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

LEONARD H. MARKS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background
- Raised in Pittsburg, PA
- University of Pittsburgh and Pitt Law School
- Andrew Mellon
- Law practice

Washington, DC 1942-1946
- Office of Price Administration (OPA)
- Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Washington, DC law practice 1946-1965
- Field of communications
- Canadian considerations
- BBC

USIA Director 1965-1969
- Surprise appointment by President Eisenhower
- Eisenhower and use of military
- Separation of USIA from State Department – relations
- "Super" cultural officers in Paris, London, and Tokyo
- Defection of Svetlana Stalin
- Vietnam controversies in U.S.
- Senator Fulbright
- President Johnson
- Congressman John Rooney
- Richard Davis
- Voice of America and the Soviets
- Cultural exchanges
- De Gaulle and NATO

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 29th of January, 1996. This is an interview with Leonard H. Marks in his office in down-town Washington D.C. It's being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Mr. Marks, can we start out a bit about your early upbringing. First I would like to ask you about your family.

MARKS: All right. My dad was a politician in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. All of his life he had either an appointive or elective position. I grew up interested in government from the earliest times. I went to the University of Pittsburgh where I was elected president of the student body. As a member of a fraternity I was elected president of the fraternity. You can see from the outset I was interested in running things as a politician.

Q: Was your father in any particular party?

MARKS: No--he held positions under both parties. He was in law enforcement. As an officer of the courts he held various positions during his lifetime. He encouraged me to be a lawyer. I took his advice and I don't regret it.

Q: Pittsburgh... You were born when?

MARKS: When was I born? March 5, 1916.

Q: So you basically grew up between the two wars in Pittsburgh. What was Pittsburgh and school like when you were a kid?

MARKS: Well, Pittsburgh was a melting pot, truly the amalgam of nationalities in the United States. I grew up with Poles, Italians, Hungarians, and Czechs, and there was no distinction between black and white. We all lived together in the same neighborhood; we went to the same school; we participated in the same sports; we were social as well as neighborly friends. Pittsburgh was the home of the steel industry, heavy industry, which attracted a great migration from Eastern Europe. It was a community where there was a thriving metropolitan area, constantly expanding with a civic consciousness. Because of heavy industry, there was a tremendous amount of soot in the air; but people tolerated that because that meant jobs, that meant security.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

MARKS: In Pittsburgh, Fifth Avenue High School. I was president of the student body there and I went from there to the University of Pittsburgh, graduated and went to the Pitt Law School.

Q: The University of Pittsburgh. Was that the Cathedral of Learning at that point or hadn't it reached the cathedral stage yet?

MARKS: It was a Cathedral of Learning and I had something to do as a student in the program of expanding and developing the Cathedral. I give you this anecdote: Andrew W. Mellon was a patron of the university. He had been Secretary of the Treasury under Coolidge. He served as Ambassador to the Court of Saint James. When he retired he came back to Pittsburgh as the head of the Mellon National Bank., which was the largest financial institution in the East. As a young student I, of course, respected the elderly Mr. Mellon and understood his importance. One day I got a call from the President of the university asking me to come to his office. Since I was president of the student body, it was not an unusual summons. He complimented me on my service to the university and the contributions I had made as a student leader. He said I was now going to be called upon for the most important contribution that any student could ever make. Andrew W. Mellon was coming to visit the Cathedral of Learning for the first time, a building to which he had given tremendous financial support. He wanted to see the building, but he did not wish to have the president of the university or any member of the faculty accompany him. He wanted a student and I was it. So I escorted Mr. Mellon. He was a very taciturn man; conversation was very limited, but he had a great curiosity about student activities, which I explained in detail. As we were leaving he said to me, "Would you have lunch with me?" I accepted quickly. As we approached his car a boy came by yelling, "Extra paper!" In those days extra editions of a newspaper were not uncommon. The headline was "Wiley Post and Will Rogers killed in a plane crash." This excited Mr. Mellon because he knew both of them. He hailed the newsboy, said, "Paper, please." The boy handed him a paper and Mr. Mellon turned to me and said, "Would you please pay him? I don't have any money." That was my contribution to the growth of the Cathedral Learning!

Q: These interviews are focused on America's role in foreign affairs. What were you getting at the University of Pittsburgh? What were you getting about Europe and China and Japan and all that?

MARKS: Little or nothing. The student body was not interested in world affairs. We were very parochial. Our parents had gone through the depression. We knew the hardships that a depression could cause. I personally and I'm sure my fellow students were interested in jobs. What would we do when we graduated? How would we make ends meet? And our parents encouraged that. We were never concerned about what Mr. Hitler might be doing and what was happening in Eastern Europe and what was happening with Japan. That was no concern of ours.

Q: You graduated from the University of Pittsburgh when?

MARKS: 1935.

Q: 1935, amidst the depression. Things were pretty difficult at that time. Where did you go?

MARKS: I went to the University of Pittsburgh Law school. I was given a scholarship and I immediately went from the undergraduate to the graduate program.

Q: Did one specialize in branches of law there or was it pretty general?

MARKS: The practice of law was quite different than it is today. You became a lawyer, not a specialist in taxation or divorce or any other particular subject.

Q: How did you find it as a law education?

MARKS: I was very pleased to be studying law and I was looking forward to practicing law. Normally I spent at least 16 hours a day in the study of law. I was put on the staff of the Pittsburgh Law Review and devoted a great deal of time - extracurricular - to writing about legal subjects. It was a complete preoccupation.

Q: Was Pittsburgh being the center of the steel industry also the center of the glass industry? Was Corning big there... ?

MARKS: No, Pittsburgh Plate Glass was there and we were close to Akron, Ohio which was the center of the rubber industry.

Q: Was there sort of a concentration on corporate law and that type of thing or not?

MARKS: There was a concentration on family law, on contract law and on divorce. These were the elementary practices that lawyers had in those days. Corporate law was reserved for a handful of prominent lawyers who represented the Mellon interests. The average lawyer didn't get that business except for small business concerns.

Q: So that was off in another world almost.

MARKS: That's right.

Q: Did you feel, coming out of Pittsburgh, the fact that you weren't coming out of the Harvard or Yale Law School? Was that where the Mellons were hiring their people or where?

MARKS: Absolutely. We understood that. That was a dichotomy. The Harvard/Yale universities were producing the corporate lawyers, and the University of Pittsburgh, although we did have some outstanding corporate lawyers, produced the average practitioner, the family lawyer.

Q: This is true of most of the law schools anyway. There were just one or two that were sort of producing the...

MARKS: That's right. It was Harvard and Yale at that time.

Q: Well now, you finished law school when?

MARKS: 1938. I was appointed to the faculty. I was first in my class, so I was made the student faculty member and I started to practice law in Pittsburgh at the same time as I was teaching law at the university.

Q: What type of law? Again, was this general law?

MARKS: I associated myself with a group of lawyers who had small corporate and family practices. There were six lawyers at the time and they gave me research work to do. I accumulated few clients of my own; essentially I worked for them.

Q: At that time the war was looming and I would assume that this would have had quite a repercussion in the Pittsburgh area, because the very basic industries are talking about whether one would be involved in recreating the military.

MARKS: You're absolutely correct. Everybody was concerned about what would happen if war broke out in 1939, and after I started to practice I too was concerned. I consulted with some of my faculty friends. Since I was unmarried and very young, what would happen if the draft asked me to be a private in the army? The Dean of the law school was a very dear friend of mine. He said, "They are creating a lot of new agencies in Washington. If you are drafted, I think you can serve your country better as a lawyer in Washington working for the government and these New Deal agencies, than you will as a private in the army. So don't worry about it, just go ahead take things as they come." So I heeded their advice until 1942, when war broke out. Then I came to Washington and I was employed at the Office of Price Administration. Interestingly enough, I was assigned to create a new division which would regulate the price of service trades. That means the service trades - freight forwarding throughout the world, price of laundries, anything that provided a service. I was given the task of creating that division and I chose a very able woman to be Executive Secretary. Her name was Mrs. Pat Nixon.

Q: Good Heavens!

MARKS: Her husband was a lawyer at the Tire Rationing Division. He too was waiting for a call into the service, which eventually came and he entered the Navy. I remembered him as a lawyer for the Office of Price Administration.

Q: Who was the head of OPA at that time?

MARKS: Leon Henderson was the man who ran the agency during most of my period there.

Q: Leon Henderson was one of the major names in this American mobilization. What was your impression of him from your perspective?

MARKS: I was too lowly to work directly with him, but I do think he ran a very efficient agency. He was under wartime pressures to recruit a staff, to get things organized in a

minimum amount of time, and he chose some very fine lawyers. Some of the outstanding lawyers of the United States at that time came to work at the OPA and the War Production Board.

Q: Wasn't John Kenneth Galbraith there?

MARKS: Yes - Galbraith was there.

Q: He was not a lawyer, but an economist?

MARKS: He was an economist. He was one of the top officials.

Q: Since this is focused on diplomacy, I might as well grab something on American history while I've got you there. What was the thrust of working on the service industries? Was there a concern about inflation because of labor being short? Obviously this could get completely out of hand.

MARKS: Absolutely. We had to keep inflation under control. At the same time, we recognized that the producers were subject to higher costs and had to be given some incentive in order to stay in business. We would give incremental increases based upon the cost of equipment, and the increasing cost of labor supply; but we held it back as much as we could.

Q: What was your impression of the OPA at that time?

MARKS: It was a magnificent agency. It was a paragon of virtue. It was run efficiently with dedicated people who worked overtime with minimum salaries. I remember asking Mr. Nixon, after he became president, what his salary was. It was $3800 a year! Mine was $4600. I outranked him, but those were top salaries in those days.

Q: What was Mrs. Nixon, Patricia Nixon, what sort of work was she doing here?

MARKS: Office management, typing. She was very efficient, loyal, worked overtime, never complained. I have great respect for her.

Q: You were doing that until when?

MARKS: I did that for about a year. I soon tired of the work because it really wasn't legal; it was administrative. So I decided I would return to Pittsburgh and wait to be called into the army with the hope that I might be in the Judge Advocate Generals' office. I communicated that desire to one of the lawyers with whom I'd been associated in Pittsburgh and he said, "I'll be coming down to Washington next month. Why don't we wait till I get there? Then we'll talk about when you might come back and the arrangement that we would have." When I met with him he said that he had been invited to dinner by a classmate, who was an Assistant Attorney-General. He had asked him to bring me along. At that dinner he asked

me a great deal about my background and said, "Are you interested in leaving the OPA?" and I said, "Very much." His next door neighbor was a General Counsel of the Federal Communications Commission. They were engaged in very vital work, essential to the war effort. Communications particularly, the interception of foreign broadcast and other communications material was vital to the war effort. He said, "The FCC is looking for young lawyers. Let me introduce you." The following day I had an appointment with the General Counsel of the Federal Communications Commission who offered me a job. I accepted.

Q: Could you explain a bit about the Federal Communications Commission? What was the FCC doing during the war time?

MARKS: Well, they regulated all the broadcast and other activities over the airwaves. They set rates for telephone. The activity in which I was engaged had a direct relationship to the war effort: it was called the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. We created a system of monitors and recorded all the broadcasts that came in from all over the world. We also recorded other information and supplied it to the intelligence services of the military. It's still in existence by the way.

Q: This is FBIS isn't it?

MARKS: FBIS, yes. It is now under the CIA.

Q: It is very useful because it would concentrate on foreign broadcast, open broadcast.

MARKS: That's right. We worked very closely with Elmer Davis, who at that time was head of the Office of War Information. People don't realize that there was censorship - voluntary censorship - during the war by the newspapers and the broadcast stations. They restricted themselves to information that did not relate directly to military movements and wartime restrictions.

Q: Did you get involved in this at all, the censorship?

MARKS: The OWI, the censorship? Only collaterally; only to the extent that the FBI asked for material that was sent to them. We exchanged information.

Q: I was just wondering when all those things of Colonel Robert McCormick's Chicago Tribune at that time who was not - let us say - friendly to the Roosevelt regime; no matter under war or no war, was not always the most docile as far as self censorship. Did you get any reflections of this?

MARKS: No, I dealt with Byron Price, who was head of the Associated Press who ran the Office of War Information, the Office of Censorship really. It was not imposed by the government. The publishers and the broadcasters got together and voluntarily agreed on the

code and what they would do. They constituted their own board and disciplined people who broke the rules.

Q: Your particular area was what?

MARKS: I drafted legal regulations. I passed upon questions involving the statute and other related matters.

Q: How did you find that the system worked? Was there much in the way of challenge as far as government decrees and all that?

MARKS: No, there was a very loose arrangement between the industry and the government. Government trusted the industry representatives to discipline themselves and take care of the problem rather than rely on government regulations. There was a minimum of government control or influence.

Q: You kept doing this until what? The end of the war?

MARKS: It was regarded as a vital effort to the war and I was deferred. I also had a physical difficulty. I had poor eyesight and was not called by the draft. I stayed there until - let's see the cease-fire was 1945 - and I left in January of 1946.

Q: And then what?

MARKS: I entered the practice of law in Washington in the field of communications. I had helped draft the regulations creating a new portion of the spectrum FM broadcasting and I had something to do with the creation or development of the industry that would be called television. I was informed by some of the engineers and those in the official positions, that this was an expanding field. I joined a law firm with my partner Marcus Cohn. We started to practice law January 9th, 1946. For 50 years we have been together in the field of communications.

Q: I think that is tremendous. Well now did foreign broadcast enter the picture at all earlier or after '46?

MARKS: No, there was no concern. Germany had been defeated, Japan had been defeated, Europe was just waiting for the United States with the Marshall Plan. Foreign broadcasts were of no concern to the United States. They were a concern to Europe. The Voice of America and other broadcast organizations - there were private broadcast organizations by the way - increased their broadcasting to Europe, but it was not commercial because there was nothing to sell.

Q: Did you get involved early on with the Voice of America in the work you were doing?

MARKS: Yes. There was a private broadcast station located in Scituate, Massachusetts identified as WRUL: World Radio University of Learning. It was strongly supported by the Christian Science Church. All during the war it had broadcast primarily to the Scandinavian countries, France and Germany advising them of the support that the United States was rendering, and admonishing them to hold out for democracy and for the principals of freedom and liberty. It had no commercials. The Governor of Massachusetts at that time was Leverett Saltonstall, who later became a U.S. Senator. He was present one night at the studio when the station broadcast an appeal to the Norwegians operating ships at sea, not to surrender the fleet, but to take the ships to another port other than Narvik. He saw the power of radio.

Q: This would have been 1940.

MARKS: That's right, and he realized the power of communications. After the war he introduced legislation providing that out of the appropriation of the Voice of America a certain percentage should be reserved for WRUL.

Q: What about a very prickly relationship that has at least certainly developed now and I wonder how it was in the 40s and 50s with Canada. The Canadians - certainly today - take great umbrage at what they consider "American media dominance". How was that... ?

MARKS: There was no such problem. The Canadians did not enter in any of the calculations. There was no controversy at that time.

Q: This became a political issue later.

MARKS: That's right.

Q: Did you get involved in this at any point prior to your coming back to the government?

MARKS: No. No, it developed only in the late 60s when there was a national movement in Canada; "that we've got to have our own Canadian programs" and "that we don't want the invasion of the American culture".

Q: What about the BBC? Was there any... BBC did its thing and...?

MARKS: We cooperated. We exchanged information, but essentially the private broadcaster and the Voice of America didn't have to cooperate with the BBC. They had their own thing. The BBC had their own schedule. They were conscious of each other, but not necessarily antagonistic or cooperative.

Q: Just sort of a historical aside - not in foreign policy - but this field certainly grew didn't it as far as domestic broadcasting?

MARKS: Hundreds of new radio stations were created, one of them in Austin, Texas. I was fortunate enough to be retained by Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson in connection with his wife's radio broadcast station there. She retained me to handle their affairs. But there were hundreds of stations built throughout the United States.

Q: When did your government connection come back? After about '65?

MARKS: 1965.

Q: Had you had any contact because of your - at this time you and your firm's - extensive knowledge of communications things with USIA prior to this?

MARKS: Yes. The State Department asked me to go on a lecture tour throughout Asia and other parts of the world, in connection with broadcasting and communications. That took place in the early 60s. I had a very close relationship with the Voice of America. As a result of my relationship to Senator Johnson, I was consulted by the congressional committees on new legislation.

Q: So you have been because of both, I mean professionally in several fields you have known Johnson.

MARKS: Oh, I've known him from 1947 or '48 on continuously. I still have some relationship to the family.

Q: How did you get appointed to be the head of USIA? What was sort of the genesis?

MARKS: I'll relate that story to you. It has been printed many times. I was in New York representing a client who was selling a radio/television newspaper. We were in the boardroom of the bank, and seated around the table were accountants, lawyers and business people. I was in charge of the agenda. At a quarter to 12 the phone rang and the secretary said, "Mr. Marks, the President of the United States wants to talk to you." We talked regularly. I took the call and he said, "How ya doing!?" I explained where I was, and he said, "That's fine, at 12 o'clock I'm having a press conference announcing that you're going to be the Director of the United States Information Agency." I said, "You can't do that to me!" I was stuttering because I didn't have any concept of what was involved. "Why?" I said, "Well we have a farm in Middleburg. Today my wife is down there and when she hears the news on the radio, she'll think that I've gone out of my mind!" I couldn't think of any other explanation. He said, "Well then I'll hold it for one day." But he didn't. He announced it! Carl Rowan had resigned and the President didn't want any hiatus, and so he announced my appointment without my consent. When I came back to Washington the following day, I met with him and I said, "I've thought about it. This really disrupts my life, but I'll take it." He said, "I want you to understand that this is a very vital position. We're engaged in a war in Vietnam. Communications is vital to the success of that effort. The military realizes that. I want you to have a seat at the National Security Council table, so that your influence is felt. I've known you now for 20 some years; we trust each other and I

know your competence. I want you at that table because I think public diplomacy is as important as military action". He said, "Now when you are sworn in, I want you to go up and see President Eisenhower, who has told me of the importance of public diplomacy, and I want you to get some guidance from him." So I subsequently did see President Eisenhower, who made some very important statements to me. He said that one of the great failures of his administration was his total reliance upon military and little on public diplomacy. He said to me, "What's your budget?" and I said, "$200,000.000". He said, "You should have a billion dollars." I said, "No, I don't think I could spend it." He said, "You'll learn." But he gave me some very valuable advice on the role of public diplomacy, the State Department, the military and how we should interact. He said, "The minds of people abroad are more important to us than subduing them physically; so you should engage in a vast program of cultural exchange and information. People should understand what the United States stands for; what democracy means; how free enterprise works. These are the topics we should be talking about." And since the Marshall Plan had made Europe economically viable, he said, "We should emphasize the importance of foreign aid." President Eisenhower inspired me.

Q: It's very interesting. President Eisenhower came out of the military and had been a most successful military General, but what was his concern about military communications? I mean military information coming out of the military.

MARKS: Let me relate to you an anecdote that I think is very significant. President Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency. I asked him, "Why should there be a separate, independent USIA rather than have it in the State Department?"
(phone rings)

Q: You were saying about Eisenhower and the use of the military.

MARKS: Yes. President Eisenhower explained to me that if the United States Information Agency was part of the State Department, its recommendations at the national security level or at the presidential level would have to be filtered through an Assistant Secretary of State or through the Secretary of State, who couldn't be as cogent because he was not a specialist; he was not familiar enough. It was important that the most experienced express views on public diplomacy at the highest levels. He said, "For that reason I want you to have a seat at the National Security table. I think that you should be involved in the proceedings at that level. You should know what they are doing so you can translate the views of the U.S. Government to foreign audiences." I did participate in National Security meetings during the time I was the Director of USIA.

Q: You were Director from '65 to '69. What was your impression? I mean here you're coming out of a law firm and what was your impression of the US Information Agency at the time as an organization?

MARKS: You mean, "What did I inherit?"

Q: What did you inherit?

MARKS: I inherited some very competent people, dedicated people, professionals. I will surprise you by telling you that the salaries at that time paid to newspaper people - the broadcasters in government - were higher than they were in the private industry. To illustrate: I needed somebody in Rome. I knew a correspondent who had served in Rome as correspondent to the Vatican, and also to Italy for over 20 years. I think he was either with the United Press or the Associated Press. I called him expecting to have some trouble when I offered him the opportunity of coming to the government. He was intrigued by it and he said, "What does it pay? I told him, and he said, "My God, that's 10% more than I'm getting now!" and he accepted it immediately. So we got some high class people from the information world. We also got some wonderful academics, who were specialists in particular areas of cultural exchange. I created a Super Cultural Officer for Paris, London and Tokyo, because I wanted those countries to understand the culture of the United States; that we were not just a materialistic society. We sponsored arts, music, dance and all the other phases of performing in graphic and cultural arts. It made a great impact. To answer your question - I found a very able and dedicated group of people, very competent.

Q: What about relations with the Department of State? I can see where your people are interested in one thing; State has a different focus, and sometimes policy as far as getting votes in the UN or getting them to agree on what we were saying can be at some divergence. How well was it coordinated?

MARKS: Because President Johnson understood the importance of information and cultural exchange, he at an early date had Dean Rusk meet with me. Dean Rusk was Secretary of State. We discussed our relationship. Every morning at the Secretary's meeting with his Assistant Secretaries I was there, and was called upon and expressed my views. There was complete coordination at the top level. We translated that to the Assistant Secretary level; in other words an Assistant Director of USIA met regularly with the Assistant Secretary of State for that area. The same thing was true with Bob McNamara as Secretary of Defense. I had no friction with the State Department. I had great cooperation. Let me give you an illustration of how that worked. One morning, about three o'clock, the phone rang. It was Dean Rusk. He said, "Leonard, I want you to get dressed and come down and see me." I knew that it had to be very critical. As I walked in to his office, he said, "Svetlana Stalin has defected."

Q: Oh yes, in India.

MARKS: "She's on her way to Geneva, Switzerland. How do we handle that?" He wanted my advice on how to handle it. Should we be antagonistic, gloat, that Stalin has lost his daughter? Should we be just casual about it? Well anyway, that's the kind of relationship that existed. No important decision of that nature was taken without our cooperation and advice.

Q: You mentioned Svetlana Stalin. What was the advice that was given?

MARKS: Treat it as a news story. Announce that she has left. She's on her way to Switzerland. It was up to the Swiss to give her asylum. We didn't gloat and we didn't amplify. Subsequently she made statements. We were not involved in it.

Q: To catch the spirit of the times, today we're going through a rather difficult period with Congress looking at what the American government is doing and almost against - particularly against - culture and anything that rings of culture. What was the spirit then, during this period that you were there, about the cultural exchanges?

MARKS: There was great emphasis on cultural exchange because of Senator Bill Fulbright. The Fulbright program was expanded. He didn't understand the importance of information. He didn't support that role, but he strongly supported the role of cultural exchanges. We had no problems with appropriations; we expanded very rapidly. I don't think we had any real problems of recruiting people, because the academic community was very anxious to get into the international field. I could draft professors and deans from the leading universities to work for the United States Government on an interim or full-time basis.

Q: Talking about the academic community. One of the great confrontations in American life took place at this particular time, and that was over the Vietnam war. The American government essentially, and the academic world seemed to be going on almost a confrontation course. How did that work? I would have thought you would have been right in the middle of that.

MARKS: We were. We had great difficulty with some of leaders of academia who didn't support the war effort, as you know from their protests on college campuses. There were headlines in the newspapers reflecting their dissent. We did not enter into domestic activities, since by statute we were prohibited from getting involved in explaining anything to domestic audiences. Our role was to be the spokesmen for foreign audiences overseas - but there is an inevitable relationship between domestic and foreign. If they protest on the campus of a college in the United States, it would be reflected in the headlines in Asia, Africa, Europe, and everywhere around the world, so we had to deal with that. We did the best we could. We tried to explain to foreign audiences what the issues were in Vietnam. It was difficult. We sent emissaries from the academic world, who didn't necessarily agree with the campus views, to lecture at universities in Europe, Asia, and Africa. We circulated materials, articles, interviews; we did the best we could. I won't tell you it was very successful; it was helpful, but it wasn't completely successful. We got the hell kicked out of us.

Q: What happened? You must have sent a dance troupe to France and all of a sudden the head of the dance group gets up and announces their opposition to the Vietnam War. How did you all handle this?

MARKS: Our greatest asset was free expression in the United States. We tolerate people who disagree with us. That's the essence of democracy. I remember in Brussels once there were signs painted on the American embassy: "Yankee go home", and our people were right on the ball. They got some paint and they put, "... by Pan-Am." You're serious at some points, you treat it with levity in other, but you see this is as the strength of democracy, that we can have dissident.

Q: Was Congress particularly breathing down your neck about the latest? It must have been almost a daily thing of one of your exchange professors saying something that was not very supportive of what we were doing?

MARKS: It may not have been daily, but there were many incidents like that, and some congressional people were interested in telling us what to do: why didn't we suppress them? How can we choose people like that? We chose them not because of their political views, but because of their competence in the field of literature, or graphic arts, or whatever their specialty might be. It was difficult. I would have naturally preferred somebody who understood the issues of the war and realized they were not a spokesman on political matters when we sent them abroad to lecture on Shakespeare or on American literature.

Q: Of what you described there seems to be quite a difference in attitude on the part of USIA than that which took place later during part of the Nixon administration, and particularly the early Reagan administration, when there was almost a blacklist.

MARKS: That's right.

Q: You really have to meet whatever the standards were, which essentially were rather rightish wing conservative standards. I take it that this was not ...?

MARKS: I didn't have that. I was fortunate. I had a President who understood that anything of that nature had to be treated with objectivity, rather than with political anger so we didn't go into that. I will tell you one story, though, to illustrate how we handled some difficulties. Senator Fulbright was outraged because I created a program to get foreign journalists, influential journalists, to go to Vietnam to see for themselves how we were handling the war, and what the attitude of the local population was. I solicited them to come to Vietnam. I would provide them with transportation. I would facilitate their arrangements by creating interviews with them for whoever they wished, but I would not have anything to do with the content of their writings. Fulbright was very upset by that and summoned me to a hearing. He asked me to explain the program, which I did. He said, "You have made great emphasis on the fact that you're interested in their factual reporting, not in their opinions. What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?" The good Lord was with me. I was inspired and said, "Senator, I'll gladly illustrate that to you. Today - whatever the date is - I'm testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; that's a fact. In my opinion, it's a very prestigious body," he says, "You're wrong. It's a fact." It brought down the house with laughter, and it made everybody aware that the dichotomy between a fact and an opinion was a very difficult one. At least we were conscious of our responsibilities to try to present

the facts. It broke up the meeting; there were no further repercussions. I really didn't have any major opposition from the Hill.

Q: You're talking about Lyndon Johnson. You were very fortunate in that you were an old friend of his and worked with him, but he was renowned for getting mad as hell and letting off steam. Did he ever get you on the phone or something and say, "Leonard, what the hell are you doing? Why is Paris Match *running an article and you paid for that guy to go over there!?" Did you ever get any of that?*

MARKS: Oh, of course! And there's a wonderful story that I enjoy telling. I was with him one morning and he said to me, "You know, we've known each other a long time. I've great respect for you. We've never had any differences of opinion because I respect your expertise and your loyalty to this government's administration. You have $200,000,000 in appropriations and you tell me you have the finest people. Why can't you make the world understand what we are doing in Vietnam?" And I said, "Mr. President, they understand us. They don't agree with us." It shocked him to think that people wouldn't agree with us, because he was so enamored of his cause.

I said, "I've done everything I can."

He said, "I know that," and he dropped the subject. But that's the answer. You can't make people agree with you. You can inform them, but you can't twist their arms and say, "You have to agree with us."

Q: Was there a problem with what we would call the right wing of Congress, which has gotten so strong lately - as far as either culture or the story you were telling or anything like that? Was this a problem?

MARKS: If you think back to those days, the Democrats had overwhelming majorities. Lyndon Johnson ran the government and there was very little opposition of that nature. If there was, it was subdued because they were a very small minority. So it never really was a major factor for me.

Q: Dealing with Congress - let's talk about one of the delights of anybody who worked for the government, and that was dealing with a gentleman named John Rooney...

MARKS: My friend.

Q: Can you talk about your relations? He was the head of the Appropriations Committee for State and USIA. Can you tell about dealing with John Rooney?

MARKS: Yes, indeed.

Q: Of Brooklyn, right?

MARKS: Yes, indeed. I've been in Washington for most of my life. As a lawyer I dealt with Congress. I've dealt with administrative agencies. I know something about getting along with people who control your destiny. I was very conscious of the fact that John Rooney was a key player, and so when I was sworn in at the White House I personally called John Rooney and said, "It would be a great honor and privilege for me if you would come to my swearing-in." He did. When I was sworn in, the President invited a few people into his office, including John Rooney. And John Rooney said, "Lyndon, Marks is gonna be a success! This is the first time that I've been invited to the White House for a swearing-in. He's got my support." Now before an appropriations hearing I would go up and brief John Rooney on what I needed. I explained to him in detail how I arrived at my figures. I said, "John, there is a little fat in here. I think it's justified." He said, "You know I've got to cut," and I said, "That's why it's fat." He knew at that time what I actually needed. We had an understanding and I got what I needed. There was only one subject with which we had difficulty: entertainment.

Q: The so called " liquor front or representation law."

MARKS: Right. I think the figure was $300,000/$400,000 that he gave me. He said, "Now you spend it on Coca-Cola and things like that." I said, "John, you know I have offices in 100 and some countries. What you're giving me is maybe a dollar a week for each." He said, "The State Department has $1,000,000 parked for you in un-vouchee funds. It's for what you need." I had few problems with John Rooney. It worked out very well, because I was conciliatory. I recognized his problems; he had to get a headline.

Q: On Saturday, just two days ago, I talked to one of your great admirers, Richard Davis...

MARKS: Oh sure!

Q: ... later Ambassador to Poland who was your Assistant Secretary for the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. He said that one of the greater things that you did was that, prior to your time, the Director of USIA would arrive in front of Rooney with all the assistant directors and the Director would sit to one side and allow the assistant directors to take all the heat and often get into real trouble, because Rooney could nail them by saying, "Why don't you know this?" and he would find some obscure fact and really put... But you went up by yourself and would say, "Well, I'll find out about that," and obviously you could always leave, "Well I'll find out and I'll let you know," and that would get caught on that. Was this a deliberate policy on your part?

MARKS: Absolutely. I'm a lawyer. If I can't advocate my cause, I shouldn't be doing it. I studied hard. I think I knew the intricacies of the budget and I tried to acquaint myself with all the detail...but there were some things I didn't know. I could legitimately say that I would find out. Rooney was impressed by that, as were other members of the Committee, and it worked very well. And I refused to have anybody else participate in the determination of the policy. I did it. If there was criticism, I wanted to get blamed. If there was praise, I wanted to take the praise.

Q: That's one of the great lessons of how to deal with the bureaucracy. It's one of the things that we're trying to communicate as part of the historical record for those who are coming and doing some of the things that you've just said, that would be very good to pass on to the next generations.

MARKS: Let me just say one word about Dick Davis. He was an outstanding Foreign Service Officer. I decided that I needed a Foreign Service person in the Eastern European Russian area, and I just couldn't take a newsman or an academic. I needed someone with the seasoning and background of the Foreign Service. I went to Dean Rusk and said, "Do you have one outstanding guy? Have you got someone you can lend me?" and he suggested Dick Davis. He was reluctant to come over to USIA. The agency had no standing. There were no retirement benefits. You would lose certain prestige on the ladder of the State Department. I said to him, "If you come over and help me for two years, I promise you you won't get hurt, and you'll be appointed Ambassador to a significant country." His ability was apparent and his performance was outstanding. At the end of the period he was made Ambassador to Poland. I will take great pride in saying that I went to Dean Rusk and I told him of my promise. I thought that he would give some attention to it and he did. He deserved that post. He deserved to be ambassador to Russia, but political considerations, I think, took over there.

Q: What about relations during this time - it certainly was not an easy time, between '65 and '69 - relations with the Soviet Union? This was early... Khrushchev I think had just about departed - it was maybe about the time that...

MARKS: It was also post-Hungary.

Q: It was post-Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Can you talk about your impressions, guidance and all dealing with the Soviet Union in those turbulent years?

MARKS: The greatest problem you haven't mentioned was the jamming of the Voice of America. We had an agreement on a magazine exchange. They would produce the equivalent of *America*, and would each produce 30,000 copies. We found out that our copies were not distributed. They would throw them in the river. They would never be delivered. There was nothing we could do about it except protest. There was nothing we could do to stop the jamming, even though it was illegal and contrary to the Treaty. Our relations were very tense with the Soviet Union, and I want to tell you that we could do very little to improve that relationship because they were determined. Their people would not hear anything about democracies or free enterprises.

Q: Where did the Voice of America rest in USIA or did it?

MARKS: It was one of the divisions, and I recognized that it was most important because it had so much public attention. We couldn't just have anybody running the Voice of America. When I came in I looked around and I thought, "The most able newsman I know

is John Chancellor," who was with NBC. I went to the President and said, "If I ask John Chancellor to be head of the Voice of America, will you go along?" He said, "Whatever you want." "He may not do it for me, he'll do it for you." "What do you want me to do?" I said, "I want you to invite him to a weekend at Camp David and during that weekend point out to him how vital it is that he come and help our administration." He did, and that's the only reason why John left NBC and a very lucrative contract, to serve as head of the Voice of America for two years. During his period nobody questioned the objectivity of the performance of the Voice of America, because they had the highest respect for John. I didn't interfere with whatever he wanted to do. He told the truth, he emphasized the subjects which he thought were newsworthy. As a result we were getting great credibility.

Q: There was a tremendous problem with the Voice of America and Radio Free Liberty and all in 1956 during the Hungarian Revolution. You had not quite comparable problems, but fairly close to comparable, in 1968 with Czechoslovakia where they went through the Prague Spring and then the Soviets sent tanks in. Were you ready for this to make sure that you weren't encouraging people to revolt even though we had no intention of backing them up? How did we handle this?

MARKS: We were well aware of the criticism directed to the Voice on the Hungarian uprising, and we were very cautious not to repeat that performance. I insisted - at that time, I think, John had left. Yes, he had left, and we had John Daley, who was another newsman with great experience. I didn't tell him what to do, but I reminded them that we mustn't be a propaganda organization. We must be a news organization. They followed our instructions, and we had no such criticism from the Czechs.

Q: What about the cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union in the Eastern Bloc? Was this a problem or not?

MARKS: It was very limited. We had the money to do more, but they refused to allow their groups to come. They would send to the U.S. people who they knew were trustworthy, rather than qualified academics, or cultural people who were qualified in their field. So there was a limited exchange.

Q: Skipping around a bit, but going back to Vietnam; JUSPAO...

MARKS: JUSPAO was the US Public Affairs Office.

Q: ...was a major operation out there and it was almost at odds with many of the newspaper - I mean - the media people, both TV and other people as being too much a creature of the government and all of that, and there was a so-called 5 o'clock follies. That was a contentious relationship. What was your impression?

MARKS: It's one of the mistakes that I made. I let it get out of hand. We had Barry Zorthian, a very competent, experienced professional running that organization, and he kept asking for additional resources. He insisted, "I need more people." As the war

escalated, as the troops were being sent over, he increased his operation in direct proportion to the increase in the military. The military were integrated into JUSPAO. I had some influence, but I didn't have complete control over it. I felt it expanded too fast, and it undertook to do too much. It ceased to be a normal news operation. It seemed to be an organ of the military establishment. If I had to do it over again, I would do it differently.

Q: Yes, I had that impression. I was Consul General in Saigon from '69 to '70. The military dominated it, and the military really has quite a different outlook. They see the mission as a rather straight forward one and it's not comfortable for them, I think, to have open news.

MARKS: Well, there is also a problem, that you may not see as realistic. You can't communicate to the villages in Vietnam the way you do to the people in Brussels or Rome. I used to go to Vietnam once a month. I remember on one occasion I was greeted by the inevitable charts of briefers. They gave me all the propaganda about how well they were doing, and I said, "Look, give me that pointer," and I just arbitrarily pointed to a spot on the map. I remember the name was Bac Liev. I said, "I want to go there and I want to see what we are doing. I understand we have four people there, we have a daily newspaper, and I want to see what we are doing." "Oh, you can't go, because the Viet Cong has that under control." "I'm going! You get me a helicopter and I'm going!" So we went. I found a village that had no paved streets. We were publishing a daily newspaper, but the rate of literacy was maybe 10%. I found out that people got their information at night, when troubadours had been hired to entertain at the village center, the village churches or whatever it was. They improvised songs telling the people what was happening and also telling them to save rubber, and be careful about the efforts of the Viet Cong. I found that the women would go down to the market in the morning and wash their clothes and buy their fish, and they gossiped with each other. Nobody listened to the radio; very few had radio sets. So I cut our program completely, and I hired troubadours to tell our story. Now that's the difference with a military operation.

Q: Yes, I know we have learned a lot in Vietnam. Were there any other areas? Latin America, how did that strike you?

MARKS: It was subordinate; it didn't have the importance. The primary emphasis was on Vietnam, our relationship with Europe and our relationship with Russia. Everything else was secondary. Africa, Asia, and Latin America were really not of primary importance.

Q: Did the Arab/Israeli thing get you... ?

MARKS: We had the six day war.

Q: Yes, the six day war. There is a very strong Israeli lobby with APAC I think it is. Did you find that you had to be careful about dealing with the broadcast to the Arabs and all that because of the strong Israeli - pro Israeli - policy?

MARKS: It never really came into it. The six day war was a period of tension, because it might be another major war, but it lapsed at the end of six days. That was not a major controversy for us.

Q: Did France cause problems? I mean the French always seem to be - particularly in the field of culture - we seem to be going on really quite opposing sides. Did France raise much of a problem?

MARKS: Yes, de Gaulle told us to get out of NATO. That presented an information problem. "What do we do, complain or act better?" Lyndon Johnson was masterful in that. De Gaulle gave us a very short deadline and I remember the military at the National Security Council meeting said, "We can't meet the deadline." The President answered, "You'll meet the deadline, regardless of what it takes. I want Dean Rusk to go back to the Foreign Ministry and ask them - when we remove all of our equipment - `Should we dig our people out of the graves?'"

Q: World War I or II?

MARKS: That's right. This caused a hushed silence. He said, "I'm serious! I want them to realize what they are doing." But we never reflected any animosity in our broadcast or in our relationships.

Q: Did you find with the BBC, particularly with Vietnam, that we kept growing in different directions?

MARKS: No, we had regular coordination meetings. We met twice a year, once in London and once in Washington to discuss what each of us was doing. Each went our own ways in terms of programming, but we coordinated our efforts. There was no controversy. There was no animosity between us.

Q: So how about Canada, any problem with them?

MARKS: None, none with Canada.

Q: How about Greek-Turkish issues? Did these ever raise much of a problem?

MARKS: They never came up. At the desk level there were some irritants.

Q: Northern Ireland?

MARKS: No.

Q: United Nations - was the UN trying to do things that we didn't like?

MARKS: No, we had a pretty good relationship. Ambassador Goldberg was the ambassador to the UN at the time, and we worked very closely with him. The U.S. dominated the United Nations. I can't recall any major controversy.

Q: What about within your agency? The State Department had a lot of trouble, because we would examine and approve young Foreign Service officers and then say, "And by the way, your first assignment is going to be out in the boondocks in Vietnam." What about in USIA? Did you find a morale problem or an administrative problem dealing with Vietnam?

MARKS: No, we hired some wonderful JOTs. Junior officers' training courses were important, and we chose people from the Peace Corps, and those who had the exposure to foreign cultures and were eager to travel into remote places. We didn't send them all to Ouagadougou, but those who went didn't complain. I found that morale was pretty good. We had a wonderful Personnel Officer, Lionel Mosley.

Q: I know time is about to run out, so I wanted to ask; you left USIA in 1969?

MARKS: January, when the Nixon administration came in. I actually departed in November, after the election.

Q: I'm told by people I've talked to within the business, that there was quite a change in USIA during the early Nixon administration. How did you feel about that?

MARKS: It was a different agency and it had different goals. I had no direct relationship with my successors.

Q: Frank Shakespeare was the first...

MARKS: Frank Shakespeare was an advocate on the right side of the ledger. He had ideological objectives, and he had a close relationship with Nixon and the right wing of the Republican Party. I won't say he did anything improper; but he certainly changed the emphasis of the agency. Whether it was good or bad I'm not going to comment on, but it was a different agency.

Q: Over the years have you sort of kept a benevolent eye on the agency?

MARKS: Oh, absolutely. I've had a close relationship with Charlie Wick, for example. He consulted me regularly. I've gone on missions for the agency. For example, Charlie Wick asked me to go to Moscow with him to protest the jamming of the Voice of America, which I did. We did it at the highest level. Also I went to Sri Lanka and negotiated a treaty there for the creation of the Voice of America station. So I've had a close relationship. I have great respect - I regret that there has been a cut in the budget and the de-emphasis on public diplomacy, which I think we will regret some day.

Q: I can't agree with you more. Well, I've tried to keep this within the bounds.

MARKS: Good, you've met the deadline. Play it back a little bit to make sure it's working.

Q: Yes.

End of interview