Nigerians demonstrated in front of the Swedish embassy and actually burned the Swedish flag which made the press in Sweden. I think that was the first time the Swedish flag had been burned in a demonstration since the Norwegians broke off in 1905. It shocked the Swedes that this could have happened. And of course the reason for that was that the Swedes had a very prominent soldier of fortune type, Count Von Rosen, who was very well known for writing for leading flights of supplies from Gabon into Biafra. Allegedly they were humanitarian in nature, but we know there were weapons as well. All that was going on. Certainly there were groups in England, America and France, they

were all supporting the Biafran cause as well, by bringing in relief supplies and armaments.

Q: Well did you find yourself drafted into supporting the position? You know, I mean I can imagine all sorts of groups would be coming in, you know spending two days and coming back and pronouncing how colonially antediluvian our embassy was and all that. Did you get caught up in all that sort of thing?

KUCHEL: Well I guess to the extent of sitting in on briefings and so forth, but it was really for the DCM and the section heads to pronounce themselves on that. At least that was the way things were done in the foreign service then. I was there responsible for analyzing certain sectors of the economy and following transportation, aviation, and the like. One of the things that was said and was feared was that the Biafrans knew how to do everything, and when they left, the rest of Nigeria, everything would soon collapse because the talent wouldn't be there. They hand run the railways. The federal Nigerians brought in Indians to take some of those jobs and make the railways run. So I think during much of that time, a lot of hard effort in the economic section was to try to analyze and see to what extent was the economy going to survive the loss of Ibo skills and manpower. So I did a lot of traveling through the country charged with trying to gauge the ability of that economy to move its export crops out. If the export crops did not move, then federal Nigeria wouldn't have the resources to continue the war effort and things could collapse. That was the scenario of the NSC and of many of the intelligence agencies, that federal Nigeria had no future. It would collapse; it couldn't go on, and therefore we should recognize the inevitable, accept the fact of Biafra because federal Nigeria would no longer work. I think what we did was to demonstrate, I mean Paul Grant had me go out and count ground up piles of peanuts were a big export. I went into areas of the ports in the middle of the center to see whether railroad transport might take the place of road transport. All those were issues at the time. We looked at and tried to evaluate whether federal Nigeria could make it absent the petroleum resources that were in the east and absent the technical abilities that they no longer had as the Ibos had fled the country. I think we came up with the conclusion that was happening, and indeed it did. Federal Nigeria went through this period without as much as a, too much of a hiccup. I think in a sense it showed our analysis was correct. Now it didn't lead to a politically palatable conclusion, but it really was I think, an intellectually honest assessment of what was going on. Now at the end, intellectual assessments were still used for political reasons, and so there was a political issue there.

Q: Did you ever feel under any danger during the war there?

KUCHEL: There were a couple of times. One just before the Biafrans declared their own state and civil war began. I think about two or three weeks before that happened I was sent out to evaluate the economy in the Midwestern region, which was next to Onitsha on the eastern side of the Niger (later Biafra). My wife was with me, and we were crossing the bridge to stay in Onitsha for the night. I often took my father's old Leica camera. I had it on the seat next to me as I was driving.

Q: Is this the camera that was confiscated, and you got it back.

KUCHEL: Yes. That old Leica had quite a lot of voyages. I always took pictures of markets and things like that. Without thinking I left the camera exposed to view as I was crossing the river on the bridge into the east. Well of course, by that time the situation had gotten extremely tense. On the bridge there were military guards, and they asked us to stop and present our particulars and pointed machine guns at us and looked and found this camera right next to me. They said, "Give me that." I was not about to part with my dad's old Leica. I said, "No, this is a diplomatic car. You can't take it." At that point the soldiers raised their machine guns at us both, and I foolishly continued to insist no that they couldn't take my camera. Thinking back, I think I was extremely foolish, but I was young.

But I think in terms of experiences that could have come out badly, the most dramatic was the evening in which Portuguese mercenaries based in Port Harcourt, Biafra, got drunk and decided that they were going to bomb Lagos. They got a hold of a Nigerian Airways Fokker aircraft, a civilian aircraft that had been hijacked to the east when the civil war began. So these guys, six or seven of them, flew over Lagos and the lagoon one evening in full moonlight. They were so visible, that aircraft coming around. I think they must have been extremely drunk, because they began to open the passenger door- it had no other cargo door, and throw out makeshift fire bombs of gasoline which they tried to ignite just before they threw them out. Well the official version of this incident is that a very alert federal Nigerian force guarding Dodan Barracks on Ikoyi where General Gowon resided, machine gunned the aircraft which then exploded over the lagoon between Ikoyi and Victoria Island. Instead, I think quite clearly what happened was these people blew themselves up as they circled around and were throwing out these home made bombs concoctions all over. Of course, the Fokker Friendship exploded in a great many pieces. The debris fell mostly over Ikoyi's residential area where we and many foreigners lived.

My wife and I were out at a party in Victoria Island. All of a sudden saw and heard the anti aircraft firing going on. This explosion on New Years Eve, the sky, the full moon. We realized that pieces of the aircraft were falling practically over where we lived, and we had two little girls in the house sleeping with the nanny. So we rushed over there. All the windows in the house were blown in and GSO's fine furniture were full of shards. But fortunately the girls slept through this because their bedrooms had very small little windows so they survived unhurt. We went outside and found everybody out in the street and just pandemonium. Across the way were some people in the Brazilian legation from the embassy. They were so panicked by the bombs and explosions and so forth and the windows coming in, that they rushed out. Then the husband turned to his wife and said, "You forgot to lock the door!" All their windows had been blown out. Next to us was the Ethiopian embassy. A whole engine fell right down into it, and another engine landed in the middle of the Czech embassy next to the Ethiopians. Well for days afterwards the Czechs refused to let anybody come in citing diplomatic immunity, but they didn't know

how to get rid of the Fokker engine in the middle of their property. The next day, I remember vividly as we lived right on the lagoon, hundreds of people thronged to the area, wading in the lagoon to retrieve body parts- little bits of flesh of Portuguese mercenaries that could be collected and brought home and sold in the market as a very strong juju.

Q: Oh boy.

KUCHEL: So to this day I have in Vermont, a little piece of the Fokker Friendship with the green painting of Air Nigeria, and have that as a memento of that occasion.

Q: I take it you didn't get any flesh.

KUCHEL: No, I am not into that.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point, unless is there anything else we should cover?

KUCHEL: About Nigeria? I don't know.

Q: Did you get in charge of any CODELs or anything like that?

KUCHEL: I worked with CODELs and at various times I was sent up to Kaduna and sometimes Ibadan to help out on temporary duty when people were gone, so I did get around the country quite a bit.

Q: Well one last question. I assume by the time you left it was becoming apparent that the federal government was winning the war. What was the prediction at that point of what was going to happen?

KUCHEL: I think the prediction of the outside world was that the most dire consequences were going to happen. That was, after all, the main reason why Biafra received so much outside support -- the fear that there would be a genocidal ending. There was a widespread belief that the federal troops would come into the Ibo region, rape and pillage and kill and destroy, and leaving the deepest scars. There was the fear that Ibo leaders would be hung, and the leadership would be victimized and so forth. I think that what happened really surprised even everybody in the embassy. The fact that Gowon, a very committed Christian from a small minority tribe on the Jos Plateau, turned the other cheek and got Nigerians themselves to do that, the fact that Nigerians themselves simply didn't become vindictive, was amazing and really made possible the reintegration of the Ibo East into unified Nigeria.. Lots of times I sort of think about that and say gosh, if you think about that, the Northern Ireland situation, if you think of all those grudges and horrors that continue for four or five hundred years, there is maybe a lesson to be learned in what happened there. On the other hand you look at other areas of Africa, right now Rwanda and Burundi, you see how old ethnic conflicts have a way of recurring and recurring. As far as I know, even though there still may be sometimes a sense that Ibos

are arrogant, northerners are slow, and Yorubas are con artists, everybody had types. But as far as I know I don't think Nigeria to this day is divided or scared by the hatreds that could have been inherited from that conflict. Even Ojukwu, the Biafran leader, was treated very humanely, allowed to live peacefully in exile in the Ivory Coast. Nigeria is somehow a success story that has pretty much been forgotten in terms of the Biafran ethnic conflict

Q: Well I am not sure how we are going to work this, but the next time we have you leaving in 1968?

KUCHEL: End of '69. January of '70 got to Washington and went to Romanian language training.

Q: All right we will pick it up then.

Good morning. This is Nick Heyniger, and it is now September 3, 2003, and we are continuing with our interview with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. We are in the Howell Library in Dartmouth College near Hanover. Roland, you are about to go off to Romanian language training. Was this your idea or was it the department's?

KUCHEL: Nick, sometime before I left Lagos I had an inspection, a post inspection. An inspector named William Crawford, Ambassador Crawford, came by. He had been in Romania. I think at that time we didn't have representation on the ambassadorial level, still head of legation. Still he was extremely taken with his service there. When I mentioned during the inspection that I had been in African affairs for a rather long time in terms of starting out a foreign service career, he suggested that Eastern Europe or Romania would be a very good alternative or different kind of an assignment. I readily thought that was a fascinating part of the world. It was the time still of the cold war. This was the central issue in U.S. foreign policy, and it sounded like a very good thing to put in for. Anyway, Bill Crawford made a strong recommendation to the department that they consider me for service in that part of the world, and for some reason, I was assigned to Bucharest via Romanian language training in Washington. At that time it was considered a hard language, a nine month course of instruction. Lately I think it has been reduced to six months. It is quite unique in that part of the world with its basis in Latin. Although Romanian has a great many challenges with the inclusion of Slavic and Turkish vocabulary, its basic structure is Latin. It was more accessible, if one had other Romance languages, than Slavic or Hungarian tongues. It is something that in six months one can do something. So certainly in nine months you came out with a very honest 3-3, and a very useful competence in Romanian. It was all the more an intensive course because I found myself as the only student assigned to Romanian that year. So I basically had one on one instruction with a long time teacher of Romanian, Nicolae Chiacu, who was extremely dedicated to getting his students proficient in his native language. He used to drill one on one in the classic FSI method. He really produced results. He was not a favorite of some of

his colleagues at FSI and some of his other Romanian language students because was clearly an ultra nationalist.

Q: Language training I have had myself. It is pretty exhausting. Was it about six hours a day for you?

KUCHEL: Well I think they recognized that they could not have students one on one for six hours, and so they gave me four hours of training in the morning. Then my wife, Marianne, was able to take one on one training with Chiacu in the afternoon. So she had a full course in Romanian that would normally be given to people assigned to Romania and really benefited tremendously because she too came out with really excellent Romanian. It turned out to be a wonderful asset when we went to Romania for the next three years.

Q: You had a rather unusual experience because usually language training is in a class of three or four or something like that. Do you have any comments about language training in the foreign service, about how you saw the Foreign Service Institute being run, any ways in which you think that training in the foreign Service could be improved?

KUCHEL: I don't know. I think the language training program that existed at that time really did the job. People were motivated. The instructors were all people who were extremely committed to what they were doing. They came out of the sort of immediate post war period, and they almost felt that they were partners in making sure that people went to post as effective as they could be, to be basically articulators of the American position and be able to function. So I was very impressed with both the method and the way the language instruction was done. On the other hand I can't really judge the language training program fairly because that was my only FSI experience. I never had any other language there. The French, Italian, the other languages I either had or picked up were done elsewhere. FSI has now become a totally different institution. At that time it was largely language; area studies was extremely weak. Economic studies, role playing, all of these things came much later. Although in later guises I have had a lot to do with FSI in talks there and seeing people over there, so I am generally familiar with what it has become as an institution, I am really not that qualified to comment on it.

Q: I think that FSI generally has the reputation of doing a pretty good job of teaching people how to speak and listen in foreign languages. Ok it is now the fall of 1970, and you and Marianne I hope are off to Bucharest.

KUCHEL: Yes, we are off to Bucharest with three small children.

Q: With three small children. What was your assignment?

KUCHEL: Well in those days starting from the model of everybody who had served in Moscow, everybody who went to Eastern Europe was also first assigned to a year in the consular or administrative sections so you would really use your language and ground it. I think in the case of Romanian that really wasn't all that relevant because by that time,

Nicolae Ceausescu had come onto the scene. For a very short period between 1970 and into most of '71, Romania had sort of an opening, a brief period of relaxation. Ceausescu soon saw where this was going, but for a very short time foreigners were given a good deal greater amount of access. People who had Romanian really had a good deal of entrée in many parts of society for a very short window there. So as in all the Bloc posts, we all started out in the consular or admin sections. I spent a year in the consular section. It was great. I loved it for the human contact the job entailed. To this day, I feel it was one of the most personally rewarding foreign service experiences I've had, to issue immigrant visas to applicants who had tears in their eyes after ten or fifteen years of fruitless applications and waiting. The consul was the station chief which was a rather unusual arrangement, so as vice consul I did all the visa and passport issuance work. He was really a working consul as opposed to a mere cover assignment. He really spent many hours really leading that section, doing interviews and working in a full consul capacity in addition to his other duty. Nonetheless, he naturally spent most afternoons in the station, and I don't think any Romanian local employee or the Securitate were fooled. That was Bob Pierce who was an individual extremely committed to his agency's mandate, but also in a broader sense to overall foreign policy objectives. A person who later served in Vietnam, was one of the last people to leave Vietnam, and who after retiring from CIA service enrolled in the DC Law School's program in public interest law in order to contribute to social justice in our country. As part of that training, he tragically happened to be in an elevator coming up into the city hall. As the elevator opened, radical Black activists, I can't remember who, opened up with machine gun fire. Here was a person who survived service in World War II, the Vietnam War, all kinds of things in terms of a life of being put in harms way, happens to be in an elevator that just as the door opens the whole lobby is sprayed, many people killed. He was shot in the back and remained paralyzed for the rest of his life. Something that destroyed his marriage, led to alcoholism, and eventually suicide. A life destroyed. Bob Pierce was a very good man.

Q: And this was in city hall in Washington, DC?

KUCHEL: Yes. It occurred during the end of the '70s.

Q: Let me take you back for a minute. You were saying that he did a really very good job as a consular officer at the embassy in Bucharest. My experience in the foreign service was different. We had in various posts, we had CIA officers doing different jobs in the embassy. I remember one post that I served at that the consular section, the consular officer was a CIA officer, and he knew nothing about consular work, and therefore when anything of any complexity arose that the local employees couldn't handle, I was summoned from the political section to go down to the consular section and do it. Do you have any thoughts about CIA officers working in American embassies and posing as consular officers?

KUCHEL: That example of Bob Pierce in Bucharest was probably the only situation that I encountered of that type where a cover assignment was really genuinely taken. I don't know how effective a cover it was, because after all security people have a way of

smoking out other security people. On the other hand, he did the job with dedication and competence. He was devoted to consular work, and helped many Romanians with their visa issues. He got along famously with our consular local staff, looked after them. My experience in the consular section was very positive. Being able to help Romanians -- and a nasty case involving an American imprisoned by the Romanians (visiting him in prison and bringing him cartons of cigarettes) provided a sense of personal involvement and satisfaction.

Q: This is tape three, side A with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. Roland, you were talking about your experiences in the consular section at the embassy in Bucharest, and then after a year or so you were moved to the...

KUCHEL: Political section. I was it. So I worked closely with the DCM, first Harry Barnes and then Bob Martens under Ambassador Meeker. I loved it. It was a terrific job because it required language, it required analytical skills, reading endless Ceausescu speeches in the party organ Scinteia, Romania's "Pravda, looking for a nugget within a four hour speech -- what people called Kremlinology. More importantly, it was an exciting time to do political work in Romania. The whole United States government, in terms of its overall foreign policy outlook at the communist world. looked at Romania as a fascinating example of a potential breakaway part in the Warsaw Pact, and more importantly because of Ceausescu's relationship with China in terms of his disagreements with Moscow. It became a listening post and effective intermediary for Americans who were interested in China. You will recall that Kissinger himself made a secret visit to Romania at the end of the '60s as Nixon was coming on as president. From that time on, Romania was of course the kind of place that eventually Poland became during the Solidarnosc period. Everybody had to go to Poland then; at that time everybody had to go to Romania. So in the three years we were there, I think we had at least a third of the U.S. Senate, any number of Congressmen. Journalists from the New York Times (Rick Smith) and the Washington Post (Al Friendly), made stops in Bucharest a regular part or feature of their work in that part of the world. Businessmen were discovering Romania in the hope that they could get a wedge in to the Warsaw Pact world. It became a really fascinating post in terms of the kinds of people who came there. And the Embassy in that closed society became a regular stop on their itineraries.

That meant in addition to CODELs and visitors, the opportunities for entree to go and see Romanians at various levels and all spheres, political people from Ceausescu on down, the politburo was open to us through these visits. The different governors in all the different provinces, the journalists, the artistic world, the theater, Romanian theater was opening up, and as the post's prime language officer, I was the interpreter not only for visits that he would have with Ceausescu and people of all stripes, but when we had Senators and congressmen, also interpreted for them during their visits around the country. So it got me traveling, got me into everything. It was a situation where the Embassy played a key reporting and analytical role. You couldn't just read the Economist or the Financial Times to know what was going on -- as one might have done in Germany or Britain. It was an exciting and busy post. I never had a better or more satisfying job

than being a political officer in Romania.

Senator Eagleton and his wife came a number of times. They became very fond of paintings by one of Romania's finest painters, Corneliu Baba. My wife took the Eagletons to Baba's studio. Thereafter, we became life-long friends with Baba. He was very fond of Marianne, my wife, who visited often on the way back from tennis to talk -- invariably on non-political subjects, listen to Mozart and have a drink. We had him do a portrait of Marianne, and he also did small portraits of me and our three children. What we didn't know is that he used all this work to compose what became a much publicized and published image in books on Baba -- a family composition that excluded me which he titled "Mrs. K with Children." We didn't know of its existence. But later, friends said, "we saw Marianne in East Berlin," in Moscow. When assigned ten years later to Budapest, Baba visited us at our home on the occasion of a retrospective at the National Art Gallery. "Mrs. K" was there. Shortly thereafter, a crate arrived from Bucharest; Baba had found a way to send it to us.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KUCHEL: That was Len Meeker. Len Meeker was the former legal counselor in the department, and a person in many ways the antithesis of anybody in the Nixon administration, extremely liberal. I profited very much from the fact that Ambassador Meeker had me accompany him on all his meetings and travels around the country. He was also very interested in visiting and understanding the other Warsaw Pact states. So I went with him to Warsaw and Prague, as well as a EE Chiefs of Mission conference in Vienna where a very generous political ambassador invited our wives as well to stay at the Sacher, enjoy his box at the Opera, marvel at the Lipizzaner horses, and boat on the Danube on his yacht, maintained by a couple he had brought over from Maine. I also traveled with my family to Budapest, Belgrade and Sofia. So I really got to know Eastern Europe quite intimately.

I also accompanied Ambassador Meeker on a memorable orientation trip to the USSR, starting in Leningrad and then taking the Red Train overnight to Moscow, staying at Spaso House. Briefings at the Embassy, walking the streets to get a sense of the consumer situation and housing, the Moscow metro. Then we flew to Kiev for two days of similar reconnoitering, another flight to Kisinev, capital of the Soviet Republic of Moldova (now independent). We walked the streets, observing how Stalin had Russified this Romanian area after WW II. There were few signs in Romanian, and people hesitated to speak Romanian to foreigners. We left Kisinev on a Soviet train to Iasi in Romanian Moldova. When we got to the border, at night, the train stopped and each railway car was lifted up by some contraption and reset on European-gauge tracks -- the system of different track widths the Russians used to delay possible invasions, such as the Nazis, from the West. A fascinating learning experience.

Q: Can you give us one or two examples in your work as the political officer where you sensed possible Romanian openings toward the west, possible movements away from the

Soviet sphere? Were there times when you were speaking with government officials or others where you saw that the situation in Romania was changing?

KUCHEL: Well, yes. Of course it didn't start in the '70s. Ceausescu had come in maybe four or five years before that, replacing a really terrible Stalinist dictator. When we think of Ceausescu and his end, the brutal dictator that he pretty soon became, it seems incredible that at that time he was a generally popular figure in Romania. The Romanian people felt that there might be genuine liberalization, and his anti-Sovietism was really popular. And having the West, from Kissinger on down, come to Bucharest made them proud. He was popular among foreign visitors. It was not only Americans but the French were coming, the British, everybody came and looked at him as an important break with Warsaw Pact monolithic communism. Romania's break with the Warsaw Pact over Czechoslovakia in 1968 was amazing. So this was a process. My three years there was basically a continuation of a steady but slow assertion of Romanian independence against Russia and the Warsaw Pact. So we were following very closely the statements he was making on refusing Warsaw pact military maneuvers on Romanian soil, a variety of things that were extremely useful for the U.S., knowing the western position, the NATO position against the bloc. At that time I would say the main interest we had at the embassy was looking to see whether this kind of independence vis a vis the Soviet Union would also translate into a gradual liberalization of Ceausescu's view on communism itself with the possibility of economic liberalism and introduction of greater freedom. It was on that side we really began to look and see that Ceausescu's so called independence was essentially a security and political issue, but never went very deeply into opening the other aspects of life. This really began to sour at the end of '71 when he had a crackdown on the intelligentsia, the artistic world.

A curious event provided the signal for Ceausescu's mid-1971 crackdown on political dissent. One of Romania's most popular and avowedly liberal directors put on a production of Chekhov's play, "The Inspector General." Marianne and I got tickets for the first-night performance. Doing Chekhov would ostensibly be quite safe. But the play pours heaps of ridicule on a Tsarist inspector who visits the provinces and finds everything in fine order as the local authorities have created a Potemkin village of seeming progress and orthodoxy. At the time, it was widely believed that local party officials had a heard of cow that moved from province to province whenever Ceausescu traveled out to visit a cooperative farm. The day after the play's opening, the play was canceled. Everyone in the diplomatic community wanted to know what had happened. I received many visits and calls in the following days.

Q: Being a political officer in a communist country requires a very well tuned and subtle ear. Were you hearing different things from non communist figures in Romania than you might sort of be hearing the party line from communist officials. Were you beginning to detect a divergence a dichotomy from what you were hearing form Romanians that you met with?

KUCHEL: Particularly in the early period, up to mid-1971. There was this very short

blossoming. So initially we had contact with a broader variety of Romanians, particularly people in the arts and theater. Harry Barnes introduced a plan, probably adopted from embassy practice in Moscow, of assuring that staff members get out and travel as much as possible in the provinces. So all the reporting and consular officers in the embassy were assigned a certain province to visit regularly, develop contacts, and report on political and economic developments. I learned a lot of political tradecraft from Harry in terms of looking everywhere for that potential gem. We found that when we were traveling around the country with these communist leaders, the heads of different districts, culture heads, at a certain point after drinks and so forth, lots of things would open up, and they might drop the nugget. Putting that together was really the political craft of working in that kind of a closed environment.

Q: So to this extent harking back to your experience as an economic officer in Nigeria, you perhaps were hearing different things out on the provinces away from the capital from provincial figures than you might be hearing from those who were very close to the throne in Bucharest. Is this in your experience a fairly common in political work?

KUCHEL: I think so particularly political work in a closed society where you have to get as many beads as you can on one issue and try to see whether the person you are talking to you is selling you the line. Is he following the line? Does he deviate from that line? To me this was the fascination and great joy of doing that kind of work is to piece stuff together, to read between the lines in the newspapers, but also then to use that and to take full advantage of the various possibilities of meeting communists, people in a communist society, in places where they would let their hair down and talk a little bit. So we went to a tremendous amount of cocktail parties and receptions where one could talk without fear of microphones. I mean this was always the whole issue of working in Romania and elsewhere. Their security apparatus was in full steam, and we had to recognize that our residences and office space open to the public were bugged, and that the he embassy could have been bugged. Once a fellow who identified himself as a telephone repair man came to our house to “oil” our telephone. That was stupid enough. But I was even stupider being so un-technical in nature that I thought it might need it. Our dog used to bark at certain parts of the living room wall. The embassy in Romania had perhaps one of the most famous buggings of all the period of work in communist countries. That was Harry Barnes’ shoe that his maid or household help had taken out for repair. It was returned in very nice cobbled condition, with a microphone in its heel. That was discovered only when we had a security visit at one point, a periodic check of the embassy and the Seabees found that the embassy’s secure conference room (the “Glass Bubble”) was not secure, that something was operating in a place where it shouldn’t have been operating.

Q: Harry Barnes had a microphone in the heel of his shoe.

KUCHEL: Which later became a wonderful exhibit. My wife later worked at FSI on preparing foreign service people to go to work in closed societies in China and Russia and the like. Part of that was a show and tell visit to CIA, and they always brought out Harry

Barnes' shoe even 20 years later as an example of the crafty efforts of the opposition. But all of that was part of the background scene. We had to find ways to talk to Romanians in ways in which they could safely work. Even then, of course, you could talk to people, such as an artist, a film maker, a writer, people from all walks of life, but they all had a political view, and that was useful to us. You had to look at people in that area, were they for real or were they placed in contact with westerners so that they could feed a particular line from time to time, or report back on the kind of individual you were, what kind of weaknesses you might or might not have, the potential for opposition recruitment. So there was all that going on, and nothing was necessarily as it seemed.

Q: Okay, I know that you don't have a great deal of time and we need to keep moving on, but before we leave Romania, are there any other aspects of your tour there that you think researchers would be interested in hearing in terms of a communist society which is moving slowly and tentatively away from the Soviet orbit? Any other insights? Any people that you thought, your rising stars?

KUCHEL: Well I think we all felt that Virgil Constantinescu, the foreign office person in charge of American affairs, was perhaps one of those Romanians that were looking for greater opportunities for contacts with the west and so forth. He was a suave but also complicated person. I think anybody who looks at the history of American relations with Romania at that period will look at him, and I am sure other people have talked a lot about him. Harry Barnes worked closely with him. One of his successes was to get Romanian approval for PanAm to fly into Bucharest. This was a win-win project, because Ceausescu could chalk it up as another area where Romania acted independently of Moscow and provided a direct flight to New York. And we could benefit by piercing the Bloc politically and economically. I don't think PanAm ever made any money on the route, but in those days PanAm often played a political role. I think in the end Virgil proved, like most Romanian officials a disappointment. Their ability to stray from Ceausescu's line was always exceedingly limited. You can understand the position they were in. They were always vulnerable to loss of privileges, to having their families lose their jobs or educational opportunities for their children. The hold on people in closed societies is tremendous and must be understood in human terms. Few can afford to be heroes. Much later, in the mid-eighties, I became deputy director and then director for East European affairs. With Mark Palmer, the EUR Deputy for USSR/EE, we accompanied George Shultz out there on a last attempt to talk some sense into Ceausescu before we finally gave up. I found it especially disheartening to see the various people I had known from Romanian days. People who used to have a light of hope in their eyes, but now were glum and fearful. After a few words about family and so forth, there was no conversation possible anymore in the last days of Ceausescu. I think the experience I had then was so different from what Romania had been in the early seventies when Romanians at that point had hoped that things could change for the better. I think the only lesson one could draw from that is that independence in a tyrannical state is really a false kind of independence, unless you have some movement towards a liberalization in the economic and political sphere and the ability for people to travel and express their opinions. You can't have one and not the other. I think that is the lesson.

Q: That extends, often times you begin to see signs of liberalization particularly in universities with both the students and with faculty. Did you have a chance to visit any, particularly provincial universities where you could talk to rectors or faculty?

KUCHEL: Yes, we traveled around the country and made the obligatory stops on all the common institutions, universities and the like, I think that in the case of Romania and perhaps in the case of other communist countries there was perhaps greater liberalization in Bucharest than in the provinces. And in a way that is understandable. They were further away from reading the tea leaves of the different changes that could happen, so they were much more tentative, much more cautious in their initial discussions with one. So unless you went back and saw the people and then saw them perhaps in social occasions, in social environments where they were able to be a little bit freer, the actual awkward conversations with people in the provincial level are often much less interesting because people are much more cautious. And they know that security is listening and following them even while holding high provincial party positions

Q: Okay, so you said that you were in Romania for about three years. What happens next?

KUCHEL: Well when I finished my tour there, I went back to the department, served a year in INR in the East European division working on Romania, Bulgaria, and those countries. But very soon, in less than a year...

Q: Well, wait. Before we move on from that, this is now...

KUCHEL: '73-'74.

Q: You worked in INR for a year. What were sort of the differences in working in intelligence and research that say from working in west African affairs? How does the job in INR differ from the job in a geographic bureau?

KUCHEL: Well INR, of course, had an analytical function, and an intelligence coordination function. It differs extremely in terms of desk work in the sense that it is not operational. I think that was one of INR's problems particularly at that time in that people in operational jobs and on the seventh floor as well, didn't really look to INR for the kind of background and analytical assistance that INR was designed to produce: The kind of analytical work that would assist a policymaker into making an operational policy decision. INR at that time in the east European division was sort of a backwater to the Soviet office. There were wonderful people in there. Mostly émigré Romanian, Poles and the like that were in the civil service. But their commitment was more toward getting the intellectual analysis correct than responding to a policy need of an individual office or group. Bill Highland came into INR at that time, and expressed great discontent I think, at INR's work, simply because INR had gotten into that kind of a rut, where you could ask almost anyone working in INR who was the minister of agriculture in the Czech

government in 1947, and they would immediately come up with it without any need to look at a reference point. But that same individual had a very hard time writing a paper that on one page or two could outline an event or a development that ought to be paid attention to because of its relevance to a U.S. interest or foreign policy event. I myself, served a tour in INR. I recall not from that tour, but from other experiences in the department, that sometimes if INR officers sought to give voice to a different policy or a different approach to foreign policy problems, then the geographic bureau, that this was not very welcomed, and it wasn't very well received. I am thinking particularly of the stress between INR and AF during the Biafran War when INR from time to time produced papers which AF refused to have circulated around the department because they reflected a different point of view than the prevailing one in AF.

Q: Did you in your brief tour in INR eastern Europe, have any difficulty in perhaps preparing a paper which offered a different policy point of view from that of EUR? Did that ever give you any problems?

KUCHEL: I don't think that ever was the case really because what we were looking at in terms of Romania or Bulgaria, I don't think ever cut across a real policy issue. I can see that the example you gave, you would find that for example in issues on, analytical issues regarding Vietnam during that time. That was where policy debate on how do you interpret this individual or this particular development. I think that is likely to happen whenever you have a case where the particular foreign policy issue is also one that cuts across administration or domestic political issues. Human rights for example, I think, was always an issue that cuts into that area of debate. I mean do you look at a policy toward a particular South American country, are you going to continue to support that junta that is involved in human rights abuses, and then does the geographic bureau accept that or not accept that kind of a judgment because after this has powerful political implications in terms of relations with Congress or programs or AID programs or budget. I mean that cuts across the real operational issue. Then you have that kind of a conflict. We didn't have that in Romania, but I think that it was often an INR problem with its production. Analytically, I think INR has produced good work, often competing very well contrasted to the far larger resources of the CIA and other members of the intelligence community.

Q: One final question about your tour in INR. Looking back now from a fairly considerable distance. What is your opinion about the proper role of intelligence and research in the Department of State? Is INR doing the job you think it ought to be doing? Are there other things that INR might be contributing to policy formulation in the Department of State? One idea that has circulated around for example, is that INR should be combined with the policy planning council so that there is really an area in the Department of State which quite deliberately presents not only future forecasts but alternatives to current policy. What is your opinion about that?

KUCHEL: I don't know whether INR could find a way to make the Department's policy echelons, the seventh floor, take better advantage of the bureau's often excellent product. That goes to a larger issue of how time-starved policy makers, often political appointees

with other matters on their agendas, could make better use of the Department's resources. I think the one thing that INR has proven year by year, decade by decade, is that a very small intelligence unit that you have in INR still managed to put out a magnificent product on major issues. There was a great repository for independent thinking and for very careful intelligence analysis and research. For example at various times when you would have inter agency meetings in the intelligence community, you would have one or two officers from INR go up against 17 CIA and so forth with this very tiny INR budget going against mega budgets of the other elements in the intelligence community, and yet that you would find that the State Department could hold its own in terms of presenting alternative positions or useful contributions to the mix. I don't know, I haven't had much experience with INR for some time now, but here we are in 2003, and you look at our experience now in Iraq and the issue of intelligence coordination, and quite clearly, those people in the State Department who took certain footnotes were people in INR and they are now looking pretty good. I don't think INR's budget has increased any in the proportional sense. Regarding Policy Planning, there too, it had its ups and downs. Recently, it has been led more frequently by political appointees, some better than others. So, I don't think, necessarily, it would be a good idea to subordinate INR to S/P.

Q: Very good. OK, it is now about 1974-'75.

KUCHEL: End of '74.

Q: '74, and you transferred to...

KUCHEL: Harry Barnes was then the executive director at S/S. I guess he was looking for people that he knew. I am flattered that he saw me as an able officer. Staffing at the Operations Center came unto under his direction. There was an opening as a deputy director for the op center. He quite clearly sort of reached out, and all this was a bit of a stretch in terms of my assignments to that point. I was assigned to a deputy job under Maurice Ealem, the director. So I worked for one year as the deputy and then the following year as the director of the op center. That would have been '74 to '76, years when we were just at the tail end of Vietnam took place on our watch on the in which we dealt with the evacuation of the embassy and the events that immediately preceded that. In particular I recall the Mayaguez incident which again was a very important one for people who worked the watch on the operation center at that time. Because the incident quickly became a matter of political dispute, the intelligence community had meetings in which I participated to examine how and when various government elements were notified. I resisted the attempt to blame our watch officer for the way alerts were made; there was a good deal of pressure from the CIA to blame State, since the first call came to us.

Q: But here you are now I think up on the sixth floor or the seventh floor of the department in the operations center. Again from the point of view of academic researchers and others who are interested in the functioning of the operation of the Department of State, give us a few insights into how the operations center works and how

it integrates work that is coming in to you from different geographic and functional bureaus.

KUCHEL: Well, as you know, the operations center is a 24 hour alert and crisis management center, so a very key part of the operations center's work is monitoring the global traffic not only from the embassies and consulates, the State Department's traffic, but also other elements of the foreign affairs community. So White House messages, CIA messages and the like. We also "patched" secure phone calls from posts abroad to Department principals. And we monitored all sources of information, including the wire services. We housed a separate but contiguous group, the INR watch, which was responsible for coordinating and distributing intelligence and as well as alerts. Telephone was the main means of communicating and checking on events as they broke. This was a little bit before the CNN era, so information from all kinds, whether it was from media sources or embassy reporting, judgments had to be made by the Operations Center Watch as to whether someone needed to be notified, at what level and so on. There was a lot of individual responsibility. The judgment had to be made as to the level of alert, the level of coordination that the particular case might warrant. So people who worked on the watch at different levels of the foreign service had to be quick on their feet. They had to know when to intervene, when to alert, and when not, when to coordinate. We also housed the task forces that were set up at various points, when a bureau was involved to monitor and manage a particular crisis on a 24-hour basis.

The other and perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of working in the operations center at that time, and a cause of considerable tension for people who worked in it was the fact that restricted messages came in first through the operations center. It was the function of the operations center watch officers to make the initial distribution of sensitive messages, which were handled as NODIS (no distribution) and SUPER NODIS because of their sensitivity or particular subjects of interest to the secretary. The secretary at the time was Kissinger. He had a view of information that was pretty proprietary. Kissinger operated on the principle that knowledge is power, and by controlling who had access to sensitive material, he could operate to maximum advantage. We were always given a specific instruction for distribution of messages on certain subjects or particular issues. Under Kissinger, distribution of sensitive messages were often made to control information and didn't necessarily get distributed on a rational need to know basis. Certain foreign policy issues were restricted not only to elements of the seventh floor, but to particular elements of the seventh floor. Sometimes, such as Soviet affairs, it was shared with Helmut Sonnenfeldt, the Counselor, who was Kissinger's closest collaborator on the issue. The Deputy Secretary was rarely provided sensitive message; he was generally assigned general management oversight duties. Sisco and the NEA Bureau got Arab-Israeli material -- and so forth. So this whole issue of the control of information became a very refined art. Lo and behold, if anybody made a mistake, Jerry Bremer who was then Kissinger's assistant, would come down and in no uncertain terms there was a certain amount of drubbing that would take place when the esteemed secretary was unhappy with a certain distribution. Sometimes unhappy even with the distribution that had already been arranged by his office. But this was not necessarily distribution on need

to know, this was a distribution based on who the secretary wanted to know. And of course this was not only distribution to individuals and departments, but do you distribute to the White House something that Kissinger didn't want. It put people on the watch in an awkward position in terms of possessing information that a regional bureau responsible for that issue was cut out or included and not another. Soviet affairs, the Mid East and Vietnam and disarmament were generally the most sensitive areas.

Q: This was pretty well what I was going to ask you if during your tour in the operations center whether senior officials had certain requirements and certain needs, and I think that you have answered that very well. Was the operations center also responsible for preparing a sort of morning briefing papers or other things that senior officials were supposed to read regularly?

KUCHEL: Yes, the morning secure briefing was made for the principals, and so we had watch officers during the night draft summaries of the most critical cables or most interesting cables that would prepare Department principals for potential events of the day or fast breaking developments. So I think that was regarded generally as a fairly useful exercise at that time. When people came in, they had on their desk a morning summary which was a compilation of the fast breaking news that was reported from embassies or other sources of information, even news broadcasts. The operations center is also responsible for alerting various parts of the department about important incoming news, including the functional bureaus. It could be something that would affect only the consular bureau, like a hurricane or civil unrest or so on. Of course this was a 24-7 activity, so you often got people out of bed to come in. Because of the classified nature of much of the work, people would often have to drive in from their homes, take a look at the message, and deal with it. Judgments had to be made as to the need for alerts -- daytime, weekends, and at night. There was no margin for error, and the staff of the Op Center really represented some of our best people in our service

Q: You mentioned that working in the operations center, this is a time that was fairly stressful. Was Tom Pickering before you or after you?

KUCHEL: I am not sure when Tom Pickering was working with Secretary Kissinger, but I don't remember him being there during my time. Those working in the Secretariat, from the Executive Secretary to the secretaries working on the line in S/S had to be great performers during Kissinger's time. Much was demanded of them, and the Executive Secretary and his Deputies (I sometimes filled in for them for evening duty) often had the responsibility of telling Assistant Secretaries that their bureau's memo or cable had to be fixed and retyped (this was before word processing!) which meant that a whole lot of people at all levels in the building worked very long hours. There were times when they had to sort of stand around waiting while the Secretary of State was having dinner before returning to his work. You couldn't just leave. It was a high stress environment. People assigned to the "S" area were carefully vetted by the personnel system on the recommendations of people around, Harry Barnes and others. The people who came in on my watch there during that time, a great percentage went on to brilliant careers in the

foreign service. I am thinking of people who worked for me as junior officers, John Wolf who later went on to really top jobs in the foreign service and as ambassador, Chuck Redmond, all kinds of people like that were in the op center at that time and went on to S/S and went on to other jobs on the seventh floor, got the attention of principals and therefore got a big lift in their careers. Despite the unattractiveness of 24/7 shift work, at that time a job in the op center was regarded as “career enhancing.” Not that everybody came out well, but most people, it was extraordinary, that group of people who were there at that time, so many of them became leaders in our service.

Q: Okay, and you yourself after two years of arduous service in the operations center, what came next for you?

KUCHEL: Well, I bid on a political section job in Rome. Under the direction of the Political Counselor, Alan Ford, it had three reporting officer positions. The position I took required following the trials and tribulations of the ruling party, the Christian Democrats. We had another officer there who followed the communists (Marty Wenick) and another who did the socialists, all parties and small, so-called lay parties (Fred Spotts). Another officer, Kathy Shirley, had the multilateral work which focused on business with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, there was a POL/MIL section, two officers, handling NATO affairs and base issues in Italy.

Q: You were interested in getting a job in Rome.

KUCHEL: I was interested in Rome and Italy. My mother was Italian. I felt this was a dream assignment. You know many people felt that after being director of the op center I should have really looked for something more career enhancing and stayed in the Washington environment. Economic issues were also getting more relevant in our family as the three children were growing older. I think that one was always well treated with foreign service salaries, but there were times when you were living not exactly on the edge but not exactly comfortably.

Q: No, but the foreign service is not that well treated and particularly when you had children in school, it is much better to be abroad and have the children in school in Washington than to be there.

KUCHEL: We felt that going overseas would give us a little bit of a financial lift at a period that if you recall the early '70s was a time of the great inflation caused by the energy crisis and the like. So whatever little savings you had were wiped out at that time. Not that we didn't face economic challenges. Before going out to Rome, we had gotten the usual loan from the Credit Union, but finances were really tight. We couldn't afford a new car, so I bought a very old Opel station wagon from a departing officer, hopefully to last us a few months. Instead we had that lumbering car for three years until it dropped an axle, my poor wife alone at the wheel, blocking a narrow Roman street and creating one of the loudest and most notable traffic jams, even for a city like Rome. Marianne's Italian tennis friends called that car “il camione.” -- the truck. In Rome, we took a

wonderfully located apartment near the Coliseum. But Italian custom was that the renter was responsible for installing the kitchen, washing facilities, even the light fixtures. We were broke for a long time! But we loved it. I had always considered that a political section job in Rome would be terrific both for me and for my family. But I suppose if you are one of those people who like to construct an ambitious career, it was probably not exactly that. The personnel system itself fought the assignment tooth and nail, because the embassy in Rome liked to pick their own candidates, and they had a candidate for the job. So they decided that anyone who hadn't had Italian at FSI couldn't possibly be assigned to a job in Rome which was a language-designated position.

Q: This is tape three, side B of our interview with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. He has now sought and succeeded in gaining an assignment to the American embassy in Rome. Roland, what were you doing in Rome?

KUCHEL: As an O-4 political officer. I was responsible for following the embassy's relations with the leading party, the Christian Democrats, the Catholic party. It was a very unusual party, one more of personalities and power groupings that defied traditional political analysis of formal party positions. The party had run Italy, under the USG's close watch, since the end of WW II on the simple basis of Catholicism, anti-communism, and close relations with the US and the NATO Alliance. I didn't have any particular preparation for this. As I mentioned the embassy was against my assignment. They felt that I hadn't served in Italy before, so therefore how could I know anything about the political situation.

Q: It seems to me that you were sort of coming into this assignment with one or two strikes against you. Were you able to sort of overcome gradually the opposition of the embassy to your assignment?

KUCHEL: Yes. I arrived in July 1976/ Alan Ford was the political counselor, a really wonderful gentleman, and very knowledgeable about Italy. But he was one of those who felt that you just couldn't take someone in the political section who had not previously served in Italy. So the first thing he did when he saw me come in to the office was to throw the morning Corriere della Sera at me and said, "The Christian Democrats have had this big convention in Rimini or Bologna," or something like that. "Here, write a report. The department needs this right away." I said, "OK, if that is the way it is going to be." I read the paper, and I went through the file, and I came up with a political analysis piece on the Christian Democrats' meeting.

Q: How could you read the paper when the paper is in Italian?

KUCHEL: I had pretty good Italian. My mother was Italian, and I could read and follow Italian. I soon became one of the most fluent officers in the Embassy and always accompanied Ambassador Gardiner as the reporting officer on all his meetings with Christian Democrat leaders and ministers.

Q: Oh you had Italian. The embassy didn't know that.

KUCHEL: The embassy knew that, but they felt it wasn't good enough because most Italian Americans often say they speak Italian, but it often is insufficient to conduct business in it. So the Embassy was dubious that my profession of knowing Italian wasn't really accurate. So before going out, I was required to take a test because it was a language designated position. I went over to FSI, and the Italian language group was very hesitant to say that I could speak Italian because they felt that if they hadn't instructed me, they didn't really feel that I would have the level of proficiency that they felt was required. So I remember taking the test there with a very nice lady, but she just was determined to find out you the level of my proficiency. We had a long conversation about politics, about this, about that. She finally looked around the room and found something rather obscure in the way of vocabulary to see if I might come up with the thing. She pointed to the doorknob and said, "How do you say doorknob in Italian?" Somehow I came up with "la maniglia", and I passed the test.

Q: Good for you. Okay, so you are still sort of facing an uphill battle in gaining acceptance by the senior officers there.

KUCHEL: It didn't last long. They were a really good group. I remained a good friend with Allen Ford to this day. We had the best group of officers there, Kathy Shirley, Martin Wenick, and Walt Silva, who was the political military counselor. Fred Spots, who later left the service, became a first rate historian, publishing several important works on Germany and France during the Nazi period. It was a really fine group. We formed close professional and friendship ties.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KUCHEL: The ambassador when I first arrived was the outgoing ambassador from the Nixon administration, John Volpe, a Republican and former Governor of Massachusetts. Dick Gardner came in during the first days of the Carter administration. A Professor of international relations at Columbia, he worked with Brzezinski during the Carter campaign and was very disappointed not to be appointed Secretary of State or UN Ambassador.

Q: Okay, so here you are in a major American embassy with a large staff and a very sophisticated operation, and you are responsible for reporting on Italian domestic political affairs, and in particular the Catholic party. Can you give us some insights on how a political officer goes about his job in this kind of more sophisticated set up?

KUCHEL: Well, the problem at that time in terms of U.S.-Italian relations was the issue of whether the Italian communist party was sufficiently independent of Moscow that it could be brought into an Italian government. The communists (PCI) were the second largest political party and under the "Euro-communist, Enrico Berlinguer, it adopted an Italian face and de-emphasized its continuing ties with the USSR. There were elements in

the Catholic party that some kind of a “Historic Compromise” could work out, allowing the Communists to join the government, thereby forcing them to behave democratically. Aldo Moro was the Christian Democrat factional leader most associated with the Historic Compromise idea which was anathema to long-standing US policy. Moro came up with the mind-boggling term of “parallel convergencies” to explain how the Catholic and Communist parties could enter into political cooperation. The Christian Democratic party was not a monolithic but was composed of some eight or nine different factions, each led by a political leader. So the Christian Democratic Party was a difficult animal to follow. It didn’t have any similarity to any European party. Many people think the only thing similar was to Japanese political parties where you have these different *corenti* or different groups who have their own adherents.

Q: But the same party had been in power for years.

KUCHEL: They had been in power since De Gasperi after the second world war, but it went through a variety of guises. You had Fanfani first being a man of the Christian left and then becoming an arch conservative and so forth. So a Christian democratic group or faction could shift to the left or to the right depending on the internal alliances and political payoffs that it wanted to adopt at a particular time. Following the Christian Democratic party was a challenge but a rather critical one for an understanding of the main partner we had in Italy, as a NATO country and an important element in the European economy.

Q: Did your Italian become sufficient for example, after you had been at the embassy for awhile, for you to be able to let’s say invite congressmen or whatever they are in Italy for lunch and talk with them about Italian domestic political issues over a good plate of pasta?

KUCHEL: Oh yes. In fact, street work was quintessentially the work of the political section. The main contacts were different deputies as they were called, and senators in the Christian Democratic Party, because that was the party I was following. Seeing them for lunch was about the only way you could get hold of them, because in Rome (unlike Milan in the industrial north) the political day started very late, around 11:00, and they would fuss around a bit in the parliament, and then go out for lunch. After a long lunch they would sleep. Then they would work until eight or nine or ten o’clock. If you would invite them for dinner they would show up perhaps around 8:30, perhaps not at all. The best time to get them was at lunch. This made for very long days in the embassy because even though the Italian work day didn’t really start until after ten, that was not the opening hour of the American embassy, and so we started on American hours at eight in the morning and went through lunch, went through the siesta period, and just when things were sort of finishing off for most of the people in the embassy around four or five o’clock, that was then most of the politicians would come back and you could telephone them and talk to them. So I went through a period where I often didn’t see my children. I would come back at eight or nine o’clock after finishing. I also was the person who would go with the ambassador, Dick Gardner or the DCM or political counselor and be the note

taker and the interpreter as needed on any visit to any Christian Democratic leader. So since the Christian Democrats controlled the government, the president as well as the head of the party or the heads of these powerful different elements within the Christian Democratic party, if the ambassador wanted to contact them, they would look on the political section first for that.

Q: I am interested because I had a friend who worked in the American embassy in Madrid, and they sort of faced the same problem with not much going on in the morning, and lunch and then siesta. I think there, the American embassy actually adjusted its hours to the prevailing Spanish custom. It would open around ten and go until one and close until four, and then be open again, or at least the internal part of the embassy, not the consular section or the administrative section but the substantive sections would be open again until eight. What were some of the chief issues both in Italian domestic politics and in Italian relations with the United States? Did you get into that, or was there another officer that was covering NATO?

KUCHEL: Yes, that was the political-military section. But of course in our conversations with Christian Democrats that was one of the main topics in addition to the usual the role of the communists in the Italian government. But certainly basing issues, and the issue of the deployment of, what was that missile called?

Q: Sixth fleet.

KUCHEL: Not sixth fleet, but do you remember all of Europe was turned upside down by our interest in placing nuclear short range warheads in Europe. All of a sudden I can't think of a name for that big squabble, but it was in full bloom when I was there. We were trying to get acceptance of that policy.

Q: That was in your bailiwick or was that NATO?

KUCHEL: The military/security side was not my primary responsibility, but one had to further that in our discussions with Italian politicians, journalists and opinion-makers.

Q: Were you, for example, responsible for drafting that portion of the WEEKA that deals with Italian domestic politics?

KUCHEL: We didn't do a WEEKA, but reporting and analytical pieces. Our main interest was again the issue of the "historic compromise" that the communists were proposing as Euro-Communists, allegedly independent of Moscow. Up until that time, the Christian Democrats said that communists were to be excluded from government, that there would be no possibility of a coalition with the communists. So Italian coalitions in government were always center right or Christian Democratic governments with the participation of some of the minor parties, the republican, the liberals, and on occasion the socialists. Now during that time, the Italian political leader of one of the important factions was Aldo Moro. He was the proponent, perhaps tactical, of bringing the

communists into government. This from Kissinger's time on, and you will recall Kissinger's effort to keep the communists out of the Portuguese government, the Italian government, the French government. This was the major thrust of American foreign policy not to let the communists into the soft underbelly of Europe. Dick Gardner initially came out to Italy with the idea that this policy should be modified, that it was no longer critical in Italy because the Italian communist party had evolved in the view of many. Gardner had convinced many people in the Carter administration but never got Brzezinski's support for it. Still Gardner at first persisted. The Embassy's Country Team, including the DCM Bob Beaudry, but especially Jock Shirley, head of the USIS at the time, and Political Counselor Alan Ford, were proponents of keeping the communists out. So the first couple of years when we were there, '76-'78, Dick Gardner's initial years in Rome, there was a constant political battle going on in the embassy in which different elements were pointing out every lousy thing the communists did to give ammunition to the argument that it is very dangerous to bring communists in to the government. It manifested itself most critically on the issue as to whether the ambassador or anybody else who had a high rank in the embassy should have any contact with a member of the Italian communist party. Up until that time it was de rigueur that they were kept at arms length. Opponents felt that if a high-ranking Embassy officer had normal contacts with the PCI, the door would be open for the Christian Democrats who were playing with the idea of entering into a coalition with them. The only person in the embassy who had contact, formal contact with members of the communist party was my colleague who was the officer in the political section responsible for following the communist party. So whenever the ambassador had a message he wanted to circulate and make sure that Berlinguer, the PCI leader, and others knew, it went through Marty Wenick, the officer responsible for relations with and following the communist party. Dick Gardner thought this ought to change. The communist party had changed. It was an important force in Italian politics. It had the majority in many Italian regions. Why should U.S. contacts be limited? This was a long standing debate. If you look at Dick Gardner's memoirs of this period, you will see very little about this debate because Gardner later became fully committed to the idea that it was erroneous and it would not serve US interests to bring the communists into government. This evolution took place in the first couple of years of his tenure in Rome. The latter Gardner would argue very strongly that he was one of the strongest proponents to keep the communists out of government, and it was through his efforts that Italy remained on an even keel during that time.

Q: So this was a change on Gardner's part over his tour. How did the agency, the CIA people in Rome feel about bringing the communists in?

KUCHEL: The agency in Rome was extremely large. Both the embassy and the station itself had a long history of direct involvement in Italian affairs. Italy was rather unique in Europe in terms of the involvement of personalities and parties and agencies in essentially Italian domestic affairs. It was in many ways the legacy of our post-war posture in Italy, especially as the Cold War began, when the Communist party emerged as the strongest political party. It wasn't just a one sided thing. The Italians looked to Americans for leadership and for involvement. The station was enormous. Just those who were given

cover assignments at the political section must have numbered 12 or 14. They were, I think, committed to a strong position of assisting non-communist forces, certainly the station chief and his deputy, who generally attended the Ambassador's staff meetings. They knew Italy. They had people who had worked in Italy for a long time.

Q: I suppose also the defense attaches would not be too enthusiastic about this.

KUCHEL: That is true. The issue really came to a head and broke with the kidnapping of Aldo Moro during this period. I feel one of the interesting things on the job was going to so many of these meetings with the ambassador with Moro, with Fanfani, with Andreotti, with all the leaders of post war Italy, and having the insights that that kind of exposure gave you. We saw Moro so many times in his office, and then to think of what happened with the Red Brigade's targeting him, this leftist terrorist organization, targeting him because he was the leading proponent of opening to the communists. They saw that if the Christian Democrats and the communists got together in government, that would be to the detriment of the left. So they attacked the communists by assassinating Moro. And they left his bullet-ridden body in the trunk of a car parked half-way between the Christian Democrat and Communist party headquarters.

Q: That is the way the issue...

KUCHEL: We also had kidnappings by the Red Brigade during that time of the American military commander of the base at Vicenza. He escaped with his life. So there was a lot of turmoil. In politics, a lot of street turmoil, demonstrations, unrest. Many Christian Democrat politicians were "knee-capped," shot in the legs by radical elements. It was a fascinating time in terms of Italian political developments. Our relations with Italy evolved as well.

Q: Good morning. It is now September 5, and this is Nick Heyniger. We are interviewing Ambassador Roland Kuchel in the Howe Library at Hanover, New Hampshire. Ambassador Kuchel has just finished a four year assignment at the American embassy in Rome. Roland, what happened next?

KUCHEL: Next I went to Budapest as DCM to Harry Bergold, three years there, '80-'83. Hungary was a very interesting post in the Warsaw Pact at that time. Perhaps coming out of the Hungarian revolution experience, the Hungarian attitude toward market economic issues was one of a greater opening, a greater relaxation, therefore was of great interest to us. It also then became a great listening post to what was going on in the Warsaw Pact because we began to develop very good contacts in the Hungarian party, including the politburo and central committee.

Q: Okay, so for researchers and journalists or others, maybe just a word of explanation. You are now what is called in the foreign service a DCM or deputy chief of mission,

number two to the ambassador who was...

KUCHEL: Harry Bergold was a career officer who developed the coloration as being close to the Republican part after serving Secretary of Energy (and later Defense Secretary) Schlesinger on a detail to the Department of Energy for international affairs. He followed Schlesinger along at different points in his career. A very bright individual, very able person. We had an excellent working relationship. He did a lot of travel to other Eastern countries, to foreign affairs conferences in Western Europe. I had a lot of Chargé d'Affaires time.

Q: And perhaps just a word about what does a DCM do in an embassy?

KUCHEL: Oh a DCM has a variety of duties. In one sense it is to act in place of the ambassador when he or she is not on post. One does not traditionally depart from those policies that the ambassador sets down but it is to be an articulator of what the ambassador seeks in that particular country. The DCM is also responsible for the day to day operational issues in an embassy: coordination, making sure that the various elements of the embassy work harmoniously together in a productive and effective way. The DCM needs to be loyal to the Ambassador (unless serious issues arise, be they of policy or moral behavior), but also one who can be frank on differences, policy and management.

Q: Yes sort of I would say putting it in my own words, the DCM runs the embassy while the ambassador is Mr. or Mrs. America to the host country. No in Budapest, what sort of issues did you find yourself, what was the embassy particularly focused on during this period from 1980 to 1983 in Hungary? (Later note by R. Kuchel: This is sometimes the case of a really poor ambassador who is interested more in society than the job. Harry Bergold was an intelligent practitioner of diplomacy and foreign affairs, fully engaged in analytical and policy issues in Hungary.).

KUCHEL: We were looking primarily at the Hungarian communist party and to what extent it could deviate from the Soviets on a variety of areas particularly the economic area, opening up to western business, market opportunities, and market economics, playing with that. There was all through this period an argument among people who worked in east European affairs as to the advisability of how useful it would be to try to wean east Europeans off the traditional communist set up. Many people thought that by building certain bridges, by having contacts, by increasing the number of parliamentary or congressional exchanges, artistic exchanges, and so forth, building a variety of contacts, that you would eventually soften the communist system to the extent that with these contacts you would dilute the most aggressive aspects of Soviet style communism. On the other hand, particularly at that time with the Reagan administration coming in, there were many who took the opposite view and felt that you were just allowing various countries, various totalitarian states to remain in power by in effect giving them the possibility of arguing to the people that conditions were improving. You therefore lessened the possibility of internal revolt, the internal demands for change by allowing the regimes to open up the faucet just a bit, but not really enough to make true systemic changes. Many

of those people felt that a harder line of less contact was better. So during this time and for a variety of times throughout our relations with Warsaw Pact Eastern Europe, this was a constant internal policy debate.

Q: So Roland, you got there just at the time of an American national election and the change from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. Did your instructions from Washington as to what Washington wanted you to do, did they change significantly from 1980 to 1981?

KUCHEL: I don't think so, not initially. I think the Reagan administration's policy toward Eastern Europe and toward the Soviet Union evolved. In the beginning it really didn't do much to change the ongoing policy positions on disarmament issues or economic and cultural relations with the East bloc. But over a period of time I think that one did notice and one did confront a growing view, I think led by Weinberger over at Defense and Casey at CIA which put into place a much harder line, less give in the relationship. I don't think affected us tremendously in Hungary, because Hungary was of interest to them. It gave them a place to operate with both the intelligence community and other areas. So you didn't feel it that much in the embassy. But if you were in say, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia or Romania at the time, there was a noticeable cooling on our relationship in that period that reflected this change in administration.

Q: So can we take it then that during your period as DCM the embassy continued to try to do what it could to wean the Hungarian government to some extent away from Moscow and the Soviet bloc?

KUCHEL: Yes, I think so. We began to develop very good contacts in the central committee. The ambassador had very long and good discussions with Kadar.

Q: Who was the prime minister?

KUCHEL: The prime minister at the time, well Kadar was the leader of the party, and of course the power was in the party. The prime minister I am trying to think is it Horvath or who was there at the time. He was not a significant figure. The real power was in the party. You had the party secretariat member who was responsible for international relations and military relations, Gyula Horn. The ambassador and I succeeded, I think, in developing a very good working relationship with him. He came to the ambassador's house frequently. He came to my house for functions. We had lots of very good discussions on disarmament and other issues that both he and we were terribly interested in. I mention this because Gyula Horn later became extremely important in the final days of the Warsaw Pact system. He became prime minister of Hungary at a time when the East Germans began to spill over into Hungary, and took the very important decision of allowing that to happen, thereby causing the unraveling of the Honecker East German regime, and ultimately the collapse of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact system under Gorbachev. A very courageous effort, and later on played a continuing role in the politics of post communist Hungary. But we began to develop that contact at that time.

Q: How about economic relations, Roland? Were we trying to increase American exports to Hungary? Were we trying to help American businessmen to do business in Hungary?

KUCHEL: Yes, of course. We were trying to expand the kinds of relationships that would exist in that area as well as related areas such as university exchanges and particularly with market economics and economic studies. I would say our success in that area was pretty limited, largely due to export controls. Nonetheless, the Hungarians were interested and showed a keen awareness of what was going on outside of the system. I think they became models for Czechs, for Poles and so on to come to Hungary and look how things were done and how they could be done differently in terms of making a more efficient, market-oriented economic system. "Goulash Communism" became very interesting to Western political leaders. Maggie Thatcher visited Budapest's great central market. The market was a regular stop for CODELs coming to Hungary.

Q: How about cultural life and cultural exchanges? Were you able to increase travel by Hungarian artists and other cultural people and vice versa while you were there?

KUCHEL: Well to a limited extent. This still was a pretty hard time. The average Hungarian could not get a passport to travel outside the country. Those Hungarians that did have passports generally were on an approved list, so even in cultural exchanges there was a lot of control. It was still a pretty harsh internal set up. In fact, the Hungarians used to joke that Hungary was the nicest concentration camp in the bloc. They knew what was going on.

Q: Can we talk for just a minute about internal embassy work. You are now the DCM so you were responsible for supervising and coordinating the work of other agencies, other American agencies in Hungary. Did you have any problems or were there any significant things going on with other departments of the American government in Budapest?

KUCHEL: Well in Budapest at that time the embassy was still a pretty traditional, small east European embassy. Now you have an AID, you have Peace Corps, you have all kinds of things in eastern Europe. At that time these things weren't possible, and therefore our embassy was organized in a fairly traditional mode of having a defense attaché group which is basically an intelligence operation, the station, USIA, and the State Department. We had regional attaches come in from Vienna for agricultural issues, civil aviation and other regional issues.

Q: But no American agencies sort of wandering off the reservation or giving the ambassador trouble in terms...

KUCHEL: No. In fact, that was probably really one of the best embassies I have ever served in, in terms of everybody kicking in and working together. We had really an excellent staff, wonderful political and economic sections, good people in them. This was you know one political officer, one economic officer, one commercial officer. We also had a very effective administrative section. We are talking a small embassy and one that

is fairly easy to manage even in a very closed society. John Tefft was a middle-grade political officer there. He was wonderful and went on to a distinguished ambassadorial career in the area.

Q: As the DCM you were responsible for writing efficiency reports for practically everybody in the embassy. Any particular personnel problems; any difficult staff situations that you recall?

KUCHEL: Well there were some but nothing of any great importance.

Q: OK, anything else that you would like to add in the way of personal experiences with Hungarians? Did you have a chance to travel much?

KUCHEL: Oh yeah. The country is small, and we traveled a great deal. We began to have the possibility of tennis with Hungarians, of organizing picnics and the like. My wife Marianne was an excellent tennis player. That provided her an interesting experience of playing team tennis for the Electrical Workers tennis team, the only foreigner. They went to matches around the country and even to party organized retreats on Lake Balaton. The Ambassador and Security approved -- and this unusual experience worked because Marianne kept it at a low profile. An eye-opener on a very nice group of ordinary Hungarian women. Even if many of our Hungarian contacts were in controlled situations, but there was a beginning of increasing contacts. There was a very rich cultural life in Budapest, music and theater. The only hang-up for most Americans assigned there was the dread Hungarian language which even those who studied at FSI for a year, it was a hard, one of the most difficult languages that I ever encountered. As I had a direct transfer from Rome to Budapest, I never had formal Hungarian language training. The Hungarians knew that few foreigners could conduct business in Hungarian, so our interlocutors all spoke English, German or French.

Q: While you were there, did you still have to get permission from the foreign ministry to travel outside of Budapest?

KUCHEL: No, all travel restrictions had been removed. You were followed, obviously, but no longer did you have to seek permission for travel outside the capital. The first time I visited Hungary was when I was in Romania back in the early '70s. At that time Cardinal Mindszenty was still in the embassy, living in the Ambassador's office since the '56 Hungarian Revolution. Travel by American diplomatic staff in Hungary was severely controlled. Permission had to be obtained if you left Budapest. If you left the country, you had to apply for a visa that dictated exactly which day you were to enter and which place and day and time you were going to leave the country.

Q: Okay, that pretty much covers it for Hungary?

KUCHEL: I think so. Thereafter, Nick, we went back to the Department. I was asked by...

Q: So in 1983 you were reassigned from Budapest to the department?

KUCHEL: Right.

Q: And where did they put you?

KUCHEL: Mark Palmer was deputy assistant secretary for European affairs, responsible for the Soviet and East European offices. He asked me to come back and be one of the deputies in the east European office under Dick Combs. I should say that the office was very pointedly named EE/Y, the Office of East European and Yugoslav Affairs. This was at the insistence of Larry Eagleburger, a great proponent of non-Bloc Yugoslavia since his early days (with Kennan?). He made his reputation for his initiative in dealing with the earthquake in Macedonia. He was always affectionately called “Larry of Macedonia” after that.

Q: Well, now we should have a lot to talk about because EUR is the prestige bureau in the Department of State, always has been. What was it like in EUR?

KUCHEL: Life in EUR during that time was somewhat bizarre. It was headed by a schedule C political appointment. Rick Burt was the assistant secretary for European affairs. He was young and dynamic and intelligent, but also ambitious and self centered and at times downright difficult. Burt had a Schedule C Political Advisor, Richard Haas, who had a strong academic background and a first-class mind. Haas later made a distinguished career himself in foreign affairs.

Q: Not a career officer?

KUCHEL: The one thing about Rick Burt was it was very hard to figure out whether he had any driving interest in his job. He had a very fine ear for what the White House and the NSC and other people in the Reagan administration establishment wanted to see happen. In that sense he certainly was a very effective articulator of the Reagan administration’s policies. George Shultz was the Secretary at the time, more or less left EUR and Burt alone unless there were issues that were really broad and the Secretary wanted to get involved in it. So you had in Burt a bureau that I felt often lacked a certain vision of its policy, of what it wanted to do. Burt, for example, could sometimes say the Bulgarians are swine; what do we have to do with them? You know. This initiative that you are proposing, Kuchel, is nonsense, and he would sort of, with a swipe of the hand dispose of your carefully argued options paper. On the other hand, without any rhyme or reason he would be convinced that now is the time to visit Bulgaria. In fact, Mark Palmer and I took him out there to Bulgaria, and we had a visit that was the first of any at the assistant secretary level, I think in many years. So it was very hard to read the direction that he wanted to take the bureau. He was assisted, however, by some very able people. John Kelly was the principal deputy. Jim Dobbins was another deputy. I mentioned Mark Palmer. Some of these people almost felt that they had to sort of chum up and amuse Burt

in order to survive in that atmosphere. You went to staff meetings, and there was always a clown for the day who was picked out on the table for either humiliation or laughed up. The atmosphere in the bureau at the time was as I said, somewhat strange. But, as always, EUR had very good people and produced good work.

Q: So if there was not much focus or direction from the assistant secretary in a way, that gives more scope for the office directors such as yourself to perhaps pursue your own ideas. Did you have a chance to do this? Did you have some latitude policy wise?

KUCHEL: It would be erroneous to say that Burt was a hands-off leader. He made it clear that he would provide EUR's leadership. I would only say that he did not show a particular vision. There was latitude, but as I say, I don't think it was a tremendous amount because Burt's primary focus seemed to be let's not go into areas that people elsewhere in the administration didn't want us to do. So it was a limiting kind of tension in the atmosphere, reflective of the Reagan NSC, CIA and DOD, rather than I would say a more creative or constructive view of possibilities. It did allow Mark Palmer, I think, the latitude to argue one should and could do certain things in eastern Europe. Mark was both clever and active in looking for possibilities and arguing the case. There had to be a lot of maneuvering. Mark also developed a good relationship with Ron Lauder who had the international affairs job at DOD -- a relationship that served Mark well following his ambassadorship in Hungary.

Q: Tape four, side A of our interview with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. We are talking about the policy direction and or sometimes the lack of policy direction and energy in the European affairs bureau of the Department of State from 1983 to 1986. Roland, this is very interesting because the State Department as a bureaucracy is frequently accused by outsiders of being sort of steady as she goes, don't rock the boat, don't suggest anything new or different because it might be difficult. What you are telling us on the contrary is that in this situation, under the Reagan administration and George Shultz that the European bureau really, the senior levels, the political levels of the bureau didn't seem to have much of an agenda and didn't seem to have a great deal of drive. Would that be a fair assessment?

KUCHEL: No, that is quite overstated. Well, maybe not a clear agenda, I think Burt was extremely energetic and articulate. I wouldn't want to say that would be an accurate description of the thing. I think he reflected the division that was particularly pronounced in the Reagan administration on foreign policy issues. You had at that time people over in defense, centered around Cap Weinberger, people over at CIA around Casey, people in the NSC that were very aggressive on the contra and other issues, so you had a lot of ferment going on. I think the amount of I would say lack of a particular vision in EUR at that time probably reflected a certain amount of tea leaf reading that was going on in terms of the political side. George Shultz was also a master, I think, of trying to pick the important battles. You couldn't fight everything. But he was resolute on certain issues, such as the proposal to require lie detector tests at the Department. He really went all out and defended the department. One other issues, some of the East European issues, from

my vantage point I was very disappointed that the secretary didn't want to take them on. Now I realize that from his vantage point, the secretary certainly had to pass on certain ones rather than fight on them, relatively unessential issues such as treatment of Bulgaria, in order to win the big ones and the important ones. I had a tremendous respect for him; I think Secretary Shultz was one of the finest secretaries of state we have had in the post war period, one who navigated around many of these issues. It reminds me again of the current administration, the division that you find in the second Bush administration from the harder line perpetrated by or promulgated by people in Defense versus those perhaps in State, the secretary. An example from my time was CIA Director Casey's manipulation of the intelligence to make the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul by a mental case Turk who had spent time in Bulgaria the result of a Warsaw Pact plot. Casey found this was a very juicy way to win propaganda points for America, to get the Agency to doctor its intelligence, so that the very minimal evidence that this Turk could have acted as a Bulgarian agent, was put out as a solid case. As a result, due to the great popularity of the Pope, a Polish Pope coming out of the Solidarnosc -Jaruzelski era Poland, that this would be an important way of sticking it to the commies. This intelligence montage put our initiatives with Bulgaria in the deep freeze. Not all that vital, certainly, but contrary to our formal policy of "differentiation" in Eastern Europe We sent memoranda forward to clarify this issue but never succeeded. Shultz did not counter this. He thought this was not an essential battle and let it go.

Q: I would like to ask you, you are now a senior officer in the service. You are an office director.

KUCHEL: My last year and a half. I moved from the deputy director position to the director.

Q: Tell us something about the joys and the sorrows of being an office director in a very important bureau in the Department of State. What are some of the really enjoyable aspects of the job, and what are some of the sort of tougher and more tedious things that need to be done by an office director.

KUCHEL: Well, personally I found the joy was in working on an area that I loved. I mean I had developed intense interest in east Europeans and that part of the world, and working on those issues at a time when it was extremely important for those developments. I mentioned before Solidarnosc, Jaruzelski, the whole issue of how we dealt with Poland after the clampdown there, the impact of that on other countries of eastern Europe and U.S. policy toward eastern Europe. The possibility of going out and speaking to groups on eastern Europe. I went down to Florida; I went to various places. I think as an office director you can begin to speak for the department consistent with the department policy, and that gives you a lot of satisfaction. Traveling with the secretary to eastern Europe, organizing that trip. We got him into the visit of the three B's, Budapest, Bucharest, Belgrade, you know things like that were just the kinds of things that as an office director you would be involved in and could take a lead in. The downside I think of the office director position is that even though it appears to be somewhat exalted on paper, there are

layers and layers that are still above you, and there are enormous detail issues, Congressional inquiries, clearances that keep you in the office until eight or nine at night just to make sure that the paper that needed to go up to the secretary could finally make it. You don't leave until all is essentially done in your office. It is extremely grueling in terms of the demands on your professional and personal life.

Q: One of the reasons, Roland, I asked that question is because I had an opportunity to interview another retired foreign service officer, a friend of mine at graduate school in Princeton who was a deputy office director in EUR. He told me frankly that he thought it was one of the dullest jobs that he ever had, partially because a great deal of the work consisted of constantly updating the briefing book for CODELs and other people that were traveling to the area. There was not a great deal of scope for individual initiative and achievement in terms of personal satisfaction, that there was always this sort of constant coordination and making sure that the ducks were all in a row. Was that your experience?

KUCHEL: Well, certainly there is a tremendous amount of office work coordination, getting the desks to operate, getting the potential questions for the press briefing worked out before eight o'clock in the morning. So you started real early; you finished real late, and there was always some of that kind of donkey work going on. But I think a lot depended, at least in my experience and my particular situation, there was a great scope also for creative policy work. We did put together and had the opportunity to organize a number of initiatives on eastern Europe in the economic area.

Q: Can you remember a specific example?

KUCHEL: Most of them having to do with how we would deal with the issue of Jaruzelski, relations with Poland, to what extent can we move that ahead, working with the Congress. We had a tremendous amount of contacts in Congress because Polish-Americans were vociferous on that issue. It was a very important domestic issue as well as a foreign affairs issue. So there was a lot that was going on that would extend your grey matter I think.

Q: Did you have any during your tour in EUR, did you have any battles with the Pentagon or the CIA or the Department of Commerce or any internal battles in the department with other bureaus?

KUCHEL: I think that it is just not possible to have a job in the department without having this kind of thing come up. With Commerce, there was a very active and helpful deputy assistant secretary, Frank Vargas, over there who dealt with eastern Europe and the Soviet Union who was really more open to opening up possibilities and relationships, so we found a very strong ally in arguing for the keeping doors open as it were, to some of the countries, even if they were baddies in the way they ran their regimes. We had a good deal of conflict with people at the Pentagon at that time, and with the agency. Not with working level agency, but the policy level agency. I mentioned some of those issues.

There was simply a desire to manipulate intelligence, and on those issues it was an unpleasant kind of conflict.

Q: Before we leave EUR, I would like to ask you about one more thing. You are now an office director with several desk officers working for you. In my time in the foreign service, I had an opportunity both to be a desk officer and also to work as a staff officer in the army staff in the Pentagon. As a desk officer, I often found life frustrating because of the clearance procedure and the need to go around the department and get the clearances on an outgoing cable, and sort of the endless opportunities for holding things up because people didn't agree with the substance and wanted to change it. I found my service in the army staff by contrast, very interesting because a military staff has a definite procedure for handling this. If you as a desk officer are having trouble getting clearances from other parts of the army staff or with other branches of the military service, your paper is taken away from you and delivered to a group of colonels who sit down and resolve the issue. There are certain definite time constraints. If the Army chief of Staff needs a paper by noon on Thursday, he is going to get the paper by noon on Thursday, and it is going to be cleared whether people have to stay up all night or people have to stop the infighting. Could you talk just for a minute about your feelings about the way the State Department operates and about this entire business about getting an agreed American policy.

KUCHEL: I guess as Kissinger said, we should not look too closely at how diplomacy is made, it was like making sausages, sort of disagreeable. I don't know. I think we had a functioning process in the State Department centered in the Secretariat in terms of tasking and assuring that papers that are needed for a particular time period are done on time. I think that State worked on shorter timelines than DOD. I think people in the department are terribly disciplined, willing to stay up very late to make sure that their job was done. I think we continued to have people that really put everything out to make that happen. I don't know about the analogy that you were describing over at defense, but every organization is different. I think we are a small organization, and therefore, I would think it was still important that the people who are your experts on a particular subject, whether it is Romanian immigration or something like that, really do carry that issue forward because they know the ins and outs of it. Sometimes they need the help of an office director or somebody like that to step in and overcome a barrier somewhere, but that I think, is by ratcheting up in terms of authority. But otherwise, I think it works. It just is not a very pretty process -- and it often involved a lot of clearances from interested offices, but also retyping documents and cables well after formal closing hours simply to accommodate small fixes or insert a different adjective.

Q: You didn't have a lot of experiences as an office director of having desk officers come to you and say sir, I am trying to get this cable out to my embassy, but the economic bureau won't clear it. That didn't happen to you?

KUCHEL: Oh yes it happens too often. But that doesn't mean that you don't, you know, get it resolved.

Q: I think perhaps my own experience was I'm a little too sensitive about this because I was a desk officer in the African bureau. My turf was the Portuguese territories at a time when they were not independent. Therefore, anything that I wanted or the African bureau wanted to send out had to be cleared by EUR because Angola and Mozambique at that time were actually part of Portugal overseas. There were just endless struggles between the two bureaus as to what American policy should be. Well, let's move on from that.

KUCHEL: Let me just mention one thing. At the end of this period, Roz Ridgeway came in to replace Rick Burt as assistant secretary for European affairs. Burt went on to Germany as Ambassador to Bonn. I just wanted to mention that perhaps of all the people that I worked for in the foreign service, I have never perhaps found anyone that I could admire more than Roz Ridgeway in terms of her capacity, her attention to policy, and the insistence that she drummed down in everybody who worked in the EUR bureau, that you do not write anything, you do not say anything, you don't present any option without making sure that it meets the test that this is something that is going to advance U.S. interests. Her focusing, as I say, her laser like attention to this, was something that I learned, I valued very much, and I have never forgotten. So often the department ends up making recommendations because we somehow feel that this is good for relations. This is going to improve relations with Togo or Japan. And of course, it is vaguely in the U.S. interest that this happens because better relationships will improve our interests. That was not good enough for Roz Ridgeway. She really wanted to know if you are proposing something. Is this consistent; is this in the U.S. national interest. She was a wonderful exemplary leader of the department in terms of the operational aspect, operational leadership of EUR at the time. But she also was a tremendously focused policy leader, and I have the greatest respect for her.

Q: This is very interesting because we are talking about Roz Ridgeway who was one of the first women in our era to become a senior officer and to have a really distinguished career in what was then still a fairly male dominated environment.

KUCHEL: Very much a male-directed institution.

Q: So tell us a little bit more. Can you give us an instance or so where you saw Roz Ridgeway focusing like a laser on actions which would advance American policy interests in Europe. She was the senior deputy assistant secretary?

KUCHEL: No, she was assistant secretary. She replaced Rick Burt.

Q: Okay.

KUCHEL: I worked for her for about a year. There was just not a paper that went out that basically it would come back with circles around it if there were something vague or unclear. She was skeptical that our policy on Romania which was critical of growing human rights abuses but still called for keeping doors open was no longer valid. It was

becoming increasingly clear that Ceausescu and his wife Elena were becoming loathsome dictators, rejected by even those in the Communist Bloc. Roz was skeptical that some of the last ditch initiatives we were proposing were valid and would work. She put this constantly to the test. She really did pull us up by our socks, and question the same old, same old kind of thinking. It was a valuable lesson for me and others in EUR.

With Mark Palmer, we nonetheless got Roz's support to have the Secretary go to Bucharest on a portion of a European trip that we called the three "Bs" (Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest) in order to make one last effort with Ceausescu. It was a disaster. Ceausescu was as intransigent as ever. The mood of people I had known in Romania was dark and gloomy. The Secretary's visit was the last high-level US visit ever made to Ceausescu's Romania. (Roz, herself, did not go on the East European portion of the trip).

The stop in Budapest went very well, as expected. The visit to Belgrade started out very badly. The Yugoslavs had announced that they had arrested noted dissident Djilas just hours before the Secretary's plane landed. Mark and I huddled with the Secretary and agreed that Shultz had to make some statement condemning the arrest. Once on the ground, the Secretary got in Ambassador Jack Scanlon's car. Scanlon argued forcefully that mentioning Djilas would ruin the visit and our objectives. The Secretary would have none of it. Scanlon turned to me afterwards, saying we were making a big mistake. The visit went on; the Secretary made his point. No relationship was ruined, except probably Scanlon's.

Q: Do you have any insights or guesstimates as to how she got the job? Who was Secretary of State?

KUCHEL: George Shultz.

Q: Was he trying to advance women in the service, or was it the director general perhaps, who wanted to see her?

KUCHEL: I don't have any particular information on that, but I would think George Shultz supported her. She got along famously, and the director general must have been also supportive. She had come back to EUR from a very successful tour as ambassador to Finland, and used that position there to great advantage by making Helsinki and the CSCE process a really a focal point of a lot of East-West negotiations and the like. She certainly must have gotten a lot of high level attention for her intelligence and her efficiency and her effectiveness.

While on the subject of work in EE/Y, I should also mention an initiative originated in Counselor Derwinski's office (C) to resolve the decades-old impasse of entering into diplomatic relations with hermetic and pro-Chinese Albania. This dealt with our refusal to return Albanian gold-reserves which had been sent to the US for safekeeping when Mussolini invaded Albania. With US support, the British would not agree to the return of

the gold until they were indemnified for the Albanian sinking of UK naval vessels after the communist takeover. With a rep from "C" and Legal and EUR's approval, I was designated part of the 3 person team to hold Albanian gold talks in Paris (there were at least 3 meetings). The Albanians would not meet with the US directly, so the British Foreign Office head for Eastern Europe, my counterpart (and former UK DCM in Budapest when I was DCM there) John Birch, conducted the talks based on agreed US-UK conditions. All very quietly done -- it never made the press -- but it ultimately never yielded results either.

Q: Okay, it is now 1986, and you have been in EUR for three years. What is next?

KUCHEL: In '86, the possibility arose of going out to Belgrade as DCM. Jack Scanlon was going out to Belgrade, and I was the director for Eastern Europe. He had asked a number of people to come out, and for one reason or another they couldn't do it. I thought about this for a short time, and felt that although Jack was extremely stable and knowledgeable about Yugoslav affairs, I didn't think I could work with him well as DCM. He was an ambassador that wanted to hand pick everybody in his embassy down to the GSO. And given his proclivity to view his views as unchallengeable, I didn't think I could do a good or happy job there as DCM.

Q: This wasn't Warren Zimmerman?

KUCHEL: No, Warren Zimmerman was an utterly different sort of person. Scanlon's leadership style was intense micro management. I foresaw a good deal of unhappiness if I were to go to Belgrade with Jack. In many respects, I think back and say perhaps I should have accepted it because Yugoslavia continues to be and was a focal point of U.S. policy interests, and the ensuing developments there made Yugoslavia and the disintegration of Yugoslavia a central foreign policy issue in the central point in the '90s. There was a great demand then for officers with Yugoslav experience.

Q: You had been a DCM in Eastern Europe already.

KUCHEL: Belgrade was a very large post, and in career terms it could have been a very good step. But I just felt I couldn't work well and be happy there. I chose instead to go out to Stockholm as DCM even though there were few policy issues or challenges in friendly, neutral Sweden. I worked for a very kind man, Greg Newell, who was a political appointee under the Reagan administration. He had previously been on Reagan's campaign team. Before going out to Sweden, he had been assistant secretary for IO, the youngest assistant secretary in the department's history, I believe. Although my wife had been born in Sweden, she was not pining for the assignment as one might have thought. I guess, looking at the options, there was simply a feeling again that we had three children in college, and of the various choices and possibilities then, this was maybe the best option. In retrospect, I have to say that my time in Sweden was extremely pleasant. It was wonderful. I loved the Swedes. I loved the Swedish life. We rented a little summerhouse, a "stuga." The workload at the embassy was so office like in nature, a neutral country

with no major policy issues, such as NATO issues, that we were able to get away every Friday evening for mushroom and lingonberry picking out in the country, and come back well rested Sunday evenings like most Swedes. We had a very pleasant four-year tour there, but in professional terms it was the most unchallenging places I have ever been assigned.

Q: You mentioned earlier that you had worked in the department for Roz Ridgeway, and that she had been ambassador to Finland, and that she had done an excellent job in that post. What is different about Sweden from Finland? It is an extremely well known country. There are hundreds of thousands of people of Swedish extraction living in the states. So it is an important country, but unlike Finland, there were no really serious American policy problems with Sweden because it is a neutral country?

KUCHEL: Well Finland was also neutral, but Finland was a neutral country that had to operate under the very heavy shadow of the Soviet Union until the USSR collapsed. Therefore, Helsinki was an important listening post throughout the cold war. The Finns themselves were extremely knowledgeable in relationships with the Soviets and other peoples in the Baltic. They found that if they took the lead at the UN and many of the international relations issues and CSCE issues, they could play a helpful intermediary role. Roz Ridgeway headed our mission there when Finland played this role, hosting the CSCE conference. Stockholm often hosted similar conferences. We had an important disarmament conference in Stockholm while I was there. Bob Barry was the ambassador to that. Our relationship with Sweden was extremely close in terms of family ties, cultural events, economic and commercial relations. But in terms of working with the Swedes politically, there still was the overhang of the very bad experience that the two countries had over the Vietnam issue. Olaf Palme was still the prime minister, assassinated on a Stockholm street just before I got there. Then one of his close but less ideological associates, Ingmar Karlsson, took over. There began a warming of the relationship at the political level once Olaf Palme was no longer on the scene. I'm not saying anything derogatory of Olaf Palme in those post-Vietnam years, but he simply had a negative reputation in the U.S. that cast a shadow on our relationship. I think that the embassy in Sweden was run professionally. I think we did a good job in terms of our mission. But we rarely got into issues that were really of critical importance in the U.S. foreign policy realm.

Q: I'd just like to ask you briefly, years ago Sweden was sort of known popularly as the third way between flat out capitalism on the one hand and flat out communism on the other hand. While you were DCM in Stockholm, were there times when the Swedish government was pushing at all for the United States to adopt somewhat more sort of welfare capitalism policies particularly in the economic area or that was not part of Swedish foreign policy?

KUCHEL: No. There has always been an interest, mostly academic, in the Swedish political/industrial/labor arrangement. Swedes, being from a small country, are proud of their achievements, international interest and attention. But the Swedes would never

argue that the rest of the world ought to follow their lead. They were extremely active and extremely committed, as most of the Scandinavian countries are, toward multilateral institutions, to seeking international solutions and peaceful solutions to world problems. So that aspect of Swedish foreign policy continues to be an important one for Swedes today. You mentioned “the middle way.” This was the book that Marquis Childs wrote in the ‘30s on Sweden. There is much in Sweden that is of great interest to Americans in terms of economic and social and labor organizations. I found it interesting to look at, while I was there, what was not working. Swedes began to find a lot wrong with the system. As the economic engine that had propelled Swedish prosperity during the ‘60s and ‘70s and allowed Swedes to adopt ever greater extensions of social welfare, social benefits, university education and the like began to falter. They began to have pressures on the budget to maintain this very high level of social services. The social democrats themselves began to get into political trouble because there was a growing opposition in the population over the tax burdens that were required to finance this historic way, this welfare system. At the same time, with ever increasing costs, the quality of medical care, education, and the like, was eroding. This kind of development at the end of the ‘80s and into the ‘90s in Sweden brought the end of 46 straight years of social democratic rule and the emergence of the first time of a conservative coalition government. This was welfare state Sweden in transition. We had close contacts throughout the Swedish political scene and especially with the Conservatives -- during the Reagan presidency -- in the new government.

Q: One of the things that a lot of people, ideas that they have about them, about Sweden and about other Scandinavian countries is number one is that people with a lot of drive and initiative want to leave because they feel that they are overtaxed by the system on the one hand, and on the other hand that perhaps this middle way tends to lead to the creation of sort of welfare loafers, people who don't really want to work and don't want to have a job and are happy to just live a life on the social welfare system. Did those characteristics strike you while you were there?

KUCHEL: Yes. I think that is probably a little broadly stated, Nick. There are people in our country and people there that sort of loaf through, but that is a very broad and inaccurately generalization. I would say that there are a lot of people that simply take advantage of the laws and the regulations and so forth as they are, and so you find a lot of people retiring at age 50 with full benefits. Not many societies continue to do that without paying a certain price. What you saw there was a degradation of social services because government revenues couldn't keep up with growing costs. That caused a certain social issues. As far as the issue of taxation and so on, yes, there are always a group of Swedes that will go to Monte Carlo and the United States to access the more hospitable tax structure. But more importantly I think, the Swedes were wrestling with problem that this kind of a welfare society often cuts initiative in terms of entrepreneurial risk taking, business development. The Swedes tried to set up their own kind of silicon valleys around universities, but they had a very hard time because the regulatory climate was such that most people who really wanted to join an entrepreneurial group to develop new technology and so on, still found it easier to go off to the United States or Canada and put

those ideas into practice rather than to stay home. So they lost a lot of drive and intellectual material; there was a certain amount of brain drain going on. I think that right now it is probable Sweden and other countries in that part of the world have found ways to offer or to meet some of these issues, but that was particularly a problem during the time we were in Sweden.

Q: Anything else, Roland, that you think researchers would be interested in knowing about Sweden in the period?

KUCHEL: I don't think so.

Q: All right, so we are now at 1990, and you have been a DCM for the second time for four years. What does the department have in mind for you now, and what did you have in mind for yourself?

KUCHEL: Well I was coming to the point as a senior officer who needed to look around be realistic about my options. I had been promoted to the senior foreign service relatively early. This, in effect, ultimately worked to my disadvantage because the Foreign Service adopted a regulation that limited a senior officer to 15 years of service unless one received a presidential appointment or other position requiring Congressional advice and consent. After the end of the Cold War, the Department regarded its senior cadres as top-heavy. It sought to reduce their number through early or forced retirement. So I was beginning to look at what would be a graceful topping off of my career, happy as I was with the variety of things I had a chance to do in my professional life. I saw this job opening up as consul general in Milan, going back to Italy, taking charge of an important consulate general in a vibrant economic and commercial center, and I thought that running that and then perhaps looking at post-retirement possibilities there would be a satisfying conclusion to a very good career in the foreign service. However, Personnel unhappily advised that another candidate was going to get the job and, moreover, I was overqualified for the position. A nice way of saying, sorry, I guess. I was asked instead to come back to the department and become the head of senior personnel training, assignments and career development. The career development part of that was sort of a joke, but the assignment part was very much part of the job. It was the first time I served in a functional, non-geographic bureau. Personnel at that time was headed by Ed Perkins as director general. It was a period that the department was buffeted by all kinds of lawsuits to correct practices of our Service in the past. Class action lawsuits on behalf of women officers who had been denied possibilities for career advancement or career possibilities as well as a black officer's lawsuit. This required us to change our basic entry level examination process. This required us to look at the promotion system and find ways to meet grievances that women and minority officers had not given a fair shake in the promotion process. Awards had to be made to provide such officers assignments that would be career enhancing, and in fact in some cases promotions that were made to redress the situation. This was a rather interesting and sometimes not terribly fulfilling function of essentially applying the principles of affirmative action to the foreign service personnel system.

Q: Yes, I had a chance myself to serve in personnel for a couple of years. I found it very interesting from the point of view that in any organization, it is the people that really that make the machine go and the question of on the one hand, putting the right people in the right job to keep the machine functioning effectively is a challenge, and on the other side dealing with people and encouraging them and encouraging their careers and trying to have them feel that they are having a fulfilling and successful career in the service, on the other hand, is a huge challenge in personnel. It is one that takes place every week. I used to go into the panel which I...

This is tape four B with our interview with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. He is now head of senior officers and senior assignments in the department of personnel. I was just remarking that I found my tour in personnel and particularly the assignment process one of the most traumatic and challenging periods in my career because there are really some major stresses and strains in getting the right person in the right job and having that person reasonably be happy with the assignment. Perhaps you could talk a little bit about some of your experiences there, particularly with senior officers, lots of whom want to become ambassadors and few of whom are going to make it.

KUCHEL: That's right. I found, as you said, the chance to work in personnel just fascinating and exciting in many ways, and also very hard because you are dealing with your own people. You are dealing with people who have aspirations, who have at that point put in 25 or 30 years of their lives dedicated faithful service to this organization. You have got to explain to some of them the facts of life, that their career is basically over or that a posting that they are eminently qualified for is going to go to somebody else for reasons that are often not clear or readily explainable.

Q: Or for political reasons.

KUCHEL: Or for political reasons. Or sometimes for simply personal reasons. Those are the more difficult ones. You had situations of very talented qualified people, and you are privy to an understanding that the assistant secretary or the deputy secretary or the secretary or some other element will not work with that individual. Finding a way to be sensitive we to fellow officers -- I mean it isn't very helpful to go and say John, you are not going to get a job in EUR because so and so will not have you. There are sometimes people you can say that to, and I have had that kind of conversation. There are others that the situation, I think that kind of a thing could be so hurtful and so damaging that you have to find other ways to put it across or find other solutions that might be appropriate. I think that was one of the odd things about working in personnel that people could be perhaps denied the possibility of going to a logical assignment, but if you found good alternatives, the human being has such resilience I guess that people often considered that they had been well served. I think that the chance of making that system work to the extent that I could, that flawed and imperfect system, one that recognizes that we are all human beings. We have our likes and our dislikes. It was worse I think, when we had to deal with individuals who were really marvelous people but couldn't get the assignment

they wished. It was sometimes just as difficult to tell people who had created a record of havoc because of their own limitations or their own personality issues that were well known. They became hard to place or difficult to place. So you had similar kinds of difficulties in finding suitable places for people who had in many ways not measured up, and so you had a tremendous variety of people and jobs and the negotiating requirement at the senior level proposing candidates to the bureaus or the jobs or to embassies, working out their relationships with those bureaus so that if you said so and so is going to be a candidate, see if we could make that prevail. We didn't always win, but I think that during the time I was in senior assignments I really take this with a lot of pride, that many of the people who somehow got onto the wrong side of a particular bureau, we were able to get those people assigned jobs for which they were well qualified.

Q: Well, I agree with you. I think that being in charge of senior assignments in the foreign service must be one of the most challenging jobs around. Of course this is true for all organizations. In the army there are only so many generals who are going to be commanding general of the big red one or the first cavalry division, and in business there are only so many executives that are going to be CEO's. That is understood, and I think it is understood in the foreign service as well. The point that I am particularly interested in is that in the last few years, the question of morale and esprit de corps in the senior service of the foreign service has become more and more difficult, and looking back, do you feel that that situation was getting better or getting worse, that senior officers many senior officers who had had very good careers and had very good service records and reputations just were not getting the chance at the top jobs and that morale was being affected in the senior service?

KUCHEL: I guess morale is always being affected in our service, but that was particularly difficult time for senior officers, and I suppose throughout the system, but particularly senior officers. I mentioned the fact that we had adopted a senior threshold test that people who didn't pass that senior threshold test at the 0-1 level had to retire or leave the service, so that was the kind of tension that caused individuals to try to psych out the system. They were told one year you had to have experience as a DCM, and so all kinds of officers that never should be a DCM who couldn't manage anything felt they had to get managerial experience. We had disarmament experts who really had a lot to offer in their field but felt they had to opt for assignment as DCM for an obscure African post, managing what, you know, a small little program, when their talents should have been used elsewhere. So there was the flavor of the day in terms of the kinds of jobs people felt were career enhancing. That distorted the system. There was the fact that I mentioned before that the department quite correctly had to change its attitude toward women and minority officers and had to find a way to redress those grievances that were well founded, and had to find a way to increase recruitment of women and minorities so that we had a more balanced body of personnel, one that more reflected the diversity of our country. So all those things were going on, but as a result of the need to sort of follow the new precepts of years in grade, the famous "tics", time in service or whatever that affected both the regular 0-1 level as well as the senior grades, time in service. There were many officers that paid the price for the department's own weaknesses in previous

years. In other words because women were not promoted, we therefore had to go all out to find positions that women officers, those few women officers that reached the senior level could be promoted to or could be assigned to. At one point every consul general in France, four or five, were all women. So you began to wonder what kind of thing were we trying to promote here. Were we trying to tell the French this was a female job? This kind of attempt to redress the system meant that there were a lot of qualified male officers who wouldn't get France at that kind of a job. They themselves, were not responsible for the fact that the department hadn't dealt with its women officers fairly and equitably, and yet they paid a certain price during the end of the '80s and the '90s in order to redress the larger shortcoming that the department had inflicted on itself.

Q: I think you put your finger on it. In the '30s and '40s and '50s, we all came in as male officers and expected to have careers leading up to senior level, and then in the 1970s and 1980s, outside social and political pressures forced the department in effect to change its entire personnel system and many senior officers suffered for that. Anything else? Did you work for example, with Al Lukens in personnel?

KUCHEL: I know Al Lukens, but he was not in personnel at the time. He was in inspection corps and then retired. Ed Perkins was an excellent person to work with, and I think he gave personnel a good deal of strength being the first black Director General. A very imposing gentleman. When he therefore would argue, no, we are going to assign this officer to this post, it made it somewhat more difficult for some of the people at the bureaus to say you can't do that. So they had a good deal of moral authority that he brought to the job. That helped, I think, enhance personnel's possibilities for assigning the right people.

Q: Did you have a rather good director general to work for? Ed Perkins was the director general.

KUCHEL: He was the director general, yes. He was succeeded by Genta Hawkins who was equally dynamic and dedicated to improving career system. So I worked for two directors general, both very different but in their own way dedicated and effective.

Q: I worked for Carol Laise who was I suppose the first woman to be director general of the foreign service possibly. OK it is 1993. You have been in personnel for three years and being in personnel, you should have somewhat a leg up on future assignments. What happens now?

KUCHEL: You are right. One of my functions was creation of the ambassadorial list, people who would be considered for ambassadorial vacancies and coordinating that with the White House Liaison office on the certain number of posts which were going to be open for political appointment. Certain other posts would be open for career choices. So we all worked to supply the career information and the candidates for the deputy secretary's committee, the so-called D committee to make ambassadorial nominations to the White House. The rather cynical aspect of this was putting qualified career officers up

for posts which were already designated for political appointees. We had to ask each candidate if he or she would serve if appointed. Most realized that being offered Madrid or Lisbon was a farce, but some less realistic officers thought the offers were realistic, becoming disappointed with the results. I couldn't tell them they were not part of the White House deal. That was a key element of my work, as well as working up each year's list of people to be considered for the senior seminar which again was a very important step in a senior career. With the White House and NSC increasingly absorbed by the crisis of the day -- whatever got on the front page of the New York Times, the DG's office was often called upon to come up with career candidates for White House nomination to ambassadorial positions for crisis issues. This would give the political world and public that the White House was on top of things, "doing something" about a problem that defied immediate solutions. It became a habit in both Republican and Democrat administrations to name more and more ambassadors for special assignments to take the political heat off the White House. The knowledge that I had built up of the senior officer cadres time and again proved useful in coming up with candidates that fulfilled these special requirements.

I was the beneficiary of very kind attention by my superiors in the director general's office. They nominated me for an ambassadorial assignment. I was selected for Haiti when Ed Perkins was still serving as the DG. Haiti was a post often made available to a French speaking officer with EUR experience -- not a language that ARA folk routinely had and sort of compensation for difficulty of EUR officers in getting ambassadorial posts on their home ground, given the demand for most EUR posts by the White House. I had to wait a year in Washington for this, and therefore I spent another year working with the director general on a variety of assignments. I took Haitian Creole lessons at FSI, prepared for Haiti, made calls on the Hill. My wife was invited with other nominee wives to tea at the White House with Barbara Bush. She was very charming. When Mrs. Bush asked Marianne where her husband had been appointed, she amusingly said, "What did he do wrong?" Now, all this was taking place at the end of the Bush Administration. Haiti, because of the increasingly irascible radical leader Aristide, had become a front-page political issue -- not really suited, in view of the political firestorm in the run-up to the November 1961 elections, for a first-time ambassador. The progressive wing of the Clinton campaign was close to Aristide. Senator Jesse Helms on the Foreign Relations Committee was against doing anything that could be seen as dignifying Aristide. This left me in limbo. The ARA Bureau was not supportive since I was a Personnel candidate and not a Bureau choice. I spent the fall waiting to see if Haiti would be included in hearings schedules. It was touch and go, but finally the Foreign Relations Committee made it known that they would not act on a nomination to Haiti. This was particularly hard on my wife, who had given up a job she enjoyed and did well as the FSI course coordinator for personnel assigned to communist countries. This also had later consequences, leaving her several "quarters" short to qualify for Social Security due to the difficulty of her FS generation in being allowed employment and later finding employment while at FS posts.

When Clinton was elected, the situation in Haiti had become even more difficult, but the Clinton people felt they had to honor their commitment to Black American leaders to

recognize the legitimacy of Aristide's election. The new Director General, Genta Hawkins, told me that Port-au-Prince was not on. She did not have to honor the earlier ambassadorial nomination commitment, but she did. There were two AF posts coming up that I might consider -- the Seychelles and Zambia. The Seychelles often went to a non-AF hand Europeanist with some AF experience (Sam Gammon, for instance) as it was close to being an island paradise, but had importance to Africa or AF interests. Genta tried to convince me that IO would love it; quite clearly the AF Bureau preferred that option, but Zambia appeared to me to be a real diplomatic job. Under Chiluba, the country had just emerged on an encouraging democratic path, with the help of former President Carter, by having a peaceful transition from Zambia's founding father, Kaunda, to the newly elected leader. Genta kindly let me get away with Lusaka, even though it caused heartburn certainly among the AF stalwarts. The post would open for another year, however.

The DG asked me to assist the White House Clinton Transition team for the State Department which was headed by a very likable and equitable man, William Atwood (who later was named to head AID in the first Clinton administration). Genta Hawkins saw that it was important to be responsive to the Transition team's needs in order to influence the selection of good people on the political side (Schedule C) and preserve good positions for career officers. I actually worked on White House files at the Transition team office in the Old Executive Office Building for three weeks before someone pulled me out on short notice, recognizing that it was not appropriate for either side -- the career service or the Transition office -- to have an FSO evaluate political candidates in terms of their background and suitability for particular ambassadorial posts. Without a doubt, however, my personnel and job requirement knowledge was appreciated not only by Atwood but also to the overall transition head who had me in his office to thank me for my work. They had little practical knowledge in the early days of how to assess the flood of office seekers -- the only easy ones for them were candidates who had been key to the campaign as workers or fund-raisers.

So that was another eye-opening kind of activity, seeing how the transition team of a new administration worked in terms of making high-level political nominations. Each administration has different interests in the foreign policy area. For example, Democrats seem to give much greater attention to UN and multilateral positions. One of the few FS heads of mission not permitted to fill their usual 3-year term was our career head of the US Mission to the EC (Dobbins). The competition in Republican administrations seems to be greatest for traditional Embassy diplomatic assignment

Q: These are all the so-called Schedule C positions to which administrations can legitimately name outsiders for those jobs.

KUCHEL: And I think one of the sad things that have happened to life in Washington although in the department and in the other departments as well is that we have often had a very close relationship with political appointments at top levels, various assistant secretaries or deputy secretaries or secretaries, ambassadors. But beginning I think with

the Reagan administration on, there was an attempt, a greater attempt by White House personnel to place people at a more junior level in political positions. Part of this was the ideological bent of the Reagan administration, that wanted to assure that things in the African bureau and the European bureau, the Economic bureau, that they had their people there to sort of keep tabs. They didn't quite trust. And so it was also a way of payback, providing jobs for people that had performed well for that campaign one way or another. But I find successive administrations, the Bush administration, the Clinton administration continued this process so that once you had a schedule C job appear on the list, it sort of goes down in the book as a White House job, and it is very hard once that job is ceded to get it back in successive administrations, Republican or Democrat. The erosion in this area I think has done considerable amount of harm in the Department which has become increasingly politicized. The Department's political leadership begins to rely more and more on their politically appointed staff people -- even at non-expert and junior level -- who are used as in-house political operatives, rather than the accumulated skill and knowledge of professionals.

Q: You put your finger on a very important and very sensitive issue because in earlier days there were as certain number of positions in the Department of State, and as ambassadors overseas as there were in every other department of government, Department of Commerce or Labor or whatever that were designated as schedule C positions. But that issue had been decided and it was clearly the top positions at the senior levels whether it was in the State Department or the Pentagon or the Department of Labor. And what you are saying is over the past ten or fifteen years, there has been an attempt to increase the number of schedule C jobs or at least there has been an increasing attempt to put political appointees into jobs which had not previously been schedule C jobs. That is very significant.

KUCHEL: It particularly took the form of a requirement that each bureau would have a political deputy assistant secretary. It was the political requirement that was sort of formed at the end of the '80s, early '90s. So even if you had a politically appointed assistant secretary, he or she could still have a political deputy in addition to two or three deputies that might be there from the senior foreign service. So you really had an elimination of some 25 or 30 senior jobs by just that one requirement. That has an impact of course, on a small service where you already have a hard time finding suitable senior jobs.

Q: Okay, so it is 1993, and you are now, you have been selected as an ambassador. That must have been something of a thrill for you.

KUCHEL: It was and it was wonderful. I had simply expected to retire, as I said before, after a wonderful career. I knew that without strong regional bureau support, only few officers receive ambassadorial assignments from functional bureaus. And my senior officer clock was ticking. Yet I had been selected to go to a country that in many ways had a good deal of interest. I think that people in AF were not terribly happy with the fact that someone didn't come out of their bureau to take that job.

Q: Someone out of their bureau.

KUCHEL: I had been in AF for nine years. But that was some time ago.

Q: Okay, so you arrive with Marianne and I guess no children at that time in Lusaka in 1993. What do you find when you get there?

KUCHEL: I found a small embassy that was I think correctly focused on the main policy issues that we had there. These issues were centered on seeing if we could further the process of multiparty democracy and market economic reforms. We also had a strong AID program centered on public health. And after I got there, Peace Corps arrived for the first time (Kaunda mistrusted the PC and never permitted it to operate in Zambia during his tenure). Two years before, president Kanda agreed to step down after his opponent, Frederick Chiluba was elected president in a democratic election. Jimmy Carter was out there helping to assist that process. And the so-called movement for multiparty democracy was taking off.

Q: Jimmy Carter was getting active in Zambia?

KUCHEL: Oh yes.

Q: Do you remember what part of Zambia?

KUCHEL: The Carter Foundation was very active in furthering the democratic process with election monitoring and democratic transitions. He was there as head of an election monitoring team. He was instrumental in getting Kaunda to accept the democratic verdict of the elections and to step down after some 20 years of power, maybe more. There was a good deal of hope and promise that various African countries would take the step toward peaceful, democratic leadership transitions. Zambia looked like one of the countries that might make it in terms of adherence to democracy, parliamentary rule, and to the custom that a president not necessarily be considered president for life. It justly attracted a good deal of attention for that achievement.

Q: Just to get this straight. When you got there Kenneth Kaunda was still...

KUCHEL: No, the election had taken place in 1992, and the new president Chiluba was in office. I think one of our primary functions, or at least one of our things was to try to find ways in which we could strengthen adherence to the democratic process and values. Secondly we were terribly interested in if we could further the economic wellbeing of the country which was grossly in debt following years of corruption and "African Socialism;" large state enterprises, particularly the copper mines. Kaunda had left the place in complete economic chaos. Almost all the businesses and economic activity centered primarily on copper and agriculture -- many sectors had been taken over by the government, run into the ground. They were unproductive, they were uneconomic.

Different entities, Zambia Airways had two airplanes but about a payroll of 10,000 people. One of the first symbolic successes of the Western (and essentially US-led) IMF Zambia donors group was getting agreement to shut down the government airline (an African essential that normally went with national independence); later a private airline took to the air. Working as a lead figure (given US influence in the IMF) in the group of major “donor” countries, we worked with the IMF on conditions that were designed to foster market-oriented economic reforms. These efforts included reduction of government workforce, privatization of bloated government entities, and anti-corruption practices. This was our primary task with AID, the IMF’s Zambia rep (Hendrick van der Heijden) and others. By the way, Kaunda had always refused to have a Peace Corps contingent. After Chiluba’s election, we signed our first PC agreement with Zambia, and the first contingents began to arrive soon after my arrival.

Q: This is really fascinating stuff because Zambia here is sort of a microcosm of the problems of the developing world in a number of continents. Now for example, you as ambassador, was there sort of a coordinating committee in Lusaka of donor countries and United Nations agencies and the World Bank and the IMF that got together and met in Lusaka to talk about how do we help the Zambian government to get to a better place?

KUCHEL: Yes. It was something that I inherited. It was a system that was put into place when Chiluba was elected. I would say that we and the Brits were the lead embassies in terms of economic assistance efforts and in terms of taking leadership of this informal donors group which included all of the major donors to Zambian development with the exception of the Irish. The Irish felt that they didn’t want to be part of an effort that could be construed by the Zambians as a pressure group which indeed we were. But the Swedes and others who were major donors in Zambia were all part of this group and worked with the representatives of the IMF, the World Bank, as well as other financial advisors. We met on a regular basis at least once a week to share notes and programs. It was a very coordinated effort. The Zambians, we met with Zambians once a year in the “Paris group” for discussions on debt reduction and economic reforms. This was also a group that often went up to Paris to assist the delegation in their work. I attended meetings with my Lusaka counterparts in Paris and Bournemouth, England. The Zambian side was headed by a very able Finance Minister, a frequent interlocutor and by no means a pushover for the donor group.

Q: OK. Tell us a bit about what you feel were some of the successes and some of the not so successful work that you and the embassy and the donor nations were doing in Zambia.

KUCHEL: Well I guess in Africa it is very difficult to pull off a lot of successes, and Zambia is no exception. I think that looking at the condition of Zambia today, years after I left the post, one could say that at least unlike Zimbabwe and some of the neighbors, things are not in great shape, but they are not in horrible shape either. It is a country that has never had severe tribal or ethnic issues that divided it. The problems of Zambia are inherently the lack of resources and development, but with a certain amount of luck and

good intentions perhaps they could come to make it. That made it extremely interesting to work hard on those issues. At the same time Zambia was one of the countries that was severely affected with public health issues, HIV Aids, malaria. Many of our programs were directed at the health issues, some of them at agricultural development, others at education. Then because we wanted to support and strengthen emerging democratic elements, we had a number of programs to strengthen democratic institutions and enhance the role of women in social, economic and political life. We tried to retrain and support a stronger judiciary. Quite clearly a stronger judiciary could serve as a counterweight to presidential power. The Chief Justice was a strong ally in these efforts. I worked closely with him.

During the period I was in Zambia I had frequent easy access to the president, used to meet him alone over at the State House for long chats, a couple of hours. I continued to push basically for adherence to his democratic promises. But by the time I got there, soon thereafter, this was like two years to three years in power, Chiluba the man who came out of the trade union movement, who was once imprisoned in for his political agitation, began to eliminate the various people in his cabinet and his government that he found threatening to his power or in the way of his increasing taste for money. So the very able ministers, in particular, Finance, Trade and Agriculture, all got the axe. Various capable people that had founded with Chiluba the Movement for Parliamentary Democracy and then displaced Kaunda in a free election, were sidelined. They were replaced by a new group of corrupt and often ignorant hacks. Others, like Ben Mwila, the corrupt Defense Minister and reputed cousin of Chiluba, remained securely in power. So over the course of time what started out as a very hopeful development began to become unfortunately a road toward ever enhanced presidential power, the elimination of many of the more capable officers in key ministries that we needed to work with. Their replacement with toadies, friends of the president who offered nothing in terms of economic or technical expertise and became really obstacles to much of the work we were trying to do in the economic and political area. On the health side, unlike the example of Uganda which really seized the HIV aids issue as one that required presidential leadership and authority, getting the people of the country to pay attention to it, to change behavior to deal with it, to set up services to deal with that issue. This was not the case in Zambia although we had a very extensive HIV aids program. It had very little support from the government at large, largely because Chiluba himself had become a born-again Christian during his prison days listening to radio sermons by an evangelical out of Ohio, and had become convinced that HIV aids was caused by the lack of Christian faith rather than an illness. So there too, my efforts in talking to Chiluba, the efforts of other people in the country team to work out these issues were impeded by a growing undemocratic behavior in the state house, and less and less cooperation in many of our programs.

All of this culminated towards the end of my tour in perhaps the one issue that attracted interest in Washington. That was Chiluba's attempt to change the constitution of the country so that he could run for a second term. The constitution had been changed at his insistence when he came into office, at the insistence of his new emerging democratic party in terms of guaranteeing that Zambia would no longer ever have to have 20 or 30

years of one man rule. The new Constitution stipulated that the president would have a four year term and then have to step down and allow that office to be open to somebody else. Well, Chiluba changed the constitution with the majority of his toadies in parliament much to the dismay of a great many Zambians and also of the donor community. They saw this as a slippery slope going down into autocratic one man rule. The constitution was changed so that it enabled the president to run for two terms. This by itself was not the end of the world, but it was indicative of some of the trends that were going on in the political side. This was followed by an attempt to disqualify the main opposition leader from standing for election. Awkwardly, this was Kenneth Kaunda, the former president and now the leader of the second largest party in parliament. Chiluba decided that this was not to happen for reasons that I am not quite clear. I think that it had to do with African belief in the use of magical powers by their political enemies. Chiluba accordingly engineered with his party stalwarts a bill in the parliament that would declare that Kaunda was not a Zambian citizen because he had not been born within the confines of present-day Zambia. In fact, it turned out that Kaunda had been born in present-day Malawi (then Nyasaland) of Zambian-born parents who had gone there on a teaching assignment. The mischievous nonsense of this position was apparent to everyone in Zambia. I found myself in the unenviable position of arguing for Kaunda's democratic right to run in a free election as a Zambian citizen, even though doing so put me (and others) in the role of seemingly taking sides in an internal Zambian election issue. I had to voice my objections in a way that made it clear that neither I nor the USG saw Kaunda as "our" candidate -- we were simply arguing for his democratic right to run for office.

Q: Arguing with Chiluba, good for you.

KUCHEL: And publicly also in terms of speeches and other public positions that I took along with others, I was the most vociferous on this point of all the western embassies. Not because I felt that Kaunda offered anything in a way of a solution. I had frequent meetings with Kaunda, talked to him. As far as I am concerned he was a fine old gentleman, but he hadn't a clue in terms of how to run a government or an economy. But the idea that a democratic process should be messed with to eliminate somebody and declare a person who was the father of Zambian statehood, who was the head of the entire anti apartheid movement, the front line state, who played such a role in African history, and declare him a non citizen after having been president for over 25 years, was so ludicrous in terms of self serving instrumentalization of democratic system, that I felt that this had to be countered. I got Lake, Clinton's NSC Director, to stop off in Zambia to try to talk sense to Chiluba. When Deutch, the head of CIA, made an unusual visit to Africa, he came to Lusaka. I also got Deutch to take Chiluba aside and say this was something of serious consequence and would be looked at askance. I also proposed to the Department that it would be useful to have Jimmy Carter come out to see Chiluba in view of his recognized role in Chiluba's own election. But the Clinton people had no use or love for Carter, and informally let me know that was not to happen. I left Zambia just at the time the elections took place in which Kaunda was declared ineligible to run by virtue of the fact that he was allegedly not a Zambian citizen. So I left Zambia a much unhappier place in terms of our relationship with that country, which steadily went downhill thereafter.

This culminated with Chiluba himself being arrested by his successor regimes for improprieties, corruption, and the like. This of course, was another one of our issues, the growing corruption of the government, the unwillingness to proceed with the privatization of the copper industry until he and his henchmen took the major share of it, robbed it blind, made it almost valueless to be sold off, a very disgraceful end to a very promising beginning.

Q: Do you have any thoughts about, you know this has been such an endemic issue for countless American and other ambassadors and countless donor countries, and of course, the urge to get power and keep power has been by no means unique to Africa. But it seems to have been particularly prevalent there. Do you have any thoughts on what the United States or other interested donor nations can do to encourage the real functioning democracy in the African continent?

KUCHEL: Well I don't know. I think it would be demeaning to Africans to take the simple position that they have no experience with democracies; therefore, one shouldn't expect anything from them. These are people that are intelligent, quite capable. They know the structure of a democracy, have a functioning parliament, judiciary, and the like. The forms of democracy and elections and so forth are well done. We don't need to go over there and instruct them on how to run an election. The question is how to run a clean election, how to abide by the checks and balances, the rule of law, that are essential components of a functioning democratic society. And, importantly, how to improve economic, health and educational areas that are really pre-requisites for a stable, functioning democratic political system. Perhaps there we are just going to have to accept that there are going to be imperfections for some time, just as there were in our own country if you look at Washington to Jackson. A lot of the activity in our country was not exactly pretty. I think the real possibilities for taking hold of democratic behavior in Africa will come with economic development. There is such poverty. There is such lack of economic opportunity that the ability...

Q: This is side A of tape five of our interview with Ambassador Roland Kuchel. He is serving as the American ambassador to Zambia, Lusaka. We have been talking about the relative success and failure of development of democracy in the African continent. I asked Ambassador Kuchel if the prevalence of tribalism and tribal chieftains in Africa was a significant aspect of the situation.

KUCHEL: I guess I can only focus on Zambia. We tend to generalize about Africa but each country has a different situation. In Zambia, as I noted before, the tribal elements were not terribly pronounced. I think the tribal structure of the Bantu people who originally moved south to populate the area had somewhat disintegrated, so with the exception of the important tribal group in the western part of the country (the Lozi people), there were really no strong tribal associations. That said, during the Chiluba government, most of the people that had prominence did come from an area around Ndola, people from the Bemba tribe. So one couldn't say that ethnicity played no role. But they really were understated; they really weren't a major issue. I think the major

threat that really makes the democratic process so difficult in these countries as opposed to other parts of the world such as Eastern Europe, Russia, Asia is simply a question of degree. The poverty, lack of development, inadequate education, and massive health issues present challenges to democratic development that arguably the greatest in the world. Now, with HIV aids often taking the lives of various people in the civil service or the teaching staffs of schools, countries that have just finally made an effort to create the manpower needed for a takeoff of economic and social development, in Zambia and elsewhere, are paying a very heavy price for the loss of life in that area. But most of all, it is simply that once you are in power, there is still the feeling that you have to benefit from this somehow. It is just an easy slide to say, well, I need to dress better, or we need a car or my wife should establish a travel agency and get all the contracts for all the business, any ticket issued by the Zambian government is issued by my wife's agency. This is what happened to that wonderfully competent Finance Minister. Later, after I left, he was murdered in his house either by political opponents or common criminals. That slide into corruption is just too easy in a place where there is so little money going around, so corruption just sticks out in ways that would hardly be noticed in other societies.

Q: I think that in the larger sense that what you are saying is people need to have a certain level of education, and they need to have a standard of living and a quality of life that is such that they don't just have to focus on staying alive and trying to look after their families. They have the education and the background and the time to focus on things beyond their own immediate situation, and therefore an important aspect of bringing democracy is to bring education and health care and higher standard of living, whether it is Africa or elsewhere.

KUCHEL: Yes. I think ultimately this will create the conditions of a class that will demand more from politicians. Right now life is so raw; life is so brutal particularly in the urban areas in Zambia and Africa generally, but you go to Lusaka and you go into these shacks. This is rough living. People are ripping each other off, stealing from one another. There is vast unemployment, terrible health issues, people have only cursory knowledge of education. And so when they look at a political party that said support me, it means what can you do for me. What are you giving me. If that means a sack of the mealy meal, a sack of corn meal at election time, look this is not unknown in the world, but life is at such a harsh level in terms of standard of living generally that it is pretty hard to say the system can be put into place within the timeframe we set up that guards against those kinds of abuses. Sometimes I think we and other western countries in dealing with them, at least when I look back at my own experiences, it is not that I think we were incorrect to try to hold up a vision, not necessarily of Westminster parliamentary rule or American democracy, but hold up a vision of some greater need to doing something for your people, producing some results, letting some money go into education and public health rather than into the Volvos and Mercedes. I think that is our role. We have to hold feet to the fire, but we have to do it with a long term view and patience, that this is going to be a long term activity. The other thing I would say in looking back at the kinds of programs we had and successes and failures, one of the things that I look back at and now realize that unwittingly I think we caused a lot of grief and unhappiness in the agricultural sector.

The Kaunda system had really wrecked them in agriculture in the sense that there was a central purchasing agency that ripped off small farmers who had to pay a certain amount each year, supplying subsidized seed. So a dependency in agriculture was put into place. The farmer didn't plant unless he got the seeds from the government. Once he got his produce, he had to sell it back to the government at a price that often was well below the market price. People came in and made money in between. What we attempted to do, the donor community, was to put in place a reform of the agriculture sector. We tried this in Zambia and in many other countries, introducing a free market system, so that the farmer would make his choices, plant seed and obtain a price for his product that the market would bear. What we are now coming to realize from the people I have talked to subsequently working in this area in Africa as well as literature on the subject right now, is that we didn't anticipate how difficult it was to change a system in which people expected the government to provide for them, into making people responsible for providing for themselves, holding back enough seed for the next year's planting. So that in times of poor harvests or drought, they would not have enough to eat, or sell everything when the price was high, or dealing with the vagaries of the market, too much production, good rains or poor rains. This left the individual Zambian farmer in a very bad way. It also proved detrimental that hybrid corn seed was introduced to increase yields, but hybrid seed couldn't be collected for use in next year's planting. The farmer was made totally dependent on imported seed, controlled by you know whom. It became a very corrupt system, with politicians getting their cut for seed imports. So despite the best of intentions, I don't think the farmer's lot was improved by the policies that we were trying to promulgate. Often, I think our policies, introduced to strengthen a free market system, created food shortages and the need for relief assistance.

Q: Sometimes you don't get a lot of help from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or from the U.S. Congress either in terms of trying to increase Zambian production and export. People in Congress don't want that.

KUCHEL: Yes that is absolutely right. Here we were on the one hand lecturing the Zambians and other Africans on the value and importance of free trade. Open your markets, that is the way. Join the world. Join the market. Yet when they had something that they could sell to us, Zambian coffee and sugar, we closed the door. I argued. I sent back so many messages. I went back to Washington to talk to people in commerce, to people in treasury and the like, get Zambia a small part of our enormous sugar quota. I was constantly told you can't do that. Zambia is not a traditional producer. I said, "No wonder Zambia is not a traditional producer. You have never allowed it to be a producer. How do you get to be a traditional producer?" So while we were arguing you know, you have got to increase trade because it is through trade that you can finance economic development, education programs and so on, we did very little to open our markets to the very few products that Zambia could compete successfully in a free and open market.

Q: Roland, what else needs to be said about the Kuchel era in Lusaka? Everything went fairly smoothly at the embassy?

KUCHEL: I think so. I was not terribly impressed with the people I had there. Maybe it was just the luck of the draw, but maybe it is also a regret that many technically qualified younger officers don't seem to have the zest for overseas life, travel in the country. They are much more attached to their family life, certainly a good thing, but evenings watching videos don't exactly encourage greater depth of experiences in the foreign environment one is in. In my career, I have worked with so many good officers who zero in, who do good street work, who like to travel around the country, who like to meet people and find out what was going on. I found officers who would rarely leave their office, despite my encouragement.

Q: What happened to programs when you encouraged people to get out and tour around the country?

KUCHEL: Similar to Romania, divide the country into sectors and gave everybody a part. We asked them to look for up and coming young people that we could benefit from or be a candidate for educational or travel possibilities.

Q: Were people reluctant to travel?

KUCHEL: People were reluctant. I often heard that they were too busy at the time, had to get another report in, or whatever, so the planned trip was postponed. It was hard to get people to broaden their interest in the country. I really found that regrettable, despite the fact that Zambia was a country that admittedly was not easy to travel in, did not have a great highway infrastructure, places to stay were not all that comfortable or great. But this, I thought, is what interested one in joining the foreign service. I found the relative lack of interest in the staff I had there, getting out and doing what I call street work, disappointing. I kept trying to prod them, but I have to say to no avail. This was also true in USIA, also true in some elements of AID, although many on our AID staff were just all over the place, knew their subject, knew their work, terribly committed. In general I had a higher regard for the AID mission than I did for my own embassy.

Q: That is very interesting, rather unusual, but very interesting. What else needs to be said about Zambia?

KUCHEL: Well I might say before going out to Lusaka, I talked to as you normally do, a lot of people to give you pointers and help on what I should be looking out for, and what I should do in Zambia, what to look out for, what are the important issues. One of the people I talked to was Hank Cohen who had just stepped down as assistant secretary for African affairs, and has a life of commitment to Africa, continues to do so now that he has retired after being a career ambassador. I asked Hank, "You know, how could I best get support for positions and initiatives from a country like Zambia?" Hank said, "Whatever you do, don't ask Washington for direction unless you absolutely have to." I have to say this was wonderful because George Moose was assistant secretary for African affairs at that time. He and I got along very well. He came through a number of times, primarily because Lusaka was the venue during much of that time for negotiations aimed

at a peace agreement between the Angolan factions UNITA and PLA. So we had people coming in for that, but we often hosted those delegations during that time. It was an interesting element that otherwise Zambia had very little relationships with other African issues. But I often remembered what Hank said because I found that to be the case that if you didn't have issues or problems that really demanded sixth and seventh floor attention such as Rwanda, some of the issues that were going on in South Africa with Mandela and de Klerk and so on. Hey, you are in Zambia, keep yourself in realistic proportion and do your work. I found that you could lead a mission relatively autonomously without having to go back and say look at me, see what I am doing or I talked to the president today, or I am having a meeting with the president today, here are the points I intend to make. Can you clear these talking points? I found that I simply didn't get into that and felt that I never was at a loss for it.

Q: In that context and in those circumstances, one of the things that you might do is for example, shortly before I got to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, the ambassador there was a man named John Burns, really a very good ambassador whose next job after that was director general of the foreign service. He had a really good staff at the embassy at Dar es Salaam, but he was using the embassy sort of as a training ground actually training foreign service officers on how to be good foreign service officers. You know, what good foreign service officers do in the field, what kind of reports they write etc. That could have been an opportunity for you as a senior officer with 36 years experience to sort of try to encourage and motivate and train a staff for the future. But your feeling was that you had rather mixed success with that effort.

KUCHEL: I guess that is true. Coming out of personnel and having been a DCM twice, knowing the service that I did, I think that at that point of my career, recognizing the value of giving opportunities to junior officers, for mentoring, I felt all those were important aspects of my work, particularly in an African post. We had an excellent female administrative officer. She ranked third by grade after the DCM. When the DCM was off, on home leave etc., I had her take the DCM position which she performed very well. She was pleased to gain DCM management experience. I supported her bids on several DCM openings at African posts, but to our mutual regret, she was not successful. You also want to look at the whole range of issues that are contemporary. Families, it is important to provide opportunities for employment and the like, and for people to be involved in the community and activities, to include them in social events and so forth, so that anything we did at the residence would bring people into contact and so forth. We carefully included a wide section and all through the year went through to make sure that on a rotating basis everybody, the communications staff, the secretaries, members of other agencies, were included in what was going on at the embassy. So I think it really wasn't for lack of trying. I am not saying this was true of the whole embassy. There were a lot of star performers as you would expect.

Q: You have to have some material to work with before you can become the Michelangelo of the foreign service.

KUCHEL: Well I don't know. Many of these people, I am not saying they were just serving their time servers or uninterested. They were people who could do a very good piece of economic analysis, but they preferred to do it from the comfort of their work station without going out and getting the anecdotal, the other things that go in to give us a better picture of what was going on. So I think there was not a question of capability. It was a question of how people could be motivated to get out and do in terms of their own interests. So I think that anybody who works in an African post pays attention to the morale issues, to post health, post security, all of those were very important key elements of anybody that has some responsibility in that area. What I am commenting on is the lack of zest and enthusiasm to do that extra bit more that really says this guy or this lady is really should be recognized for outstanding performance.

Q: That is the luck of the draw. Well Roland, before I let you go, I have to ask you two questions. The first is you spent 36 years in the foreign service. You became a senior officer and an ambassador, so we in the first instance would be very interested in whatever you would care to say about the functioning of the Department of State, the operation of the foreign service. In other words, the professional aspect of your career. What needs to be done? What needs to be improved internally within the department and within the service?

KUCHEL: Well I think the department has had its better days and worse days. In many ways it reflects the country, what is going on in terms of social developments, changes in the work place, security issues. Look at the various things we work on now since when you and I came into the service, they were not issues we would pay attention to, terrorism, narcotics, international crime, money laundering, all of the so called trans- national issues that are added to one's plate. The department I think, is making that change and I think, making it successfully. We are a somewhat conservative institution. They are always about 10 years behind on certain developments, and that includes computerization. But I think that sometimes people say, well, the department isn't being used as it should. You know, you have got all that expertise and the administration doesn't use it. That is something bigger and sort of goes directly to the way we as Americans (as opposed to Europeans, for example) have little regard for diplomacy, and this extends throughout our political process, the lack of appropriate funding given the Department, and the reluctance of our elected leaders to look to the State Department for foreign policy advice.

Q: That is outside the purview of the department. What I am thinking of is for example, certainly when we came in, I don't know if it is the case now, but I would think so. There was the cone system. You were either a political officer or an administrative officer. As you pointed out, the foreign policy problems confronting the United States today do not fit neatly into this cone system, so we have or we need to have or should have many more specialists in multi lateral affairs, international organization affairs, environmental affairs. Do you think that the foreign service the way it is currently organized could be improved by doing away with the cone system and having a much more general approach to assignments and promotions?

KUCHEL: I guess yes and no. I think we need more and more specialists to deal with the various problems that you just outlined including economic specialists, commercial and so forth. I don't think that we have a promotion system or career development system that addresses that. In fact if you are overly specialized, you are at a disadvantage for promotion to most policy level jobs in the department. You could say, oh so and so, he really knows civil aviation, but that is about it. So we have this issue where a person might be an expert on disarmament or terrorism or whatnot, and matching those functional needs with general career development is still something we haven't resolved, and is becoming more and more acute as the department needs greater in depth specialization. I almost feel that we need to go back to the old FSR system where you had people who you liaison with the FBI on terrorism or money laundering or what not. We have these functions with these capabilities reside within our building.

Q: But they are not part of the career core foreign service.

KUCHEL: We have an antipathy in this country, and I guess it develops way back even calling ourselves diplomats. We don't use the word. And so we go out and tell people around the country that you are a foreign service officer, which causes tremendous bewilderment abroad, but even in our own country, foreign service they say. Well are you not working for the government, or which foreign government are you working for. That I find particularly as I go about my business in my life up in Vermont a complete mystification. But if you tell people you are a diplomat, that may conjure some unpleasant connotations of cocktail parties or skullduggery of some kind. But largely they understand that you worked in an embassy in a diplomatic capacity.

Q: Yeah, exactly. I find now, I used to tell people that I was in the foreign service, and there was this sort of mystified look. Is that like the French Foreign Legion. So now I just tell people that I was an American diplomat and consul. They understand that much better.

KUCHEL: I really feel that we need people who are well versed in diplomatic practice, who can negotiate, who can put forth policy options, who can be sent across the way, who do not just see a political issue or an economic issue. We are already becoming so specialized that you don't find people who are broad enough in their vision to take on some of the policy level positions in the department. So I fear that going so far in that direction is going to do the department a great disservice. At the same time, the department is wrestling with how to better integrate and lessen the degree of conflict, jealousies and the like between the foreign service and the civil service. I see no reason why we shouldn't aim for a leaner diplomatic force, which is aided and assisted both in the department and abroad by civil service people who go on a five year assignment to Rome as aviation specialist or the terrorism expert or the FBI liaison, or all the things we need done in a highly professional specialized way. Yet we still need people who can talk to the head of state, the Saudis or the Russians, different cultures, who have the language, who have the depth of experience or several years of experience in Asia or in Japan or

whatever that gives us that qualified diplomatic strength that I think the country continues to need.

Q: Okay, now the other question that I have to ask you. As someone who has been involved in American foreign policy and foreign affairs for three and a half decades, standing back a bit and looking at the formulation and execution of American foreign policy, beyond the State Department but the entire range of American foreign policy, what comments would you have on how the United States formulates and carries out its foreign policies.

KUCHEL: I think I am going to take a pass on that. We can either talk for several hours and enjoy ourselves, or really say something platitudinous. I really don't know what might be said in a few words to really seriously address your question.

Q: Well it sounds as though, summing up, you had the most fun when you were in the field, when you were traveling around, when you were doing the nuts and bolts work of being an American diplomat. Would that be fair to say?

KUCHEL: That is very true. I have always noticed that there are people who thrive in the Washington environment, and those who function most happily in a foreign environment in an embassy. I think clearly, if you are going to work in our profession, you need to be able to function well in both places. But certainly in terms of where your heart is, I think this often does divide out, and I think I have often always been one that has enjoyed the challenges and the excitement and the possibilities for learning, expanding your life experiences by working abroad.

Q: Well I think an important point is that you enjoyed your career. I have interviewed retired foreign service officers who really didn't enjoy most of their career at all, and have a very jaundiced view about the foreign service and the Department of State, and American foreign policy. But on the whole you found enjoyment and fulfillment in your career, right?

KUCHEL: I think that is true. I am sure there were many unhappy days, but they are forgotten. What I remember is just delight and happiness in having this experience, this profession, this commitment to our country. Lots of time people ask what is your favorite post? It is just an unanswerable question for me because I had wonderful times and great times both professionally and personally in every place that I have served. I couldn't have asked for anything better.

Q: Okay, well, Ambassador Roland Kuchel, thank you very much. You have made an important contribution to the historical record of the United States, and we appreciate it.

End of interview