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WOODWARD ROMINE

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is the oral history interview with Woodward Romine done by Peter Moffat on March 27, 1998. Can you tell us a little bit about your early life and what led you into the Foreign Service?

ROMINE: I grew up in Indiana, and I was always interested in what went on beyond that state. I used to watch the trains go by and wonder where the people were going. Early in life I had the fortunate experience to run into a very good French teacher, who stimulated my interest in things French and in the French language. As I went through college, I continued to follow that. I finished college and, of course, did service at that time, back in World War II, and was in the Navy and had a chance to see something of the world. By the end of that time, I decided I wanted some kind of an international career, so I went to the University of Geneva in Switzerland and did what we thought in those days was a graduate degree but which today really is not. But in two years I learned quite a bit about international affairs, and I learned the French language quite well. By this time I thought that the best place to follow a career in international affairs probably would be with the State Department or in the Foreign Service. So that led me to this. I did a couple of years with the United States Displaced Persons Commission in Germany. When that position was about to be abolished, I was considered favorably for the position of Assistant Land Observer in Freiburg, Germany, which was a position in the State Department. So that was where I got started.

Q: When you say "Land Observer," do you mean land, a German state?
ROMINE: Yes. This was an interesting time. The occupation as such had come to an end, but we still had the High Commission, and in each German state or land, there was a Land Commissioner who represented the former occupying power. This in Freiburg was the French. But then each of the other two occupying powers sent observers to watch what was going on. I went there as the Assistant to the U.S. Land Observer.

Q: And that was at Freiburg?

ROMINE: Freiburg in the Black Forest.

Q: And then you moved on to Stuttgart?

ROMINE: Yes. This was an interesting time. At that time there was a question of whether to maintain the old German states, that is to say Baden and Württemberg, or to combine them. There was a referendum carried on in both states, and they decided, quite overwhelmingly as I recall it, to combine the two states into the state of Baden-Württemberg.

Q: Which still exists today?

ROMINE: Which still exists today. The French had not wanted to do this. The French wanted to maintain separate states, and so in the South where they were, they had what they called Land Baden and Land Württemberg. In the north the Americans had combined the two states calling it Württemberg-Baden. There was a very vigorous campaign which was great fun and amusing. They had a president of the state in Freiburg who was vigorously supporting the re-establishment of the whole of Land Baden reaching from the Swiss border nearly up to Frankfurt, a large thing. But he lost. Delightful fellow, though.

Q: Were you working at cross purposes with the French, or was this strictly observational?

ROMINE: No, we didn't really have cross purposes with the French. That's to say, the French knew where we stood, and we knew where they stood, and we watched with interest. I think those of us who were in this part of Baden probably felt that that was a good idea, to maintain the old states. The French thought this was a wonderful idea, because it was to make Germany really a federal state with each state having very strong federal powers, and that appealed to them, I think, for obvious reasons, greatly. But we all stood back and watched this go and watched for President Bulline fight his cannon fight but lose.

Q: How long did you stay in Stuttgart?

ROMINE: I was looking at that this morning. I'm really in Baden now, and then I came up to Stuttgart in 1951 and stayed there until 1953, shortly after the election of Eisenhower as President, when we at that time again went through a reinventing government exercise in which many, many people including myself were invited to leave the government with letters of warm appreciation of what a fine job we had done; and that happened. But in the meantime, the times in Freiburg and Stuttgart were interesting in watching them put together this new German state, which really worked quite well.

Q: So did you stay in Europe or come back?

ROMINE: After the RIF arrived, I was offered a temporary appointment which allowed me to go to Berlin very briefly. I arrived there at a very interesting time, when there were riots in East Berlin against the Soviet occupation. I was able to observe this--not very near. They wouldn't let us go over into East Germany at that time, and I didn't stay there for very long.

Q: When you say "they," do you mean our authorities?

ROMINE: Our authorities, absolutely. I was cautioned very carefully about this by a man whom I came to admire and like very much in the Foreign Service years later by the name of Cecil Lyon.

Q: After your time in Berlin, you went to Bonn?

ROMINE: I went to Bonn for another rather brief time, where I was in the Office of Travel Control, a thing which was an enormously important instrument that the Allies used to control and direct the Germans after the war. We issued travel documents in lieu of German passports, so the office could have a good look at who people were, what they were going to do, and whether they were allowed to travel or not. At this particular time, of course, we were in the process of handing the whole operation over to the new German foreign office.

Q: Was it a means of sanction, or did everyone in effect have the right to travel?

ROMINE: Well, at the beginning it was certainly a means of sanction or of reward, how well you cooperated with the occupying powers or later even the High Commission, because if you didn't do this, you couldn't travel. Legally you couldn't travel, anyway. But later as more and more independence was handed over to the Germans, it became more and more a passport operation. When I was there, we were in the process of handing this over from this three-power office that we ran, which in itself was quite interesting and amusing, to the Germans.

Q: I had a somewhat similar situation in Japan as a visa officer a little bit later. We had the Japanese in effect through foreign exchange release mechanisms control the travel of their own people. It was a visa officer's dream, because everyone was vetted carefully before they even came to us. Was there anything like this with the Germans themselves vetting in advance?

ROMINE: Not as far as I remember. But then I came at the very end of this operation. I wouldn't be surprised but what that was the way that it had worked. But by the time I arrived, the large part of the office was to prepare to hand it over to the Germans. Since it was a tripartite thing, we had lots of interesting and different ideas about how the office should be run. I remember one thing which was very amusing. We had a Frenchman in the office who was deeply impressed by the strict security rules that we had concerning

confidentiality, locking up the files at night. He had never seen anything like this. He went on travel to a particular French office, and when he came back, he said to me, "I'm glad to get back, because as far as security goes, coming from that office to here is like going from hell to heaven."

Q: Well, anyway, it's about time for you to come back to Washington, I presume, after all this interesting living abroad.

ROMINE: Yes, that was because the appointment came to an end, and so we packed up and came back to Washington; but as soon as I came back, I was called and asked if I would be interested in working with the Refugee Relief office. Since I had had previous experience before I came into the Department with displaced persons and that sort of thing, I found that was an interesting job. This job consisted for the most part, however, of interviewing people who were going to go abroad with the Refugee Relief Commission and finding people who were qualified, particularly people who could speak other languages. At that time Italian and Greek, as I recall, were very important on the list.

Q: Were you able to find good candidates in those languages?

ROMINE: We found good candidates and amusing candidates--one man who was given an appointment and who was most amiable but who just never would fill out the little daily report that we were supposed to fill out at the end of each day telling what we had done. He would always bring it in in the morning, and finally the officer in charge said, "No, you stay tonight and do this," at which point he said, "I cannot read or write." He was a very successful man who had run a hotel business in New England, but his wife always did the paperwork.

Q: He probably went on to great things.

ROMINE: He went back to the hotel business.

Q: It strikes me that you would probably have wound up with native speakers from families of Greek and Italian ethnicity. Did this lead to any problems of personal agendas or divided loyalties?

ROMINE: There were always--not always, but often--personal agendas. Many people had relatives abroad. One man who had been in some law enforcement agency in the United States, which I don't recall now, and who was most anxious to go to Italy, set forth carefully where he could and where he could not serve in Italy, because he said if he went to Sicily, the Mafia would put a hit on him. Later he was assigned to Italy and he resigned because of this.

Q: Wise man.

ROMINE: Yes. By and large, what we found were people who were quite competent in

the language but who really had no idea of what the conditions would be under which people could be admitted to the United States.

Q: The fellow who could not read and write entered through other than the ordinary entry procedures. Am I correct?

ROMINE: Well, I think that's correct. He was interested, and he applied to the head of the Counselor and Security Services at that time, whom he knew.

Q: Was that Mr. McCloud, Scott McCloud?

ROMINE: Yes, and I received a call from Mr. McCloud saying he was sending this man over whom he thought was quite qualified and would I please interview him. I did interview him, and I was convinced that he knew Greek and that probably he could learn the procedures. We had a nice interview for about 15 minutes, at which time he said, "If you will excuse me now, I have to have lunch with Scotty in about 15 minutes." So I said, "That's fine."

Q: Some of us old-timers remember the controversy surrounding Mr. McCloud. So you probably put in two years in Refugee Relief?

ROMINE: Yes, about two years, I would say.

Q: And you went on to...?

ROMINE: I had a very good job in what we called the R area then, now INR.

Q: That's Intelligence and Research.

ROMINE: Right, and we were doing some studies at this time of various countries around the world. I knew French and got a chance to do some of those things, and I learned a great deal about France at that time, its social organization. I read the whole code of criminal instruction and of criminal justice, and those were two very interesting years, particularly because there were some very good people there who were scholars, university people who knew this very well and who could help you a great deal and could get you through these rather long and ponderous papers that we had to write. I enjoyed that.

Q: Was that the infamous NIS?

ROMINE: That was the infamous NIS.

Q: National Intelligence Survey.

ROMINE: Right. We would go over this and it would be vetted and approved in the

Department, but then it would have to get the final stamp of approval by what we called our sister agency.

Q: My recollection of the NIS is that it was an interminable process in which editors wielded far more powers than the original drafter and that other agencies had enumerable nitpicks, but that's a personal reaction.

ROMINE: This happened in certain cases. I think I was more fortunate than others, because the people who were running that part of the Department were very good people and helpful and, yes, of course, they did edit a great deal, but one had to say, it probably came out in more fluid, limpid prose than that which I brought out on my old Underwood.

Q: Well, let us skip forward to your appointment as a Foreign Service Officer in 1956, a vintage year where Foreign Service Officers started to be admitted after a long hiatus after the McCarthy era.

ROMINE: Well, yes, and one that caused no little controversy, because we had what they called the Wriston Program. I'm one of those Wristonees, and I always try to say this because many people will start to expound on their views of the lack of qualifications of these people, so it's best to make it clear right then, and that was what I was.

Q: That in effect meant that you were brought in at a higher rank than...?

ROMINE: No, it did not. I would have liked it, but at that time the lowest rank in the Foreign Service was Foreign Service Officer Class 6, and that's what I came in with.

Q: We've gotten you established as a Junior FSO. So what did the Department choose to do with you?

ROMINE: I finished out my time in INR and then was assigned in early 1957 to Polish language training in the FSI, the old FSI, and went through that very intensive work for about seven months, and then I was sent to Poland.

Q: Was that sufficient training? Did seven months produce a useful level of Polish?

ROMINE: Yes, it produced a useful level. It might have been a longer period, I think. I found that some of the people who came out from the Army training program in California seemed to have a better grasp of the program, because they had been at it a little longer, and I think they did things that we didn't do as much here, such as making them learn dialogue to go to the theater and that sort of thing, and this was very helpful to their fluency. But I had no complaints about what the FSI did. I thought it was a good program, but did work awfully hard.

Q: As a graduate about that time of the Monterey Language School, I am well aware of your description of how Monterey went about this training. In Polish, as in Russian, it

was an 11-month program, and frankly I think the Monterey program was better in its end result than FSI's programs. That is a personal observation.

ROMINE: When I saw the young military attaché who came out there at the same time I did and his ease and what appeared to me fluency in Polish, I did think he had gotten something that I didn't get, but then maybe he was a better student.

Q: You are quite a linguist. You had French, German, and Polish at your command; so the Department clearly sent you somewhere that would make use of this.

ROMINE: Well, I had French at my command and German less at my command, Polish not bad. I could do the things that needed to be done. I could read the newspapers, for instance. Among other things that we did there was to follow the Polish newspapers very carefully from all over the country.

Q: This was as a Political Officer in Warsaw?

ROMINE: As a Political Officer. We edited a thing everyday called The Polish News Bulletin, which was the only thing like that in English at that time. We did this jointly with the Brits, and they had a good Polish language officer there, and we would alternate doing the immediate news and then doing the news that was the long articles and that sort of thing. We had two parts of this bulletin. This was an interesting time, because, one, the Poles were remarkably free in what they could talk about, but, of course, their newspapers were carefully watched. Oftentimes if you read the provincial papers, things would appear in them that shouldn't appear at all. For instance, one time there was a strike in Lublin, and looking at this one morning, down in the corner, right-hand side of the paper, was a little thing that said there was a strike at the textile factory there. That was all that was said, but that, of course, caused great interest and pleasure that we were able to find out about this and could dispatch the head of the political section immediately to go to Lublin and see what was happening. It was also an interesting time because among other things that I did there was to run what they called the German Permit Office. This gets back something to travel control. We represented the Federal Republic in Poland. We ran an office, and under rather strict German rules we could issue visas to various people, people who wanted to go and visit their relatives in Germany.

Q: Poles?

ROMINE: Yes, Poles, but from what the Poles called the Western territories. There were many of these people who were German or who were part German, part Polish, and what they wanted to do most of all at that time was to leave, or at least to go on a visit to West Germany, where their relatives were looked upon as people being very fortunate and in very good material situations. So this was an interesting thing, and it was a very, very powerful instrument to have in dealing with the Polish government, which would sometimes become very unpleasant in its comments about the United States or any of our allies and could threaten to do certain things. I'm trying to think now what some of the

things were that they threatened us with, and that escapes me now, but at one point when they were particularly difficult about some kind of office space that we needed for this office, we simply shut the office down. It had an astonishing effect. We got a call immediately from the Foreign Ministry asking us why we were doing this, and we told them, and within 24 hours this whole thing had gone away and been resolved, because the Poles were very anxious to get their own official travelers out, and they couldn't go without this German visa that we put on their passports. That was interesting, and then the whole situation in Poland was interesting at this time. The Poles wanted to be very, very friendly to us, but shortly after I arrived the Russians put up Sputnik. It was a very unhappy moment, particularly to read the Polish press, which brought out all of the old clichés about this capitalism is great for making cars and refrigerators and all that sort of thing that people really don't need even though they may want it, but when it comes to pure scientific research, you can see that socialism leads the pack. We got that until we just could hardly look at it at all, and then one day in came a small paper, I think called Politika, and again down in the right-hand corner of one of the pages a little cartoon showed a Sputnik all dressed up at the top, very well presented, but from there on down he was in rags and he was barefooted. We got that paper, and when the Poles found out about it, the paper was confiscated. Everything was withdrawn. That was an interesting moment.

Q: How would you characterize the attitudes of the proverbial Polish man in the street as regards his own government?

ROMINE: I would regard it as, one, he didn't like it at all, because he felt it wasn't his government. He felt it was the Russians'. That was a thing that was always expressed to us. The commander of the Russian forces in Poland, I believe, as I recall, his name was Rokossovsky. They sent him there because he had been born in Poland and he spoke Polish, but he was a Russian. They looked at it this way. Another thing, the Polish government was very wise about this. They didn't object to people telling you this; just don't write it. So we heard this a great deal, and we had quite free access to all sorts of people that you could talk to, and they would always express this, even in very public places. It might be embarrassing to us, but they didn't mind, and the Polish authorities themselves didn't react unfavorably to this. It was another interesting time, because the man who was in charge of Poland at that time was not looked upon with favor by the Russians.

Q: Who was this?

ROMINE: This was Gomulka, and in 1956 before I had arrived, they had almost had a revolution there at the time of the invasion of Hungary. Gomulka at that time came to power and strongly and stoutly defended Polish interests and that sort of thing; so it was an interesting time there.

Q: Who was your Ambassador?

ROMINE: Our Ambassador was Jake Beam, who was first class, a very careful, cautious man, but who I felt developed very good relationships within the Polish government, particularly with the Foreign Minister, Rapacki. He saw him frequently. They socialized as much as one could, and he listened carefully to Rapacki's idea for denuclearizing Europe and that sort of thing. The Poles were very proud of this. They thought that this showed a certain amount of independence from the Russians.

Q: Were you or others involved in what might be termed intelligence on the Russians through warm relations with the Poles who in turn had greater access to the Soviets?

ROMINE: I wasn't involved in this. Some of my colleagues were and did quite well with this. My contacts with the Poles were limited mainly to the permit side of things, but that was very interesting. The Poles were not beyond having a good sense of humor, and a way to get back at the Germans, whom they didn't care much for. Among other things they had a very special arrangement between the Polish Red Cross and the German Red Cross to return Germans living in western territories of Poland directly to Germany. They started a train at Stettin -- we had nothing to do with this -- and they would load up six cars of this train. They would be sealed, filled with these German refugees, and the train would take off and go non-stop across to East Germany and right into West Germany. One day in my office I got a call from the Federal Ministry of the Interior saying, "You mustn't ever let these gypsies into Germany." I didn't know what they were talking about. Well, what the Poles had done that day: instead of six cars, they put on a seventh one, and in this were gypsies. When the Germans came to unseal the cars, the gypsies came out and disappeared. So we had then to go to the Foreign Ministry about that, but the Ambassador, who was very careful about this, said, "You just write up on plain white paper the story, and take it over to the Poles and tell them that we thought they ought to know about this," and so we did, and the Poles immediately said, "Oh, this was a terrible mistake, and we'll take them all back," but it was too late.

Q: Following Poland you were assigned to Paris. Is that correct?

ROMINE: Right, as a Political Officer.

Q: And that was a fairly large section, so you obviously had an area of specialization within the Political Section.

ROMINE: I came to follow the development of the European Communities from the political side. This had been very much in the domain of the Economic Section up to that particular point.

Q: We should specify 1959.

ROMINE: Yes, right, in 1959. They had just completed the Rome agreements where they had really written the charter of the thing, and the Political Counselor at that time was anxious to have someone in the Political Section who would follow it from that point of

view complementary to the real economic things, and I was assigned to do that. It was a fascinating time.

Q: At that time in Paris you had three embassies, major embassies, the bilateral one and the NATO one, but you also had the mission to the European Communities.

ROMINE: That was just beginning. At the time I arrived, as I recall, it was still in the embassy where Jack Tuthill was the Counselor for Economic Affairs; he was the Economic Minister at that time, but he left shortly thereafter and was replaced by Jack Reinstein and then returned to set up the sort of OECD operation, which he did for a year or so. We had a number of these things, but we were interested, of course, in how the French looked at this thing, and the French didn't always look at it the way we thought they ought to look at it.

Q: How did you go about covering the political aspects?

ROMINE: Well, I learned, of course, who was in charge of these things, and he was a fascinating man. His name was Jean Francois Pensé, and he was a young man, and he had worked on the combining of the two communities, the coal and steel and -- what's the other one? He was up in the Western European section of the Foreign Ministry, and it was with him that I made my first contacts and watched the growth of this thing. There was a feeling at that time in the Foreign Ministry--but I think it changed--that the President of France, M. de Gaulle, didn't look on this European Union movement all too favorably. As a matter of fact, he did, and he encouraged the French to do things that many other people.... One of the things that occurred after I arrived: de Gaulle came out and proposed that, in addition to discussing economic developments, the Communities establish what he called a small secretariat which would be based in Paris in which they would discuss not only economic developments but political matters. Well, people were horrified at this. At least, people said they were. Here was a thing that they were trying to promote, a good, growing economic union, and here was someone who was French trying to get in there and influence the thing politically and get these countries to do things in the political field -- it was never really quite defined what it was going to be -- that they weren't supposed to do, because they were to talk only about economic matters. The matter was sort of quietly shelved, but what was interesting about it was that the French were right about this, that they were going to have this union and knew that at sometime they were going to have to have political discussions about it, and they never gave up on this, and this did cause a certain amount of friction, I think particularly with certain parts of the Department at that time which felt themselves very much out of the European Communities but who wanted very much to push it in the direction they wanted it to go. The French understood this, and we had always friendly but animated discussions about that, but they always assured us that this was going to happen. I think they were always very right.

Q: How did this fit in with de Gaulle's famous directorate proposing . . . for the three?

ROMINE: That proposal came somewhat later and, of course, it didn't fit in well with

what the smaller members of the Communities saw or the members of NATO. He was going to have the three big NATO members, excluding the Germans, of course, make these decisions about what you were going to do not only just in Europe but, I think, all over the world. Well, the smaller people didn't go for this, and I think they also felt that probably nothing would come of it.

Q: At the time, of course, there were purportedly strong views within Quai d'Orsay and elsewhere in the French government with pro-Gaullist and anti-Gaullist factions and so on and so forth. How did this impact upon your services?

ROMINE: Well, most people were cautious in expressing any views about the President that would be too strongly opposed. A number of my colleagues at that time had different relations and talked to a number of people in the Ministry who were very, very much opposed to the General, particularly in matters of atomic weapons, on the direction that the French government was expected to take, which was nearly always characterized--when I say the French government, I mean the President--as anti-American and anti-British to a certain extent. There were also certain reservations about the efforts made by de Gaulle to create a better relationship with the Federal Republic, that is to say, a bilateral relationship, a Franco-German relationship somewhat outside of the NATO context. The French did a lot of this, and this did cause a certain amount of concern, but at the same time it was also recognized that these were astonishing steps being taken really to reconcile the French with the Germans. So that came into a great deal of our work. Among other things that I followed at that time, I followed a great deal the development of French nuclear power, followed the debates in the National Assembly which was led by Michelle Debray, an extraordinary man, very tough and always knowing exactly what he wanted to do and what he wanted to say. I went to one of the debates where he got up and defended the whole idea of the French building their own nuclear establishment. This came well before they had decided to nuclearize electrical power and that sort of thing in France, and he laid it out very well indeed. First of all, if France is going to be a great power in this world, it's going to have this nuclear capacity. And then he went at great length into the economics. This was the thing where we had criticized them very harshly and, I think, unwisely in many places. We claimed that this was going to bankrupt the French, and we couldn't have done a better thing to urge them on the way more. He, in this whole debate, laid it out very well, why this wasn't going to bankrupt them. it was going to create a whole new industry, it was going to create jobs; and he really carried the whole assembly with him that day except for the Communists. It was an extraordinary performance, and they had laid the groundwork. They had gone all over France to small industries and that sort of thing saying, "You're going to be a subcontractor here for this kind of thing, and look at the jobs this is going to create," and it was an excellent preparation for the decision which, I think, most people wanted anyway to be accepted.

Q: Meanwhile as a background obligato, the events in Algeria were taking place. Did that impinge at all?

ROMINE: Well, this was just a terrible and tragic thing from all points of view. Yes, they did impinge on it, because we saw this growing. I had known a number of officers who had served in the French army and were career people and who, when it became clear what was going to happen in Algeria, finally had to resign. But I always felt that there was no great overwhelming support for staying in Algeria as long as they had to fight that war in France. It seemed to me that de Gaulle recognized this early on, even when he made his famous tour of the officers' clubs in Algeria, but of course there came the moment when the generals in Algeria came into open revolt, and that was a very dramatic moment. They marched the people down to the Ministry of the Interior not far from the Embassy there, and I remember them walking up the street there, and we were sort of hanging out of the windows and they would wave to us. I don't recall whether they were distributing arms to them -- I don't believe so. I remember frantic appeals to them to go out and tell the troops if they came to put down their arms and not to do this, but they never came. It was a sad time that divided a lot of people.

Q: So you continued dealing with Francois Pensé as your main interlocutor?

ROMINE: Yes, until he left and went off to Morocco to take over the French aid program there, and then he was replaced by a man called Sannajay, who was an excellent officer. I think later on he went on as the Ambassador to Chile, but in the meantime he stayed in the Foreign Ministry and then was shifted to de Gaulle's staff where he was sort of his Chef du Cabinet--how do you say that?

Q: Chief of staff?

ROMINE: Well, he was kind of his special assistant for European political developments, a man that you could always talk very frankly with, and he was willing to reply frankly. That was the thing I liked about the French. Don't go to the Foreign Ministry or go to a French official without knowing exactly what you're going to do and what you're going to say, because otherwise they would have you. He drafted at one time a long French paper on how the European Communities should develop and, among other things, once again saying that there must be a political element in this, and you can't just have a union like this. He was very kind and gave us this paper right away, long before it came out. Later when we were talking, he said that the French always appreciated discussions with the Americans because with us they always knew where they stood and that sometimes it was very unpleasant but they never felt that they couldn't be as equally frank and candid. For them this was a valuable thing, because they always felt that they knew where they were and where we stood on these matters. We compared this to certain other of their allies -- and I won't say who.

Q: During much of this time soon after you arrived, it was Ambassador Gavin who came. How would you characterize his service in France? It was preceded by considerable media attention because of the new Kennedy administration and the General's laudable military service.

ROMINE: I would say that he had a pretty good grasp of what the French were going to do, particularly from the point of view of nuclear development. I admired him for that, and he pushed this, and he felt that the United States should be helpful to the French this way rather than being unhelpful, because his view was that they were going to do this. So I think from that point of view, he did well, and I don't think that what he wanted to do was well seen in Washington. That's my recollection of it. I think finally he was ready to depart. He didn't feel that he was getting anywhere on this particular thing. It seemed to me that that preoccupied him as much as anything, what was going on then with Franco-American relations, that we were facing something that they were going to do and that we should be helpful to them, that this would ease things for us. I think he had a hard time. A great deal was expected of him. He was expected to speak French fluently and that sort of thing, and I believe that it always bothered him, that he didn't do this as well as he would have wished.

Q: Then Ambassador Bohlen arrived, and he characterizes in his book, if I recall correctly, that it was the best embassy he had ever served in, that the machinery ticked over very well, and clearly you were a major part of this.

ROMINE: That was a nice remark in his book. I think everyone who served there and who read the book felt pleased about it. But, of course, he gave excellent leadership to the Embassy. He always would let you know where he was going, what he wanted to do, but he was willing to leave the responsibility to his various section heads. I always liked that. Working closely there in his office, you could see this, and he listened to what his officers had to say.

Q: We should point out at this point that he selected you to be his aide, his personal assistant.

ROMINE: Yes, he did.

Q: So you were peculiarly well qualified to see how he operated.

ROMINE: He had, I felt, a great feeling of what he as an ambassador should be doing and, of course, to convey what the United States felt and picked up from the French what they felt. But he had certain very good relationships with people right up at the top, including the President of the Republic and the Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville. He would then allow his other officers to pursue their work and do the things that they were doing and would review this with care and make comments on it; but they always felt that they had free rein with him to do the things as they saw. I always liked that about him.

Q: During your final three years in Paris where you had a bird's-eye view of what was going on as Assistant to the Ambassador, what wisdom did you derive from all this?

ROMINE: The Ambassador himself was a man who really was at home in the field of

foreign affairs. Someone might laugh at this, but he was a man at great ease, and one of the things that impressed me the most about him was that he had for years always been in contact with the leadership of the country, starting way back with Franklin Roosevelt, when he acted as his interpreter. I always felt this gave him a great confidence in himself and put him at ease with nearly anyone that he would meet, and that, of course, helped him a great deal in the things that he did and the relationships that he had. It was always an easy relationship, but he always understood the importance of the formalities that needed to be observed, and he always was able to put everyone at ease and he himself was. That was one thing. I learned that we could disagree, and frequently did disagree, with the French, but that you could disagree in ways that it wasn't taken as a personal thing. I enjoyed that very much.

I want to digress just a little bit and go back to when I first came to Paris during the time of Ambassadors Houghton and Gavin. A wonderful person there whom I enjoyed the most and who I thought was also an excellent diplomat was the DCM, Cecil Lyon. During a time when it was quite unpopular and not done very much to follow what was going on in the Gaullist camp or the right side of the political spectrum in France, Cecil Lyon had been careful to do this. This earned him not only the respect of the people who later took power in government but also a great deal of their affection and regard. I remember this very well. Years later when I was in Washington and we were celebrating the 20th anniversary of NATO, Michelle Debray came -- he was the Minister of Defense then -- to represent France at this meeting. He greeted him at the airport. He got into the car, and the first question he asked us was whatever happened to Cecil Lyon, because there was a man who, regardless of how other people might have looked at it, always kept in touch with us and followed things up. I always remembered him as a man who did things like that, who looked beyond things just outside of what was fashionable to be looking at.

I found mostly people were sympathetic with what de Gaulle was doing, and I do think also that even those who were not in sympathy with him still felt he could stir them in their pride of being French. He was very successful in doing that. There was criticism. I did meet a number of people, but not regularly or officially, who were members of the opposition, either socialists or radicals, that sort of thing, and they were sparing in their criticism of de Gaulle and also sometimes slightly amazed that Americans would speak to them in a way which indicated that they thought that de Gaulle had done certain things that were positive. You could always bring this up with the question of Algeria and that sort of thing, mainly because it had been the left. At the beginning it was very pro-Algerian--not pro-Algerian, but supposedly sympathized more with them--but even before de Gaulle took power had had to govern and begin to preside over the struggle that led eventually to the independence of that country.

Q: In 1965 you returned with enthusiasm to Washington, the Department, and to an office in the European Bureau on regional, political and military affairs?

ROMINE: Yes, of course, I took a year off and had a delightful year at the Industrial

College of the Armed Forces, the ICAF, which probably for me was a good thing because it gave me a picture of the economic and infrastructure of the world that I didn't have as close a grasp on, and I enjoyed that. Then I did come back into the Department, and I worked for about a year in RPM and then went on and was the French Desk officer for a couple of years. This was a most interesting time, because this time they had the great student uprising in Paris with barricades going up and also the downfall of Charles de Gaulle. It was a fascinating thing, because no one at that time believed that anything was going to overthrow the President, and yet there were certain indications in some of the opinion polls that were just beginning to appear that things would not go as well for him, and they didn't. One of the reasons for it was that he ran this referendum on a two-based thing. One, as I recall, was that France was going--it had something to do with an international organization--France was going to go on in European matters and that sort of thing; but the other was that they would abolish the Senate. Many people felt that he could have won on the first thing, but in attacking the Senate, he finally took on long, vested interests in France, and they simply would not tolerate this. In other words, there were a lot of senators who were going to be out of jobs, and if you're out of a job as a senator, then you also give up your job as the mayor of your community and several other offices which you can hold--as they say, the accumulation of jobs. It's still being discussed in France today. In fact, I think I heard something about it yesterday on the news. People started to look at this. This was one of the things that led to their finally defeating him on the referendum. Of course, it was a strange thing. He had always said if he didn't win the referendum, he would resign. I don't think anyone believed that, but he was a man of his word, and when the referendum was lost, he left immediately. I think the French were probably a little tired of him. He had been in power for ten years or so. Secondly, politically he made a capital error, and it's one of the few times that I ever saw that he made a mistake like that, unless perhaps he was getting ready to go anyway and wanted to go out with a flourish.

Q: Did we have big bilateral questions in play at that time?

ROMINE: I don't recall that we had big bilateral questions in play at that time. We were most anxious for the European Communities to be upward looking, as we said--in other words, to encourage free trade and, of course, the free exchange of goods. Of course, large American sales to Europe were a very normal thing, and we did have the feeling that the French wanted to turn a lot of this within to be able to do the trading within Europe but not to afford any particular favors to the United States. This did cause some problems. One time Ambassador Bohlen went to Bordeaux, where he made a speech about the development of the European Communities, and he suggested that the Communities, if they really wanted to grow and develop, should be an outwardly turned group--just this. That was all that he really said, but this caused a great deal of irritation and calls to him from high members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protesting that he was interfering in the internal affairs of France. I must say it wasn't pushed very hard, but still it was stated.

Q: After your exertions on the French desk, you went on to your next reward which was a

change of pace into administration.

ROMINE: That was an amusing time, because we were called upon at this time once again to reform and straighten out the Department of State. My job there had to do with helping prepare the great book that came out called Diplomacy for the '70s, and this put together task forces from the entire Department who wrote on all sorts of different subjects and put them all together into one huge book, which was interesting, sometimes quite contradictory, but we were driven on by the exhortations of the gentleman in charge of administration in the Department at that time, or management, I guess, that if we didn't do it, Congress would do it, and that we'd better do it. And so we came out with this great book. It was of interest. Some years later, at the time of my departure, retirement, I spoke to someone who had also contributed to Diplomacy for the '70s, and his comment was, "Diplomacy of the '70s -- that's so long ago I don't know whether it was the 1970s or the 1870s." But it was an interesting time, and we did work hard putting these things together.

Q: Well, then in 1971 you were assigned once again to Regional Political and Military Affairs in the European Bureau?

ROMINE: This was an interesting time. I was on the military planning and training side of things, and this permitted me, and in fact made it necessary, to work very closely with the Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary for NATO Affairs -- that isn't what it was called -- and in this we worked on a number of interesting problems including nuclear planning, which was an exercise, I think, devised very much to involve the Europeans and to keep them abreast of nuclear problems. So there were always very high-level meetings in which the whole question of nuclear matters in Europe, in particular, would be discussed and then a briefing by a U.S. representative. We had the State role, and this was one to oversee, to look at what was going on, but the main actors on the scene, of course, were the Defense people who had the real expertise on this thing, or at least so they said. This was a thing to reassure our allies, one, that we weren't going to run off and do something that they didn't want us to do with nuclear things, and also to give them, to the extent possible, the idea that they would participate or at least were consulted on things in nuclear planning and things that were going on. That I found was quite interesting. We also had other things to do, and this gave you some idea of how complicated the whole NATO organization was. One was the development of transportation, non-military transportation, and how it could be used by the Alliance in times of war, how you would get civil transportation such as shipping, air, that sort of thing. This we worked on a great deal. We wrote a few interesting papers about this and tried to work together with the NATO people to coordinate this. I found those were interesting years.

Q: 1974 takes you back to Europe, to one of its more delightful cities, as Consul General in Strasbourg, with all the excitement of France and the Consular Bureau associated functions.

ROMINE: Those were three lovely years. One, you're far enough away from the capital so that generally speaking you can do the things that you want to do or that you feel are important. This was an absolutely fascinating part of France, especially in Alsace. When you cross the Vosges Mountains and come down into Alsace, you find that there's another language spoken there. It's a language very much like German. It is a German dialect. This gives people a slightly different viewpoint of things. Also, they have always felt that they had been very much protected and taken care of by the people of what they call the interior, the people of the interior. That was meant as a highly complimentary thing to the French-speaking people, but sometimes it wasn't taken that way and the French people thought that this was aimed at them as a condescending sort of thing, but it wasn't. I was very interested to see how this affected people's attitudes in that part of the world. While there were many people of the left there, what the French would call the left, the Socialist party, still with these people in Alsace there was a great feeling of being very, very French and therefore very much attached to the memory of de Gaulle, who was, of course, out of the picture by that time, and an even nicer thing, a feeling of deep affection for the Americans, because the American 7th Army who came down and been highly instrumental in freeing that area from the German occupation at the end of the war. This you found always reflected in the attitudes of the people towards anyone there who was American, and it made your work interesting. Also, it was an interesting place from what was going on. There was a rapidly developing area that had a lot of industry in it that was interested in getting into the American market and in buying things. One of the things that I remember the most was a textile industry which was most interested in getting American cotton and which, for reasons that were sometimes obscure, always seemed to have difficulty in doing this. The consular district itself covered not just Alsace but also Lorraine and parts of France bordering on Switzerland, very beautiful country. It gave you a different view of how people would view problems than you would get from being in Paris. Then there was the Council of Europe and later on the European Parliament. The Council of Europe was sort of a discussion- (end of tape)
-members who were not members of the Communities at that time like Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey, and they could meet and discuss all of these European questions. As I recall, also the Council had the Court of Human Rights attached to it. Now, maybe that's with the European Communities. I don't think so. I think it was with the Council. And that was a very interesting thing. We followed its work a great deal. During the time I was there, there was a dispute between the Irish and the English on the holding of prisoners in Northern Ireland, Irish Republican prisoners, of course. This was debated at the Council. It was a splendid thing to see these perfectly trained English barristers from both sides, English or Irish but all obviously out of good English universities, debating this with the most exquisite courtesy to each other and some of the most sad and tragic matters that you could talk about, that they all recognized themselves as they made these debates. That was a part of my stay there that I found very rewarding, mainly because the representatives there certainly wanted to reach some sort of understanding. They knew how to talk to each other, and they were all very pessimistic, to say the least, that any solution could be found. The court did find, however, in favor of the Irish complaint this time, and the Brits acknowledged this and, I think, the prisoners were released or something was done. Then the assembly of the European Parliament came there, and they

built a new great building for them. That was an interesting thing to follow, but, of course, the mission in Brussels liked to cover this very carefully itself, and its representatives were nearly always there, but still you could watch carefully what was going on, and the residence where I had the great fortune to live could be used to receive prominent guests and people from Brussels that I could talk to.

Q: Well, back to the U.S. in 1977, to San Diego.

ROMINE: Yes, that was a good year. That was an interesting year because that was the year that the debate on the Panama Canal was raging furiously in the United States, and as a State Department representative in San Diego, as a diplomat in residence at the University of San Diego, California University at San Diego or California State -- this was a small university -- I was often called upon to give the Department and the U.S. official point of view on why the Panama Canal Treaty should be passed and ratified. I found it an excellent exercise, because living up and down the coast of southern California were many retired generals and admirals who held a strenuous view against this, and I was oftentimes called upon to debate these matters. Ours was the usual thing, that this has got to be done now. It can be done easily without any undue sacrifice on the part of the United States. The Panamanians--it's their country, they are able to run the canal property, and anyway it won't revert to them for many, many years. The other was that we have the Canal Zone where people have been living all their lives. These people are going to be unjustly denied their rights, and anyway it's well known that Panamanians will never be able to run the canal. That was a good debating point, and we had lots of fun doing it, and they would always take a vote at the end of the debate, and I lost every time. One of my opponents did say that I had presented the same old State Department line in a pretty stylish and elegant way, so that was the closest I came to a victory. I also had a good year speaking to young people who were interested in the Foreign Service. I went up and down the coast as far up as Los Angeles to talk to people who were interested in this, and I was also surprised at that time to learn that people were interested but they really felt that the time and effort that it would take to prepare and enter the Service, go through the examinations and finally possibly be appointed did not really fulfill the material needs that they thought that they would have at that time. So it was a tough thing then really getting people interested enough to persuade them to fill out the application and take the exams. I realized then that time was going by.

Q: And time did go by. The next year you headed off to your final post in Vienna as head of the Political Section.

ROMINE: Yes. That was a very interesting two years. One of the things that was interesting was the Austrian government at that time was headed by one of the grand old men of European manners, Bruno Kreisky, not only a very successful administrator of his country but a highly successful politician who had a great feel for his country and who had, because he was of Jewish origins, passed his war years in Sweden. He was an interesting man, because he was very interested in the Arab-Israeli problem, and he was also quite sympathetic with, or at least willing to talk to, the leaders of the Palestinian

Liberation Force, Mr. Arafat. This did cause a certain amount of concern in the Department of State, who wanted us to stand back from all of this, which we did to some extent, but the Ambassador's relationship with Mr. Kreisky was so good and so close.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

ROMINE: His name was Milton Albert Wolf. He was a political ambassador from Cleveland, but he had pulled together his knowledge and his act of what was going on there, and he worked very hard and he did very well in Austria. He too was a man who was very generous in letting his subordinates in the Embassy pursue their work. We didn't have any very great problems with Austria at this time. Some of the things that we had suggested or wanted to do, such as give Austria a bit more military assistance and that sort of thing, didn't go very far. They had a modest program, but Vienna was an interesting place because it really was the center of a neutral country, very much as Switzerland had once been before World War I, and during that period it was, of course, bordered by Switzerland, Italy, West Germany, and then by Czechoslovakia and Hungary and Yugoslavia. The Viennese handled this really tough and delicate relationship very well. They never made any secret at all that they were very pleased that they were all one country, not divided as the Germans were, but they went to great lengths to point out that, in addition to the Americans having made this possible, it was always also the Russians. I never talked to them on anything but what there wasn't this very careful balancing act--quite understandable. As one Viennese said to me one time, "This is fine for you people who are a big power sitting on the other side of the Atlantic, to take certain very strong attitudes vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, but we are within 30 miles of the Czechoslovakian frontier and the same amount from the Hungarians, and you have to remember there are Russian troops in those countries, and we are very sensitive to this kind of thing," and indeed they were, although it was interesting that their relations with the Hungarians were always quite easy, and none of them ever ceased talking about the old Austro-Hungarian empire. On the other hand, their relations with the Czechs were often quite difficult, and the Czechs were often quite hostile to them. That too probably was a reflection of the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

Probably the most difficult time we had was when the President visited Vienna to sign the MBFR agreement with Brezhnev, and this led to a very close working relationship with the Soviets there. The whole meeting went off quite well, meetings at the Austrian Embassy, at the American Embassy, and then the huge signing ceremony. All had gone well, and then came the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. One of the more interesting things in our experience there was the question of Austrian participation in the Olympic games that were scheduled for Moscow. As soon as the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan, we were urged to urge the Austrians, which we did for a long period of time, not to participate in the games, and they tried everything that they could. First, they told us that we would have to talk to the Olympic Committee about it, that the Austrian government really couldn't do that and whatever the Olympic Committee decided was all right with them. We did talk to the Olympic Committee, and the Olympic Committee told us they had no intention of getting into deep trouble with the Austrian government by

leaving the games, and it went back and forth and back and forth. In one very telling thing with, if I'm not mistaken, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he said the Austrians had cautioned us at the time the Soviet Union and Afghanistan signed their non-aggression treaty, that they felt this had great dangers for the independence of Afghanistan and that we should do something about it, take some sort of measures, because this absolutely would happen. They pointed out that they didn't feel we had done anything and that at this point, given their position as a neutral, they just were not going to offend the Soviet Union by not participating in the Moscow Olympics, and they did participate. That was probably the most interesting and irritating matter that came up during my short time in Austria.

Q: Well, looking back over this long and illustrious career, do you have any valedictory observations or remarks?

ROMINE: I hadn't thought of the valedictory. Well, I guess the first thing I can say is this was a rewarding life for me. I'm glad I had the chance to do it. Certainly I was always pleased to find that the people who were leading the U.S. diplomatic effort and the U.S. diplomacy were, one, devoted to the thing and, two, were very bright people. If we made mistakes along the way or people felt we were a little overbearing, it is very possible that we might have been, but we were the outfit that was leading the world at this time, and I thought that our efforts there were very good and commendable. As I look back now into 1950 and see what has happened, the end of the Soviet Union--Ambassador Bohlen used to talk about the Soviet Union. He had a very interesting theory that the Soviet Union was probably going to fall apart all by itself if we would just leave it alone. Therefore, the idea of containment wasn't a bad idea. With two governing things such as the Communist Party and the governmental structure, it would fall apart. I say that because it seemed to me that the people I worked with always had a pretty good long-term view of where we should be going and what we should be doing, and if there were certain tactical errors made along the way, we still kept going towards the goals that we had set, and I thought that that went well. So it was a good time.

Q: Thank you, Sir.

End of interview