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

MCKINNEY H. RUSSELL, SR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: March 11, 2009

[Note: this interview was not edited my Mr. Russell prior to his death.]

LIST OF POSTS

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- Born and raised in New York City
- Yale University - Russian area studies
- US Army - 1951-1953
- American Friends of Russian Freedom - Germany

Munich, Germany - Radio Liberty	1955-1962
USIA - Washington, DC	1962
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Chinese language study - FSI and Taiwan	1985-1987
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USIA - Counselor for Agency	1991-1993
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 11th of March, 2009, and this is an interview with McKinney H. Russell, Sr. And this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. And this is a repeat. We'd done one about 11 years ago.

RUSSELL: Was it that long ago?

Q: I don't know how many. I'm thinking that's the number but it's a number of years ago. And the transcript didn't turn out very well for whatever reason so we're redoing it. We're just starting out in this year. Okay, and you go by McKinney.

RUSSELL: I do now. For a long time-

Q: Alright. It was some years ago so we're just going back and you say you go by McKinney?

RUSSELL: I have for the last 20 years or so; usually use the whole first name. For a very long time everyone called me Russ and everyone in my own family calls me Mac. And my wife, my late wife's family, who are all French, always have called me Ken. Now, whether or not this multiplicity of names has created any kind of identity crisis, I wouldn't guess. I don't think so. I answer to any one of the four.

Q: Okay. Well just, the way I do, since I left the Foreign Service I always announce my name as Charles Stuart Kennedy because everybody knows me as Stu Kennedy but in official documents it's Charles S. Kennedy so what the hell? I cover all bases. One learns to do these things.

Okay. Well, I'll go by McKinney. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

RUSSELL: I was born in Long Island City in New York, in the borough of Queens of New York City, and I was born on the 28th of May, 1929. My parents had just recently moved north from Jacksonville, Florida, where they lived. My father was a newspaperman who worked for the "Brooklyn Eagle," ultimately, some years later, and for a long time until his early death was a printer for the "Brooklyn Eagle." I was born there but grew up in Brooklyn, New York, to where my family moved in about 1930.

Q: Okay. Well, let's talk a bit about your father's side. By the way, when we mention "Brooklyn Eagle," I always think of Whit Whitman.

RUSSELL: Yes, I thought of it quite recently. Just last Sunday I attended the Lincoln Memorial service at the National Cathedral here in Washington. There was a very sharp remembrance of the "Brooklyn Eagle" and of Walt Whitman. The hindermost work called "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" was performed by the Cathedral choral society brilliantly; it was a wonderful performance. But in the process of reading about it I realized that the dooryard in question was not somewhere in the Southland but in Brooklyn at his mother's home. At some time during the Civil War Walt Whitman came back to Brooklyn, visited his mother and was moved by the lilacs growing there to write the work which is now so reminiscent of the period and of his poetry.

Q: Associated with Lincoln.

RUSSELL: Indeed, yes. Now my father, like his father before him, was a linotypist. He knew the newspaper and knew the language extremely well. My grandfather had been a printer for the "Jacksonville Journal" and it seemed like the normal thing for a son to do, moved into his father's footsteps.

Q: Do you know where the Russells came from?

RUSSELL: The family story is that many of the Russells in the southern part of the country are descended from a trio of brothers who emigrated from Cardiff in Wales in the year 1699. I don't have documentation of this; this is the family story. And there is also by my grandmother's side a German admixture: a group of German refugees from the southwestern part of the country came to the South in the 18th century, settled in and around Greenville, South Carolina, and the family name there is Hyer. The Hyer family is one of the better documented families. There's a biographical listing of all the descendents of the original German emigrants named Hyer who had come to the States in some year- as I recall about 1735 or 1740. In any case that's where the roots are.

My mother's family were from Atlanta, Georgia. She was a direct descendent of the Hyer group that came from Germany and my father's background is in Florida. They met in Jacksonville in the mid '20s, got married in '26. I arrived in '29 -- just after their decision to move to New York City to seek employment. Whether or not the early years of the Depression forced this decision on them or not, I'm not sure, but that's the way it was then.

Q: Did you get any, in your family, did you get any comments or knowledge of the history of linotypers? Because this is a very powerful union.

RUSSELL: You're quite right. The union was very strong. In 1937, when I was eight, my father suffered from rheumatic fever, a heart problem which led to his spending a full year with all salary paid at a recovery home which belonged to the printers, run by them in Colorado. He was also active in the print shop. At the newspaper he was, for several years, the head of what was called- they had an odd word for it, it's not parish or charter; the union unit has a special name that is unique to printers; it just doesn't come right to mind. My father always retained his southern accent. His nickname at the "Brooklyn

Eagle" was Reb, short for Rebel, a reference to the Civil War. In any case that's where I started and that is the background.

Q: Well let's talk just a bit more. Do you know, did your mother or father go to college?

RUSSELL: Neither one.

Q: I'm still talking to people, like myself, whose families' parents didn't go to college but basically they're probably better read than many of the college graduates of today. I mean, this is an awful lot of self-help and organizations that people just didn't have the money to go to college.

Was the Civil War a factor in your upbringing at all?

RUSSELL: Well there were references to it. My middle name is Hearn and on my mother's side there was reference to a particularly valiant fighter on the Southern side whose name was Major B. J. Hearn. I have kept it in my mind because I have his name as my middle name. Also my first name is obviously a family name as well and it was my maternal grandmother's maiden name, which was given to my father, who was also McKinney Hearn Russell. So I became junior and my wife and I gave the name to my older son who is now junior, making me senior. So the family name, McKinney, has attained a certain amount of permanence. However, it's a constant daily hassle to get people to accept the fact that Russell is my last name.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: No day goes by when I don't have to explain that I'm not Mr. McKinney; no day.

But anyway, that's some of the family background. I can still hear the unmistakable Southern intonation of the way my mother and father spoke.

Q: Where did your family fall politically during the time that you remember?

RUSSELL: They were Democrats and it seemed like the natural place to be, as a working man with union affiliations. And that was pretty much their politics right along. They had a number of rather traditional Southern views about race issues. My mother had a strange anti-Catholic bias in her mind. I've never understood what the reason for it was; something out of her girlhood I suppose but she tended to be very critical, thought the Pope was up to no good.

Q: Well this is very much a thing. I was born in 1928 and I can remember, at a certain point I was kind of warned away, don't get too serious about Catholic girls because if you marry a Catholic girl your children will have to be brought up Catholic and that was doom and disaster. And you know, we were, you know, not very hard core Episcopalians, just kind of Sunday Episcopalians. Now there was this it's them and us and also when I

interview Catholics of the period they felt it was them and us, too. It's something today that's sort of gotten completely washed over.

RUSSELL: My mother mellowed over the years. In 1959 when I married a Jewish girl she was surprised but absolutely accepting. My wife and my mother got along very well indeed so I don't think it was a big factor.

Q: Was religion much of a factor in your life?

RUSSELL: It was an important factor when I was between the ages of eight and 14, I suppose. I sang as a choirboy at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn. Not the St. Bartholomew's on Park Avenue but the one in the Crown Heights/Bedford-Stuyvesant part of Brooklyn. And it was important because of the steady exposure to the teachings of the church, regular attendance at church. Also it was very important in training me to read music and to appreciate classical music, which has been a big part of my life all of my life. So the Church was important in that regard. It was also that the Church was the scene of my activities as a Boy Scout. I was a very active Scout between 1941 and 1946. But over the years I drifted away from the Church. I came back very eagerly, I guess, is the right adverb, in 1998 when my wife passed away. I found considerable solace in returning to the Episcopal Church and I've been an active member of St. Alban's Church since then.

Q: This is St. Albans in-

RUSSELL: On the Cathedral grounds, here in Washington.

Q: Did you have siblings?

RUSSELL: I did. I was born in '29; in 1932 my mother bore twins, a boy and a girl, and then in 1940 a fourth child was born, Keith David is his name. The twins were named Doris and Donald; they were born in June of '32 and both of them married, both of them had three children, so I have a fairly good sized family of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews and so on.

Q: How, as a family how close were you as a kid when you were growing up?

RUSSELL: Quite close. We did not have a really difficult Depression for reasons that have something to do with union membership or whatever. My father worked steadily right through. He must have joined the "Eagle" in maybe '30 or '31 but then worked there with them until his death in '54.

Q: Were you much of a, as a young kid when you started out were you much of a reader?

RUSSELL: Yes, I read a great deal. I was a fairly conscientious student and worked hard and read a lot and did well in school and was generally not a hellion. I pretty much toed the line; the way things were was what I tended to accept. And I had a peaceful

upbringing. I was a little bit nervous and edgy, moved around a lot; had to be told to sit down but nothing particularly noteworthy about those years.

Q: Do you recall, let's say sort of up through the elementary school years, any particular books or series or anything that particularly interested you?

RUSSELL: I remember when I was 11 or 12 reading everything I could get my hands on by Albert Payson Terhune.

Q: Oh, "The Collies."

RUSSELL: "The Collies," yes. I read all of the dog books without exception. Read most, if not all of the Dr. Doolittle books.

Q: Hugh Lofting.

RUSSELL: Hugh Lofting's works. Those are two that come immediately to mind. I had great interest when I was 13 or 14 for science fiction.

Q: Well it was a great period of these astounding fiction and all these magazines that were really- authors of today are in collections or we're reproducing.

RUSSELL: Right.

Q: In school, let's say still sticking to elementary school, how did- any subject particularly grab you or any ones that didn't?

RUSSELL: From the beginning I have always had a much greater predilection for the spoken and written word and its meaning. I felt I was under-endowed in everything that related to anything that was technical and making things work. I sailed through everything with the highest grades I could get in high school. I really didn't know or like physics, didn't get good numbers; started chemistry and as I recall dropped out. I couldn't make any sense of it at all. I mean, my own predilection has always been very, very strongly in the verbal areas. In high school I did three years of French and three years of Latin and scored the highest number that anybody could have gotten in those subjects. They were straight hundreds and all the words were right. And I never made a particular point of it. I just accepted the fact that some people are put together one way and some in other ways. It continues right to this day. I'm very bad at following instructions and making things work; really, really close to incompetent.

Q: We're all, I won't say blessed but we're all cursed, maybe, with being in an era where almost technology is becoming more and more important.

RUSSELL: Very difficult to keep up. I'm just managing. I've been online for a dozen years but there's still basic things I don't know how to do with a computer although I use it for all kinds of things.

Q: Well again going, let's stick to elementary and then we'll move to high school but during elementary school, what was the Brooklyn school system like as far as your feeling about the teachers and also about the mixture. Who was at your school?

RUSSELL: I went to Public School 138 on Prospect Place in Brooklyn in a neighborhood which has changed a great deal. Now, at that time it was largely white and race was not an issue of any particular importance. The principal had the rather glorious name of Maximilian J. Lustgarten. One interesting thing about my transition out of elementary school to high school is that in 1942 a new high school called Midwood High School opened its doors for the first time, across the street from Brooklyn College, with great promise and with promise which has been fulfilled to being a special school for extremely bright kids. It happens to be in a part of Brooklyn where the percentage of people from Jewish background is singularly high because a lot of emigrants, second generation after settling in the lower East Side, moved to mid Brooklyn to live. I've heard this story from both my parents over the years. The principal of this new school, Midwood High School, whose name was Jacob M. Ross, was concerned that there were so few non-Jews there. In the spring of 1942 he got in touch with Maximilian Lustgarden, the principal of my PS 138 and said haven't you got any bright goyim? And Max came back and said we've got this one kid, Russell, who's tearing the place up, at least in certain areas, not in everything. And I was not in the school geographic area; I had to get a special exception to go to Midwood High School and had to travel some distance by trolley car every day for four years of high school.

Q: So you were the token?

RUSSELL: I was the token; I was the token goy.

Q: I've interviewed one female Foreign Service officer who grew up in Brooklyn, Jewish, and said that, you know, it wasn't until she got to college that she met anybody who wasn't Jewish. I mean, because she grew up in a neighborhood- It's interesting, there would be Irish blocks and Italian blocks and sometimes you had to know how to walk in order so you didn't go into the wrong ethnic block. Did you have that?

RUSSELL: It never affected me in any particular way. I do remember that when I was in Scouts I had a good friend named Lloyd Larson who lived in another part of Brooklyn which was completely Norwegian and Swedish and nobody up and down his block was named anything but Larson or Olson.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: That's the way things formed. Some of those neighborhoods are still more or less intact. There's an Estonian neighborhood in Upper Manhattan. I've never been to it but I've had it described to me as being a very unusual little collection. It's the way it works in immigrant societies, I suppose. I never thought it was a disadvantage. The competition, the Jewish tradition for excelling and working hard in academic fields was

very much at play. My academic average was about 96.5 for the four years of high school. I was fifth in my class. So the competition sharpened the edges, all to the good.

Q: By the time you got to high school, was this a different atmosphere?

RUSSELL: Not really all that different. The elementary school that I went to had great variety, a lot of Irish and Italian. No Hispanics yet at that time. And then the move to Midwood. The competition was much stiffer in Midwood High School because of the factors that I mentioned. Those years were fairly happy, uncomplicated ones.

Q: How about living in New York? Were you able to sort of savor Broadway and the museums and all?

RUSSELL: Oh yes. Not as a 10, 11-year-old but at 13 to 15, 16, 17 I traveled into the city on the subway on my own without the slightest concern. When I was in my last year of high school in Midwood I got involved in an institution which you may have met other alumni of. I don't know if Camp Rising Sun rings any bell for you, who have talked to so many people.

Q: Very vaguely but I'm not-

RUSSELL: It was a camp started in 1930 by a philanthropist who was concerned that very bright young kids, boys, in New York City were not getting a chance to succeed in life and get into good colleges and so on because they didn't have leadership training and they didn't have a chance to grow and expand their knowledge. So he set up this boys' camp in upstate New York, near Rhinebeck. It's a scholarship and still is; you can't apply for it, you can't pay your way in. Nobody pays anything. And I was picked by the founder of the camp who came down to Midwood High School in the spring of 1945 and in '45, '46, '47 I spent all the summers at Camp Rising Sun. It is a particularly interesting institution because of its international coloration; very, very strong. Right after the war George Jonas, the founder, decided that it was essential to strengthen the foundation of the world knowledge that he wanted to pass on to the youngsters whom he picked for the camp for there were to be youngsters from foreign countries. And for the camp opening at the end of June of '45, he managed to find a Finnish camper, a Danish camper, a Norwegian camper, a Mexican camper. Midwood High School was a real center for attention. We knew every day how things had gone at Stalingrad and what was happening in Kursk. How closely we followed the war during those years.

Q: You know, I belong to the same generation, I was born just a year before you; it's the greatest lesson in geography.

RUSSELL: Boy, oh boy.

Q: You know, I mean, we knew, you know, where Kursk was and where-

RUSSELL: Iwo Jima and-

Q: You know, every little thing.

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: I mean, one asked- The war was really very much, particularly for a boy, I think, it was the center of your attention.

RUSSELL: Oh my yes. It put all kinds of interesting demands on one. During those years when I was 16, 17, 18 I was very active, as I mentioned, in the Scout movement. Kids of 18, young guys of 18 who would have been the junior assistant Scout Masters, were all fighting the war, had gotten drafted or signed up and were gone. At one point in, it must have been '45, '46, I was going to three different Scout troops every week, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, because the leadership wasn't there. So the awareness of the world was very high. The French kid in '45 at this camp had been a runner for the Resistance. He had some stories that were really quite remarkable about getting the word to the maquis, where the German trains were going to be going over and leading to the explosives being placed and the trains being completely blown up. He was 15; he'd been doing this when he was 11.

Rising Sun, this whole experience, the internationalism and the leadership and the emphasis on ideas had a really strong, I would almost say- transformative may be a little strong because I was already coming out of Midwood and the second, third generation classmates I had whose parents talked about what it was like in _____ and so on. I knew the world was out there and a very different, complicated place.

Q: Well did, several things. In the first place, let's work on Rising Sun. What would you do? I mean, what was the routine there?

RUSSELL: The athletics and the instruction period and the project period were organized by a group of five of the campers chosen by the counselors. The counselors were there to give counsel and to guide them but the Indian word "sachem" was used for these- "sachem" meaning wise man in Iroquois or Lenape, I'm not sure where. The sachems were actually put in charge of running the camp. For example, every morning there was a 45 minute period of squad work, where the clean up work in the toilets and in the kitchen and on the tent hill were undertaken. The organization of how that work would be done was done by the sachems themselves. At the beginning of the season the sachems were always second year campers, those who knew the routines of the place from the previous year. There were always seven or eight, nine returning campers every year who carried on the traditions. They said this is how you do it and this is the way you don't do it, and the Rising Sun way is this way or that way. That elite training, encouragement and leadership was very, very important.

There was a great deal of attention by the counselors and by George Jonas, the founder, in giving each kid the sense that he and his problems and organizing his life and his studies and his personal life were something that really, really mattered to them very,

very much. The leadership was strengthened by this kind of concern that you really matter and your development as you're entering the preliminary years before adulthood, that this period 14 to 16 is really a time of genuine growth and development. And George Jonas was a remarkable philanthropist with people because he had a way of talking to you as a 15 year old kid as if there were absolutely nobody else in the entire world who mattered in any way; accessible and interested and alert. Over the years he wrote thousands of handwritten leaders to the campers, maintaining contact with them. I'm on the board of the foundation that runs the camp now.

Q: Do you know where his money came from?

RUSSELL: His father was an extremely wealthy American, co-owner of a Franco-American company which dealt in a product which is no longer much in demand, hatteras felt.

Q: Oh good God.

RUSSELL: The Jonas Company, Pellissier et Jonas, was a French-American company. George Jonas inherited a great deal of money and prospects for a steady income because this was a time when everybody wore a fedora.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: What ultimately happened to the company I don't know, but George Jonas heavily endowed the camp and it is still functioning now, 76 years, 78 years later, drawing on the funds that were left by George Jonas.

Q: Did you, even though the camp or through the high school, run into something, I'm thinking, you know, being in New York and being at a particular high school having very strong Jewish ties, did you run into sort of the New York Jewish socialist/communist? I mean, these are two separate strains but coming out of Germany was that at all an issue?

RUSSELL: It wasn't really particularly noticeable. The attention that was paid to the Holocaust as it became known in the mid '40s and after the war, there was an atmosphere of tremendous resentment- a concern, a focus on this aspect of the history of the time. There was one activist in my high school who was an outspoken communist who was particularly intent on getting everybody to cheer on the Red Army and make sure that everybody respected the value of our great Soviet ally.

Q: Well of course at that time, I mean, we followed it with, you know, great admiration.

RUSSELL: Well it made this difference, Stu, in my own choices. When I got to Yale in the fall of '46 there was the immediate past experience of the war and the immediacy of the events and the impact of meeting these youngsters from the countries that had been occupied, the Finns, and the Camp Rising Sun experience. At the end of my freshman year I had this strong feeling that what happened next vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was

going to be really decisive for our country. As a freshman I took French and Spanish. I decided that in my second year that I was going to get very seriously into Russian, which is what I did and where I've been ever since.

Q: This is in high school.

RUSSELL: This decision is in college. And ultimately, after a year of learning the language I decided that Russian area studies would be my major.

Q: In high school, did you get involved with any- I guess you were so busy with Scouts; any other extracurricular activities?

RUSSELL: One other extracurricular. There was a newspaper, a very left leaning tabloid newspaper which went out of business in the late '40s, I think, called "PM." I don't know if you ever came across it.

Q: Yes. I can't think of the man's name who ran the thing.

RUSSELL: It doesn't come to my mind either. For almost two years in high school, I had a concession to sell the paper at the beginning of the day. I sold them for a dime a copy or whatever.

Q: It made a name for itself. Well, coming out of, again, coming out of sort of this greater New York Jewish context was, I would think that the school, your high school would have been a beehive of all sorts of political activities and all that.

RUSSELL: Nothing comes right to mind. Everybody was united in commitment to the necessity of defeating the axis; there were a lot of patriotic fervor and excitement, cheers in civics class when the seizure of Stalingrad was broken, I remember. But I don't recall that there was any kind of activism of that sort.

Q: Well I assume that you also, as a young boy in high school, were sort of, I mean, we all seemed to be on the track that we're going to end up in uniform and going to war.

RUSSELL: I was expecting, yes, yes. If it had gone on for another year and a half or so I would have been drafted, no question.

Q: Yes, yes. Did you feel any economic strains during this time or not? In the family or not? Or did you feel part of the laboring class as opposed to the capitalistic class?

RUSSELL: Oh very much part of the laboring class. I had a very limited allowance, if any, and one of the reasons that I kept singing in the choir was that we were paid; nothing much. The pay scale was interesting. The first year, as a treble singer you were paid five cents for every rehearsal, three rehearsals a week, Monday, Thursday and Friday night, and then 10 cents for each service. So I would get a pay packet when I was eight-and-a-half, nine, that might be as much as, for a month might be as much as $2.37.

Q: There were actually stores called five and dimes.

RUSSELL: Sure.

Q: And with a dime or with a five cent piece you could go and have a choice of what to get.

RUSSELL: That's the way it was, yes. In any case, the salary soared in the second year; it went to six cents an hour from five. Anyway, I mention that simply because the fact that I had that reliable income was something that I looked forward to because I had very little spending money. The cost of raising the four kids and managing on my father's income wasn't easy.

Q: Were movies important to you?

RUSSELL: Oh yes. I used to go to the movies often. We lived, during a number of years in the early '40s on Lincoln Place. There were two movie theaters on the two closest corners and I never missed a Saturday. It was always double feature and the tickets were always 11 cents, as I recall, for both features.

Q: Yes. And movies, any particular genre or was it across the board?

RUSSELL: Across the board. We went to see them all; we went to see them all. Ate them up.
Q: And radio?

RUSSELL: Radio became important for me after the age of maybe 12 or 13. I discovered WQXR. The church music was familiar and well liked and I started listening to the opera on QXR perhaps as early as ' 43, '44. Not regularly but later, 10, 12 years later, when I was living in Munich, there was a time in the '50s when my wife and I went to the opera 20 times in a month; saw everything, everything they put on the stage. Radio was obviously a source of importance for news and one listened to the radio during the war years to find out-

Q: Absolutely.

RUSSELL: -to hear the good news as it got better.

Q: You had the map, of course.

RUSSELL: The map on the wall, yes.

Q: I highly recommend a world war as a geography helper to young people.

RUSSELL: Yes, yes, right.

Q: While you were at Midwood High School were you thinking- was it sort of understood that you would go to college or not?

RUSSELL: Oh, I think so, yes, oh yes. The kids that I was competing with for the top grades in French or whatever, I mean, there was no question in any of their minds that they would all go to college. And one of the elements of the Rising Sun experience was the expectation. And George Jonas was very helpful to me in getting funding support for my expenses at Yale. I had a scholarship and I was a bursary student all four years at Yale to pay for meals and so on but I also did a lot of babysitting, odds and ends to have an income. And George Jonas, there was a foundation called the Schepp Foundation, which was specifically intended to provide support for kids who didn't have much in the way of worldly goods, as his phrase would go. And every year during the four years I was at Yale I had a $500 scholarship from the Schepp Foundation to help defray expenses. It made a lot of difference.

Q: Oh yes. Well what directed you towards Yale?

RUSSELL: In those days you could apply to only three colleges. I don't know if this was a New York rule or a Midwood rule or what, but you couldn't blanket the colleges with your applications; three and no more. My first choice was Harvard, my second was Yale and my third was Dartmouth. And I got an early turndown from Dartmouth; I think they resented being put third. I don't know why, but Harvard and Yale both said yes. The financial benefits at Yale were slightly better. Also, even though I'd grown up in the city and knew a lot about the world and had met these foreign kids at my camp, I was still fairly provincial. New Haven was 90 miles from home and Boston and Harvard were 280 miles from home. So I recall that the closeness to the city was a factor in my deciding on Yale. I never regretted it.

Q: When did you enter Yale?

RUSSELL: Fall of '46.

Q: And when did you graduate?

RUSSELL: June of '50. Right straight through, right, just two weeks before the Korean War.

Q: I know. I graduated in June, I graduated from Williams in June and I was- although I'm a year, you must have skipped a year, didn't you?

RUSSELL: I did skip a year in- I skipped third grade.

Q: Because you parallel; I went into Williams in the fall of '46 and graduated in June of '50.

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: Well let's- Yale in 1946. You had, I assume, your white shoes, your white bucks.

RUSSELL: No, I didn't. I was too broke. I really had no money. I had like maybe 20 bucks a month for anything that came up. I don't know whether that number is right, but my family was really unable to support me in any way. So I don't think I ever bought a pair of white bucks. I was reminiscing with some other Yale friends just a while ago and I didn't know what to wear. I was really green and probably seemed to some of the white bucks wearers and the Andover and Groton and Hill School graduates- "Grautin" they say.

Q: For somebody who doesn't know what we're talking about, these were white buckskin shoes, which you had to get dirty in order to be cool and this was sort of the uniform of-

RUSSELL: Part of the uniform, yes.

Q: -of the eastern college at the time.

RUSSELL: Particularly at Yale. The white buck shoes had to have a kind of reddish colored sole; they were very specific. No, I was a poor bursary student. The first year, in order to pay for the costs of food and housing, which is what I did, my scholarship grant was for $1,900 a year. This covered tuition but I had to work in order to pay for food and housing. That was 14 hours a week, which is a lot of time to spend and the place where I spent it was in the dining hall, the big dining hall for freshmen. I put in two hours a day, in effect, the whole first year. I also continued as a bursary student in the other three years but the work fell to 12 hours a week, and starting in my third year I worked in the Russian department. I learned how to touch type in Russian, which was unusual. I still can't do it in English but I taught myself in Russian because I was doing a lot of lesson preparation. But that was later on.

Q: When you arrived in Yale how did the atmosphere strike you? I mean, you're a city kid and all of a sudden you're, I mean, it's a city too but it's a whole different world.

RUSSELL: It was a different world. I recall going up by train and getting off at the train station at New Haven, my father went up with me. It was like what you imagine an outpost in western Nebraska in 1905. It was a wind-swept train station with no place to go in out of. There must have been a place to buy tickets, but I recall not feeling very cocky.

Q: How about when you got to the campus? Where did you room and-?

RUSSELL: That was also a bit of a problem. All the freshmen at that time lived in an area, to the extent that they were on campus, which almost everybody was, and I recall the old campus. And I was assigned to room with two guys whose names I can't recall. I'm pretty sure they were Andover graduates. An episode that I recall from the early

times was the three of us sitting down and looking at this room, which had a living area and then two bedroom areas, one with a double decker and one with a single bed. They knew each other so they were going to share the room that had the double. But there was no rug on the floor so they said we need to buy a rug. And one of the guys, Harvey something, Harvey said I know where I can get a rug for 60 bucks; that's nothing, we can each throw in 20 bucks and buy a rug, which was a little bit embarrassing for me because I didn't have 20 bucks. And fortunately there was a single room right next door to the triple room. And somebody was there from, I don't know, one of the other prep schools. So rather quickly there was the idea of a switch, where I would move into the single room and this guy, whatever, Clyde might have been his name, would move in with the other two Andover guys. Within the week we had worked that out and the year went much better. It was easier studying without roommates. So my acclimatization to Yale was not all that smooth or encouraging because I really felt at a distinct disadvantage because of the contrast between my material goods and those with whom I was coming in contact.

Q: I've talked to people who went to school in those days, somebody was at Harvard was saying that the students who came out of high schools found the first two years there at somewhat of a disadvantage to the prep school kids because prep school kids had had lots of homework and supervised and, you know, were used to the routine.

RUSSELL: Sure.

Q: But by the end the high school kids on the average outdid did the prep school kids. But I don't know.

RUSSELL: I don't know how you could document that.

Q: But no, I think it was quite- In those days it was quite important. Now, I went to Williams; I came from a family with no money but I came out of a small prep school called Kent and I think five of us went from Kent to Williams and it shows you how today, I mean, that just doesn't happen.

RUSSELL: And Williams is much sought after.

Q: So I came out of the prep school side but with no money, which was somewhat different. But no, it was one of these cultural things that happened.

How did you find the education there? I mean, to begin with, was it much of a stretch?

RUSSELL: No, I was able to manage okay. If I look back at the whole record I probably made it easy for myself because I concentrated on things that I knew I could do well. As I say, I took French and Spanish the first year, the second year I took a special double course of beginning Russian and then took Russian the third year and Russian in fourth year; second class in Russian literature. I concentrated, I mean, I filled in, I did the obligatory things like take geology and astronomy but I did it because I had to.

Q: I took geology. I mean, these were the courses that the non-qualified scientists-

RUSSELL: Exactly right. It was a very good lecture; I can still visualize him. He was first rate; one semester geology and one semester of astronomy and then that freed one from any physics or chemistry obligations.

But I ultimately came out with an average of precisely 85, which was just the cum laude level, which was okay.

Q: Well it was also- We're talking about this period where the gentleman C was the average and was considered quite good. I mean today to come out with a C is practically- you're doomed for failure. I mean, there's great inflation after the Vietnam War and it hasn't gone away.

RUSSELL: Right.

Q: Now, were there any courses that particularly struck you during those four years you were there?

RUSSELL: I took an economics course as a junior, as I recall, which was enlivened by the fact that among the fellow students in the class was someone who would go on to great fame as a polemicist and as a right wing activist.

Q: Was this Buckley?

RUSSELL: You bet.

Q: Bill Buckley.

RUSSELL: William F. Buckley, Jr.

Q: "Good Man at Yale."

RUSSELL: He's the man.

Q: He was in your class.

RUSSELL: He was in my class.

Q: Did you have any contact with him?

RUSSELL: In this one class. He was in the economics class with me. I can't remember the name, it's been a long time, I haven't thought about this for whatever reason, but the professor was someone who was generally considered to be on the left. I have this memory of Buckley raising his hand and raising tough, provocative questions to this professor. I'm sorry I can't remember his name.

I took a course in politics of the Danubian area from a Hungarian political scientist. I did very badly. This was, I guess sophomore year and I hadn't yet figured out exactly how to get a term paper in on time. I had a few bad times. I decided I was a college boy who was going to drink. My junior year I kept a bottle in my room. I didn't drink much but I had, you know, something of a crisis in my junior year when things weren't going well. But it passed and the outcome overall was favorable. I've retained a lot of affection for the school, which has grown very substantially in the last six years. I'll get to that later. But I've been singing in the Yale alumnae chorus since April '03. I've made enormously more Yale friends singing than I ever did as a student.

Q: Were there any political movements going around at the time on the Yale campus?

RUSSELL: The most active one that I recall were the Wallaceites in '48. I had an acquaintance who was a real activist for them and he would go around knocking on doors and urging people not to vote either for Truman or Dewey.

Q: Yes, this was, Henry Wallace, a former secretary of the agriculture, who was fairly far to the left.

RUSSELL: Oh yes, no question. And then he was vice president under FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt).

John Nance Garner was there for the first two terms of FDR and then Wallace. It was Roosevelt/Wallace in '40, yes. Roosevelt/Truman in '44.

Q: During my period I think, you know, a lot of hope was held out for the UN.

RUSSELL: A lot of optimism, yes, yes. There was great hope that the war had been such an appalling blight for the planet that things had to be improved. The UN was seen as the instrument to do it. The Soviets came in with us on it and therefore it was all going to work out and between us we were going to rebuild Germany and Japan. There was a lot of optimism about the UN during those times.

Q: How about your politics? Were politics an issue for you at the time?

RUSSELL: Not an active one. I think, since I paid any attention, considered that I was on the liberal side of things. I voted for Carol Schwartz for mayor of DC once. And my late wife, who was an absolutely passionate liberal democrat, she wouldn't speak to me for a week. Actually, Carol Schwartz would have made a much better mayor than Marion Barry but that was much later.

I knew exactly what side I was on right at the beginning. I found, as heading public affairs missions overseas during Vietnam and other times, that it is has not always been easy but I've managed to keep my own views and those of the administration that I necessarily represented separate.

Q: Well, you were taking Russian; were you getting into Russian history, Soviet history and all?

RUSSELL: Yes, yes.

Q: How would you say that whole department was? Because obviously you'd have the equivalent to refugees teaching language and all.

RUSSELL: I had three interesting guys doing the language. The most interesting of the three was a delightful person named Alexandre Vasilovic? His last name was Vasiliov. Vasiliov was a White Guard colonel, a short man with very white hair who had gotten out of Russia after the Revolution into Shanghai and emigrated from Shanghai sometime in the '30s or so. He had sparkling blue eyes and was an absolutely charming, delightful, interesting guy. Vasiliov.

At the other end was a rather saturnine, very cynical new arrival, Soviet born, Leningradic who had been arrested. In '34 the mayor of Leningrad, Kirov, who gave his name to the ballet, was assassinated. Most people believe that he was assassinated on Stalin's orders because he was getting too popular. In any case the killing of Kirov was an excuse to arrest whole blocks of people in Leningrad and among them was Vladimir Nikolayevich Petrov. He was sentenced to Vorkuta in Siberia and was in one of the slave labor camps for five years in the '30s. When the war broke out somehow or another he managed to free himself, somehow got loose, worked his way back across the entire country and found himself in Kiev, and strangely enough got some kind of menial job in the German administration of occupied Kiev. He then managed after '45 to rid himself of the incubus of having collaborated with the Germans; how he did that I don't know. He turned up in Rome. He was very resourceful; he got somebody in the congress to sponsor him, as a former labor camp inhabitant, to sponsor his emigration to the States. So he turned up, in the fall of 1946 and got a job at Yale teaching Russian. Petrov, a fascinating character. Subsequently he moved to Washington and was at George Washington University at the Institute of Soviet/Chinese Affairs, a very influential teacher. When I met him he didn't speak any English at all and had a funny, unpredictable sense of humor. He also gave me my Russian name the first week of Russian.

Q: He gave you your nickname.

RUSSELL: Well what he said, the first week you couldn't, obviously if your name was James or Charles or Stuart, this has got to change. So if your name was William your automatic first name was Vassili. And if your name was Peter, obviously it was Pyotr. But for McKinney there was obviously no correspondence and Petrov, who was very cynical after all his adventures, he said something like this, "you must be kidding; that's not a first name, McKinney." There is a first name, an old fashion name in Russian, Makyey. Since my father's name is McKinney, therefore I am Makyey Makyeyovich.

Since the fall of 1947, I have been, in the mouths of Russian friends, of whom I've had a lot, there and at the Voice of America and Radio Liberty, Makyey Makyeyovich.

Q: Did you, while you were taking Russian and taking courses, what was your feel for the Soviet Union at the time?

RUSSELL: Obviously the atmosphere was of very considerable mistrust. I didn't have any illusions. The Berlin Airlift happened while I was in college; I got to know Vasiliov and Petrov, the two professors, quite well because I worked for them in the Russian office for two years, as a junior and a senior, as a part of my bursary obligations. Based on their experience and the things that one read, there were not very many apologists around after about 1948. I don't believe I ever had any soft spot or said Soviet socialist equality is a good thing; I don't think I was ever an advocate of these views at all. On the other hand, I wasn't a militant kill them all, down with the commies and so on. I mean, they had a right to do their politics or so it seemed to me at the time.

Q: You and I were both at the same thing when the draft cut off just about the time when we were prime meat for the draft, in '45. Senator McCarthy had just started his rise in the public as far as accusing the State Department and other places of being communist organizations.

RUSSELL: That was a little later though. McCarthyism didn't really raise its head until, I think, '51. I don't recall that there was much-

Q: Well, yes. Maybe it had wings a little earlier because we had quite a well known professor of political science, Frederick L. Schuman, at Williams.

RUSSELL: Oh yes.

Q: Who had written a book, it was sort of "the" standard text on political science, and he was accused, just when we were getting ready to graduate, of being one of the communists.

RUSSELL: I recall something vaguely about Schuman, that he was accused of being-

Q: And so this got quite a rise and I have to say, the president of the college, Phineas Baxter, gave very strong support for him and it went away, unlike which later on some of the schools did not perform at all.

RUSSELL: Yes, right.

Q: So, you're moving up to June of 1950. What were you planning on doing?

RUSSELL: I anticipated the war. I knew I was liable to be drafted no matter what happened, even before June, 1950, when the Korean War began.

Q: Twenty-fifth of June.

RUSSELL: I hadn't made any plans for graduate school or anything else. I didn't know what I was going to do that summer. I had three summers during my college years. The first year I was a counselor at Camp Rising Sun; the second year I sold Encyclopedia Britannica Junior door-to-door, which was no particular fun, and the third summer I worked as a soda jerk in a fountain near my place in Brooklyn. I had this vague uncertainty about what I ought to do next and so I wound up doing nothing; I made no plans for graduate school. I expected to be drafted some time soon. I didn't get my letter of draft until about January of '51, and was actually drafted, sworn in on the 24th of March, 1951.

Q: Before we move to there I want to ask: How about social life at Yale?

RUSSELL: It was tough if you didn't have any money. I must have been a junior, I think, when I found a way of developing female acquaintances through the field of amateur theatrics. In New Haven there were at least two schools with technical training and typing and all that kind of thing. One was a Catholic school called Albertus Magnus and the name of the other escapes me. Both of them had drama departments, and needed to put on plays and they were both all girls' schools. Somehow or another, with a friend of mine named Steve, we found out about them and their need for male actors. So we made the great sacrifice of volunteering, during the last three years of college. I recall very specifically being the boy next door in "Little Women" and also starring in "The Importance of Being Earnest."

Q: Ah yes.

RUSSELL: Did those two and then two or three others. I roomed with a friend in the graduate school. It's kind of a period of uncertainty and I guess maybe I've been repressing the- sort of facing what the hell are you going to do with your life now you've got a Yale degree?

Q: And also, going back, because I can relate to the time, going to graduate school was not that much of a certainty that it almost became later on because it required money.

RUSSELL: Right, exactly right.

Q: I remember sort of getting out and looking kind of bewildered until my patron saint, Kim Il-sung took care of matters by invading South Korea.

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: Well then so you sort of-

RUSSELL: I hung around; I stayed in New Haven, sort of expecting to get drafted, to get that letter, and did some translation work for Petrov, who was writing his memoirs; I did

some translation of his works. And I worked in a Silly Putty factory. I did whatever came along. I worked in a small factory that made coat racks.

Anyway, I had a rich and varied kind of time. There were a certain number of young ladies of varying backgrounds who hung around the Yale campus.

Q: One of the things I noticed was that in dating the night artist at that time was the guys with money dated almost a different kind of girl than the guys without money. I mean, these were nice girls we dated but the ones with money, you know, they seemed to have the fur coats and there was a certain flair there.

RUSSELL: Yes, yes, no question.

Q: Yes. Well then, so you, in January of '51, you got the call?

RUSSELL: Got the letter and I had to report for duty on the 24th of March, which I did. That was a really quick education. There were about 120 of us who were sworn in at the same time and then herded into a room. A staff sergeant came in and said, alright you guys, empty your fucking pockets. And I had never heard the adjective. I'd been brought up rather gently. And what he meant was, blackjack or any kind of hand weapon that you had in your pocket had to go out onto the middle of the floor. People started taking them out and there were probably 15 or 20 of them on the floor, blackjacks and knives. It was interesting. It was a quick introduction to another whole layer of society.

Q: Yes. Well, I remember, my thing was a shoe box put out and said put all your dirty pictures here. You know, I didn't have any dirty pictures but boy, there were a lot of them. Of course, this was all for the edification of the sergeants. But you know, apparently, you know, a whole cadre of young men were carrying dirty pictures. Dirty pictures were basically pictures of naked women.

RUSSELL: I assume.

Q: Yes. But I mean, one gets a quick little vignette of these things.

RUSSELL: Yes. The pile of weapons in the room gave me a quick reminder that I was moving in different circles.

Q: Where'd you go for basic training?

RUSSELL: Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Q: How'd you find that?

RUSSELL: It wasn't particularly fun. The expectation was that we would indeed be in combat in Korea. I learned to fire all the weapons. I had a very tough staff sergeant who was not a sadist or anything but he knew what had to be done to get us stiffened. He

would wake us up at 10 minutes to four in the morning and have us out standing in the rain within five minutes. This kind of annealing or stiffening, toughening stuff; it lasted 14 weeks.

Q: I assume you were army infantry.

RUSSELL: Yes. I recall a discussion about possibly going to OCS (Officer Training School) because I had a college degree. If I'd done that I would have had to spend three years under the colors rather than two. I thought that even though I didn't know what I was going to do with my life, it would be wiser to keep my military service short rather than long because it didn't look like something that I was really comfortable with. I was not really a gung ho soldier, sort of bring on the bastards and we'll- you know, it was not that kind of atmosphere. I didn't rouse to it. I did my duty and I learned to manage the bazooka and the mortar and keep my gun clean. Somebody from personnel interviewed me about eight or nine weeks into the process. Because I knew French and knew Russian he said, we don't need you in Korea; we need you in Germany. I didn't argue with that. And so after the basic training, a few months thereafter I was on my way to Bremerhaven with 3,000 other guys.

Q: Troop transport?

RUSSELL: Troop transport, yes, in January of '52. I was there and then was assigned to the Frankfurt area, was in Frankfurt, was in Diessen. I put in over a year overseas. Learned German; I really worked hard on German while I was there and my German ultimately got to be good. When I tested in October '62, came into the Foreign Service, I scored 5/5 in German because I really had been immersed in it for 10 years.

Q: Well what sort of work were you doing? And where you with a division?

RUSSELL: It was forgettable. I don't know what our mission was. I had a secretarial job, you know, keeping track of who attended.

Q: I'm surprised they didn't pick you up on that Russian business because you know, I mean, they took me in August of '50 and after some sitting around sent me to Army language school to learn rather poor Russian. And so I would have thought that-

RUSSELL: Never- I don't know how-

Q: But this is the military, I guess.

RUSSELL: This is the military, I guess. I did some liaison work with the French forces in Wetzlar for awhile but that was all. I guess maybe I was there too short a time for whatever reason.

Q: Well then were you thinking about- were you spending- you were getting out in '53 is it?

RUSSELL: Fifty-three, yes.

Q: Were you thinking of what you were going to do?

RUSSELL: I had two good friends from the army; one another GI like myself and another Department of the Army civilian. On two occasions, maybe even three, the three of us went hiking in Switzerland together. The civilian had a car and he and Max and I, I think on two occasions took off from the Frankfurt area and drove down, climbed _____; had a perfectly glorious time.

On the way back from one of them, I had heard about Radio Liberty being started and so I persuaded Schmidt- Al, the guy with the car, if he wouldn't mind let's go back to Frankfurt by way of Munich; I'd like to look into it. He said okay and so I went and met the people who were just preliminarily planning the start of Radio Liberty, which was after Radio Free Europe started. I had those connections and they were very useful subsequently because two years later, after two years of very interesting, very difficult work I did start at Radio Liberty. What that was, was as a result of some people I met in Munich, an organization with an odd name, American Friends of Russian Freedom, AFRF. The Tolstoy Foundation existed to help Russian refugees, ex-Soviet refugees but it had a religious coloration which AFRF did not. And the president of AFRF, a woman named Sheba Goodman, tracked me down, found out where I was assigned and invited me to meet with her in December of '52 or so. She said we are opening up a resettlement center, AFRF, with money from the PEP. What's the PEP? The Presidential Escapee Program was started to make it easier for all of the escapees from communist tyranny in Western Europe: mainly give them a place to live, a place to get a chance in life and help them prepare to emigrate eventually to the U.S. or Australia or Canada or some other place. AFRF was opening in a town called Kaiserslautern in the western part of Germany about 90 kilometers west of Heidelberg and maybe less than 100 kilometers from the French border. In Kaiserslautern there was a very big major NATO build up. That's where Ramstein and Landstuhl are located, all clustered together right outside of Kaiserslautern. And the AFRF people had gotten substantial funding from the Presidential Escapee Program to set up a reception center for defectors from Eastern Europe, mainly Soviet. They needed someone to run it, they needed someone who knew Russian and who knew German and who would be willing to work long hours to help these young Russians; there were non-Russians among them, mostly Russians but all Soviets, to get jobs working in the building of these new NATO installations. She offered me a job, and I said how much does it pay and she said $3,600, which was nice pay; 300 bucks a month.

Q: That was about the pay I got when I came into the Foreign Service.

RUSSELL: Perhaps, yes. In any case, it was an interesting decision because it really was a decisive experience for me because I was just a young kid. I was 23, 24, and these guys that I was responsible for managing their careers or getting them started in reasonable

ways were a hard bitten lot, a number of them were veterans of the war and so on. So there was a lot of work for Makyey Makyeyovich to do.

Q: Okay; you did this from when to when?

RUSSELL: From March of '53 until March of '55.

Q: Alright.

RUSSELL: Just about two years.

Q: What were your impressions of these escapees?

RUSSELL: Rather mixed. Among them were those who were intent on making a good life for themselves and who didn't have any ideological complaint; they just knew that life was better outside of the Soviet realm than in it. Among them there were also KGB agents, one a Lithuanian who was very well behaved and didn't drink and didn't give me a hard time and turned out to be a KGB plant. I forget how he was subsequently unmasked but he was one. And there were other just simple peasant-type guys who had gotten into some sort of trouble. In those days before the Wall went up, if you got civilian clothes and you got to Berlin you could defect without too much difficulty.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: And so they were a very mixed bag. Some of them were excellent, hard working, serious guys who did good work. My job was to get them settled, make sure they had a basic vocabulary in German so they could say "hello" and "good-bye" and "thank you" and so on. And then when they were settled in at the place, which was called Friendship House, they hung out not all that far from downtown Kaiserslautern. And I would take my Ivanov or Petrov or, you know, the guy, the Soviet defector, and fill out all the forms about what he could do, drive and do plumbing and whatever else, skills he might have. And then I would take him down to the labor office, and walk him through the routine of getting sent to be interviewed at the place where the new American plant was being built. I had to manage it rather carefully because I wasn't smart enough; I just wasn't experienced to know that it would be very, very important for me to know the CIC people locally.

Q: CI-?

RUSSELL: Counterintelligence Corps.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: Because if they were to come across a young American getting jobs for Russians in the building of NATO air strips they would be very interested and curious and indeed they were. Someone came around to see me. I'd been doing it for three or four

weeks, and they were saying to me: alright buddy, who the hell do you represent? What are you up to? You know, really came on strong. We cleared it all up and it went up his line of command, they checked and found that I was okay. But for awhile it was a little bit dicey and I learned a lesson about making peace with the CIC early on.

Anyway, those were very, very tough days. I really learned, I really grew up fast.

Q: Well I would think, too, about two years, from '55 to '57, I was a refugee relief officer. That was my first job in Frankfurt.

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: And one thing I did learn was the complexity of Eastern Europe. And more than Eastern Europe the whole East because we had people from the Vlasov Army, we had-

RUSSELL: Oh yes.

Q: -we had kowluks, we had Volga Deutsch-

RUSSELL: Oh boy. Same thing.

Q: And one of the things, because we would get these- the CIC would go investigate; had a lot of investigation for- to get a refugee relief visa- was how these camps became almost cesspools of people informing on each other, often just malicious informing, you know. Somebody would-

RUSSELL: Misinformation.

Q: -to being a communist and a Nazi at the same time.

RUSSELL: Oh yes, I got that too. Desinformacia; disinformation they call it.

Q: Yes. These people were trying to disadvantage their- what they felt were their competitors plus the fact that none of them liked each other. I mean, they were all coming out of this- where these hatreds had been built up over the years.

RUSSELL: Oh yes, yes.

Q: It was a real lesson in history and geography.

RUSSELL: Much similarity to what I experienced at the same time.

Q: Did you get any feel for the type? Were you there long enough to get any idea of how these people you were working with did?

RUSSELL: Yes. There were a handful of those who came early in the experience who got jobs, stuck it out, liked the income, met German wives, married, moved in. What the ultimate breakdown was is something I would be curious to know about but at a guess about one out of three established themselves well. Another third, perhaps, really didn't make it. Drinking became a serious problem the way it is when Russians have a disagreeable predilection for drinking until they're really drunk. I had times- I was glad- I needed to have a strong experienced, right hand Russian assistant to back up- to sustain my authority in places. It was a tough period.

Q: Did you run across any problems with the people over you? Because I would think that with the Tolstoy Foundation, I mean, they have the same-

RUSSELL: In close ups?

Q: You know, these currents that run throughout Eastern Europe and all; did that affect you?

RUSSELL: Didn't affect me directly. I think that the Tolstoy Foundation resented the fact that there was somebody else doing the same thing. I recall having a visit from somebody from Tolstoy who was very critical and very down putting. It didn't affect me; I was on the front lines, I was trying to do the best I could for these guys and some of them became quite good friends and others I totally lost track of, no idea how it all turned out. The idea was they would live in this _____, which had room for about 20 people, very simple kind of barracks sort of arrangement; live there until they were established and help them move out on the economy. And some did and some didn't. I moved out on the economy when I went to Radio Liberty in the spring of '55.

Q: How did you find- did you deal with the German authorities?

RUSSELL: I had to keep them happy. You can't get a job in Germany, you need references from the workers' office, the labor office I guess is what it would be called in English. And so I really worked very hard to disarm these guys. I had one guy with the traditional German name of Schmidt; he was a key player. He had to be convinced that this guy sitting here, this Morosov character, who a month ago had been over in East Germany in a tank battalion, was someone who was worth referring. And it took some persuading. I took Herr Schmidt out for lunch and got to know him and his family and did all the right things so that he would look upon me as a friend. He had a lot of jobs to fill and if my candidate, my Rusky candidate could do it, so much the better for him and for me.

Q: Well you did this for two years?

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: What did you see for your future?

RUSSELL: Well I had found out about the radio stations and knew that Radio Free Europe, had started I think in ’52, Radio Liberty started in March of ’53. RFE did the five satellites and Liberty did only Soviet languages, 15 of them, Armenian, Georgian, the whole range. I maintained the contact, kept it alive, picked the phone up now and then, called people that I knew. They offered me a job in the spring of ’55, which was the head of the translation section. CIA was already funding, had from the beginning been funding and they needed to have selected translations of what was being said in the various languages into English so that somebody could say these guys are toeing the line. And there was a staff of maybe eight or 10; an Englishwoman and maybe six or seven Russians, whose job it was to translate the broadcasts of the Russians and the others into English for control by the intelligence people.

Q: Today is the 27th of March, 2009, with McKinney Russell. And McKinney, let’s start; you were in Munich and you’re-

RUSSELL: I enjoyed the year spent at Radio Liberty-

Q: This is 1955.

RUSSELL: I began work there in the spring of 1955. After five or six months in charge of the translation section I became the roving correspondent of the station. This meant that when there was agreement among the broadcasters, among the Americans and Russians and others that a given subject was an interesting one, that I would hop a plane, go there and cover that story. The kind that we looked for were those that would depict life outside of the Soviet Union in all of its variety, its freedom and its color. Our view was that the social democratic governments of Western Europe were examples to be contrasted sharply with the tight controls of Soviet authoritarian rule. We were describing what it was like to be, for example, a socialist candidate for the presidency of Sweden, say, or to be the head of the free student union movement in Finland. These were subjects that our broadcasters were interested in because they brought lively voices of often young people, active politically, before the microphone. These programs were translatable then into Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, the other languages of the station, a total of 16.

So I began as correspondent after about six months and then became chief correspondent and was the deputy head of the news department at Radio Liberty when I left Munich in 1962.

Q: Alright. Let’s talk a bit about Radio Liberty. What was the genesis and while you were there how was it run? Who were some of the personalities?

RUSSELL: Well it became public knowledge only in about 1970, I think, that the stations were funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The notion of radio broadcasts into Eastern Europe was born in about 1950 and Radio Free Europe began broadcasting probably about the middle of 1952 or so. Radio Liberty, that is to say a station broadcasting to the Soviet Union, only began broadcasting in 1953. As it happens, a

fortuitous signal for the station's survival, perhaps, that can be interpreted various ways was this: when the radio station went on the air, one of the more imaginative producers came up with the idea of having a clock ticking. The sound of the clock ticking is broadcast at the beginning of the station every day and it's accompanied by words in Russian which were "The era of Stalin is coming to an end." And it turned out that that was absolutely right because within 30 days or so of the station going on the air, what do you suppose happened? Stalin up and died. That date, I believe, come to think of it, was probably March 15, 1953. The station had been on the air for three or four weeks and there was great jubilation, obviously. Soviet communism didn't end its course until many years later but the feeling was that the station had begun its broadcasting under a lucky augury.

And the relations between the two stations were a little different. One fundamental difference was that the lingua franca of Radio Free Europe, the news and commentary-the language that everyone was to know was English. Radio Liberty's lingua franca obviously was Russian. And how this played out, it's a little hard to tell. The two stations were in different parts of Munich and just as there was deep resentment of Russian/Soviet control over Eastern Europe there wasn't much love lost between the two communities, I would say.

Q: What about, you know, particularly with the Voice of America, but the problems there of the various nationalities, none of them get along with each other on the ground, practically; how did the nationality issue play out?

RUSSELL: The nationality broadcasters were encouraged to broadcast not as foreign stations but as a free Uzbek station or as a free Bashkir station or as a free Armenian station. And that meant that when the broadcaster in Georgian said "we," he did not mean the Western world, he did not mean the United States, he didn't mean the world outside the Soviet Union, he meant "we Georgians." And this idea of what was given the rather grand name of surrogate broadcasting was at the base of the nationality policy. I have no doubt that over the years some of the things that were said in some of the languages did not agree fully with the policy, which was all nationalities are created equal and the Russians are not bad guys simply because Soviet power established itself within the camp of the Russian empire in 1917.

Q: Was there much monitoring of what was being said?

RUSSELL: Not a very great deal. There was nobody on the American side, for example, who understood a single word of Kazak, for example. The broadcast went out nonetheless and the broadcasters were urged to follow general lines, not to take a specific political line but rather to speak in favor of the independence and the right of the various nationalities to establish their own countries and regimes and governances. Occasionally there were cases where something that was broadcast that did not follow the policy lines that had been laid down by the station leadership. There was no admission at all of CIA backing. Radio Free Europe, much more than Radio Liberty, carried out in the '50s and early '60s fundraising efforts in the United States. There were some dramatic things done

to bring the whole anti-Soviet broadcasting effort into broader publicity. There were photographs of balloons being let out of Bavaria to fly over Czechoslovakia before they landed. They had messages in them or perhaps some of them had a shortwave radio so you could pick it up and listen to the broadcasters.

That was a time of considerable tension because, for example, we went on an intensive broadcasting schedule at the time of the Hungarian incursion in 1956.

Q: Now, particularly the Voice of America took quite a beating on that, I think Radio Free Europe too, didn't it? But anyway, the idea was that we had encouraged the satellite countries to rebel and then didn't do anything. How did that-?

RUSSELL: The Voice of America, I believe, was not caught up as much, nearly as much as Radio Free Europe. The Hungarian broadcasters of Radio Free Europe got excited. They may not have said it in so many words, but by the very tenor and excitement suggested that somehow or another the freedom fighters would emerge victorious, which no cool head really ever expected. But the same sort of situation obtained 10 years later in 1967 at the time of the Czech suppression. I was director of Voice of America broadcast to the Soviet Union, at that time in four languages; Voice of America broadcast in Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian and Georgian. Not in anything else. And later on VOA added additional Soviet broadcasts, but in the '50s and '60s, it was only what I described.

Q: Well after the intense criticism of Radio Free Europe in '56, after the Hungarian uprising, did this cause changes at Radio Liberty?

RUSSELL: It had no effect that I can recall at Radio Liberty. We were very careful. I myself was at the Astro-Hungarian border doing reporting about what little one could tell. I don't recall that there was any opprobrium or criticism directed at Radio Liberty. Radio Free Europe tightened up its rules and there were directives that neither in tone nor in specific language should broadcasters assert that the West was coming to assist in any regime change in Hungary or Czechoslovakia at that time.

Q: Well then, what sort of stories would- Were you sticking pretty much to Europe?

RUSSELL: It was pretty much to Europe. There was one interesting exception. There were competing international student organizations. One was called WFDY and it was called "Woofdee" for short. The initials stood for "World Federation of Democratic Youth." This was a communist organization run from Prague. There was a counter organization, international organization of free student trade unions, student unions. Exactly what it was called I forget but it met every two or three years. In February of '57, if my memory serves me, it held an international meeting in Lima, Peru. I said to my colleagues, that could be pretty interesting and will give a different perspective than Sweden, Italy, Denmark, Iceland, Finland. I made several reporting trips to Finland, by the way.

Q: Well Finland was big as far as that's where the- sort of the peace movement, Soviet peace movement used to-

RUSSELL: The Finns carefully did the minimum that they felt they had to to support that movement.

As far as the student union was concerned, I spent about 12 days, perhaps, in Peru and had some extremely interesting interviews with young political leaders from many countries, Asia, Africa. Had a particularly interesting encounter with Percival Peterson, who was the head of the Jamaican Student Union. He was interesting because he later had a particularly successful and enlightened political career and became president of Jamaica some time during the '80s or perhaps early '90s. We got along very well with each other; we were interested in the different things that we were doing. He invited me to stop off in Jamaica on the way back to Munich, which I did and had four days, extremely interesting days in Kingston and Ocho Rios.

It was a rich and varied kind of life because a lot of things came under this broad rubric of, for want of a better phrase, freedom on the left.

Q: I was wondering, we're talking about the 1950s, latter part of the 1950s particularly; McCarthyism was not dead and to report on movements on the left, even though they were anti-communist leftist movements-

RUSSELL: Never had the slightest problem.

Q: I was wondering whether you would.

RUSSELL: Absolutely not the slightest. And we took some interesting directions. Nineteen fifty-eight of early '59 was the 75th anniversary of Marx's death. We came up with the idea of getting some former communists and Frenchmen on the left to do a round table program about the legacy of Karl Marx. I spent seven or eight days in Paris on the project because it meant getting, among others, the former editor of "L'Humanité," the French communist newspaper, whose name was Pierre Hervé. I got three observers from different perspectives around the table discussing the legacy of Marx. The main point of it was that the essential message of Marxism had been distorted and destroyed and undermined by Soviet power. And the program was broadcast, as I recall, in all the languages of Radio Liberty and caused a good deal of positive reaction.

Q: Were you able to get any feedback?

RUSSELL: One of our colleagues, an experienced CIA agent, had a system whereby Soviet visitors to foreign countries were informally encountered and interviewed on the spot. I forget exactly how it was done and where the concentration was; I do know it happened very often in Scandinavia. It wasn't unusual for some official group, a group of 15 or 20 Soviet citizens and their wives, to come out and visit factories or whatever they did. This very discreet audience reaction effort involved encountering them, seeming to

meet them by chance, giving them often books published in the West in Russian, books that they couldn't get inside the Soviet Union: "Doctor Zhivago," a tiny edition of Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago," which was about three by five inches in size, tiny little print, was particularly popular. And these persons, who were local, all recruited and so on is something I knew nothing about. As a matter of fact, I was not made witting, that is to say, informed of CIA support until I'd been at the station for four years.

Q: What was the atmosphere at the station?

RUSSELL: Very lively. A lot of discussion about approaches in broadcasts, a lot of lively discussions about things that had happened. Some controversy between Russians of different generations. Some of the Russian broadcasters who were the most important and whom I knew best I could speak with them. They would discuss and would say this program that you put together, this interview, it would have been helpful if you had also asked this and that and that. So the dialogue was very open.

There were references to old immigrants, new immigrants and newest immigrants. The old immigrants were those, obviously, from the teens and '20s, those who left Russia early in the Soviet period. Then the new ones were those who had been left behind by the war or who had defected to the West during the wartime. And then the newest were the most recent of all, those who had contrived in the '50s and '60s to escape, the same kind of people, usually intellectuals though, in contrast with the people about yesterday, the simple soldier guy who was a driver or an electrician for whom I was getting a job in Kaiserslautern as you will recall.

Q: Were you getting sort of disputes between your Georgian broadcasters and your Russian broadcasters, that sort of thing?

RUSSELL: There were some personal animosities but generally the atmosphere of the place was fairly productive and collegial because there was plenty to do. Everybody was on the air everyday; we were on the air around the clock in Russian and that meant that there was plenty of work to do to get programs written, edited and voiced and broadcast.

There was a small group of transmitters in Bavaria but the strongest signal came from elsewhere in Europe, namely the Costa Brava of Spain. We had large transmitters that were build sometime in perhaps '58 or '59 that broadcast a good strong signal into the Soviet Union. All of Radio Liberty broadcasts were jammed. The jamming of them began 15 minutes after they went on the air and never stopped until everything else stopped.

Q: Were you able to work on the effectiveness of- would the jamming work or did the-?

RUSSELL: It was standard practice to monitor it. When I was PAO (public affairs officer) in Moscow later on I had a supply of shortwave radios, eight or 10 maybe. When embassy officers would go out to various parts of the Soviet Union we would importune them to take along the radio, tell them where to find the signal and report back to us on,

for example, how clear reception was. If it was clear in Kiev or Tashkent or wherever it was that the traveling embassy officer went.

Q: Well did you ever get any sort of screams and yells from the State Department, what the hell are you guys doing? Because I'm sure if you said something particularly provocative the Soviets would have called our people in and-

RUSSELL: I don't recall that there was any dialogue. The Soviet attitude toward the station was, as I realized when I was posted there, they were angry and said that it was interference in their internal affairs. They said our broadcasters were a bad lot and the people who did the broadcasting were royalists and Trotskyites and traitors to the Soviets homeland and so on. There was also a certain amount of infiltration. There were some people in Radio Liberty who were later revealed to be Soviet plants, which is not surprising but there it was. It didn't affect anything that I recall.

Q: Did you sort of work under the assumption that there were?

RUSSELL: Yes. People pretty much assumed it. Some of them had suspicions and so on. I don't remember that there was any case where someone was unmasked, you know, somebody was sitting in this hotel in downtown and calling Moscow up and saying this guy is a good guy, that guy is a bad guy and so on.

Q: How about the German authorities?

RUSSELL: They were very accepting. There may have been problems but I honestly don't recall that there ever were. There may have been later on but certainly during my tenure there, which was seven and a half years, '55 spring to '62 fall, I didn't come across any kind of animus between the two.

Q: Was there any almost provocation on the part- Did Soviets ever put somebody into the local beerhall or whatever it is?

RUSSELL: Didn't run into it, no, I don't recall that there was anything like that. There were certainly occasions when the Russians struck at the broadcasters. The Hungarian broadcaster who was injected with some sort of poison while standing on a street corner in London comes to mind and there were a few other cases.

Q: That was with an umbrella, wasn't it?

RUSSELL: I think that's right, yes. But on Radio Liberty's side I don't recall that there was anything like that.

Q: How did you find life in Germany in those days?

RUSSELL: I had a terrific time. I was young, mid 20s, and active and had the language and had an active social life, unexpectedly. I was in Germany, after all, and had been

there already at that time for five years. The person whom I met who I married was a Frenchwoman. One of my colleagues at Radio Liberty was married to a Frenchwoman. They had children back to back; they needed help with their children and my wife to be, Lydie, was invited in February of '57 to come and help them out with their small children. She was between jobs in Paris and so she came for the adventure. On February 13, '57, I was invited by my friend at the station and his wife to make the fourth for dinner with their friend from Paris. My youthful bachelor days ended very, very abruptly. There was instant, almost instant understanding that this was it for both of us. My wife had a very unhappy, unfortunate first marriage and her divorce was not final until 1959. So we actually married in July of '59 but we had already lived together for two years before then and were totally devoted to each other, as we remained for the subsequent 40 years.

Q: Well then, by this time I think anybody who dealt, as I was with the refugee relief program and all, and as soon as you get involved in this sort of thing one gets a wonderful feel for the geography and ethnography of Europe. You must have the same; I mean, the various conflicts between the various groups, the Kalmyks and the Georgians and what have you. Didn't you?

RUSSELL: Yes, one was aware of these things to an extent at Radio Liberty. At that time I had never been to the East. In the fall of 1965, I had a very interesting trip to the four capitals of the countries that VOA was broadcasting to, or the language groups, that is to say, as I mentioned, Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian. Had a very, very interesting trip in the fall of '65.

Q: This is while you still were with Radio Liberty?

RUSSELL: No, this was already Voice of America. I joined USIA (United States Information Agency) on October 9, '62, and laterally came in as an 05. I was assigned immediately, within 15 minutes, as assistant press attaché to Kinshasa, in the Congo. Did the two years there until spring, early '65, came back to Washington, was policy officer for Africa for two years and then ran Voice of America to the Soviet Union for two years then went as PA to Moscow in '69.

Q: Alright. Well let's take '62; what moved you from Radio Liberty to the Voice of America?

RUSSELL: Well there were several factors. I had had a very interesting time with Radio Liberty as correspondent, as deputy head of news. However, the election of JFK (John Fitzgerald Kennedy) in 1960 and the fact that he named Edward R. Murrow to be the director of USIA in the spring of 1961, was a big factor. Having been a radio journalist I was interested in understanding what other people were thinking, doing, saying and then interpreting it, drawing them out through interview process and then producing a lively, interesting radio program. But then the idea of being actually part of the U.S. Government rather than someone on the outside looking in also had its own appeal. I had already been in Europe since the beginning of '52. I felt it was time for a change. I had

two children and the idea of their living in the States had its appeal. My wife, who was of course naturalized at the time of our marriage, had never lived in the United States. So these things came together. I had had an oral interview for USIA on home leave in'61 and had been offered a job. The opportunity was there, but I was surprised and taken aback. I imagined that because of the recent European experience that I had had that I would wind up in a place like Poland, say, or even Moscow, but I knew French and I knew radio and the situation in the Congo was very, very tense.

Q: Well this was the center of our interests.

RUSSELL: It certainly was. Patrice Lumumba had been assassinated some months before. At this time there was still a distinct sense of USIA officers being somehow second class citizens. We were not FSOs (Foreign Service Officers); we were FSIO, Foreign Service Information Officers. And subsequently during the '60s there was a great desire on the part of USIA's leadership to equalize, even things out. They wanted to make it clear that someone who was doing what later came to be called "public diplomacy" was as much a Foreign Service officer in the fuller sense as a political or economic officer in the Department of State.

Based on my experience with information activities I was sworn in at a mid-level. This was okay with me, and I got a very interesting and very tough first job but a very interesting one, as press attaché in the Congo, the ex-Belgian Congo.

Q: Before we get to that, when you came in did you find that, particularly Voice of America, did they sort of treat you a little bit second class because Radio Liberty was not the Voice of America?

RUSSELL: No, I never ran into that though the Voice of America. I think that the acceptance was quite broad that there were two different roles to be played. Henry Loomis, who was director of the VOA in '62, '63 was a very effective and energetic leader of the Voice of America. His analogy was that the Voice of America and the RFE/RL stations were two blades of the same pair of scissors. And in order for an impact on the political situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, you had to have both blades cutting. Which is okay with us. And I never found that working with one made it in any way difficult for working with the other. I had had a lot of experience talking to people about ideas and about formulating press programs and putting them together and interviews. I also found that the VOA was much more radiophonic than RL was, because its Lingua Franca was English, not Russian. The people who ran the VOA included the most famous VOA director at that time or over the whole years, John Chancellor from NBC News. He was director for three or four years in the late '60s. John Daly was also a popular commercial broadcaster who ran VOA. It was an institution that had real clout for itself; it had protection from the USIA's independence and since it now lost that protection it has fallen on very perilous days. As you know the VOA is under the Board of Broadcasting Governors, BBG, and the situation now is a great deal less propitious for fresh, independent broadcasting that it used to be.

Q: Well let's see, let's take it, you went to Léopoldville at the time.

RUSSELL: Right.

Q: You were there from when to when?

RUSSELL: I was on post from February '63 to February '65.

Q: Alright. When you arrived there what was the situation in the Congo?

RUSSELL: It was chaotic. There had been an insurgent movement in the northeastern part of the country. The Congo had at that time and probably still does 57 different ethnic groups and probably close to that many languages. The country had begun falling apart soon after the Belgians left in a great rush. The Belgians had done a much, much worse job than the British or the French in preparing their African colonies for independence. The Belgian policy was to educate the Congolese through second or third grade so that they knew enough to say oui, monsieur, non monsieur, but very little else. There was an uneasy feeling of disintegration. The Belgians who remained were very careful to keep a low profile. The UN was a presence at that time; when I arrived there were UN peacekeepers. I recall seeing them in the streets and passing through their checkpoints. Most of them were Nigerians in short pants with sharp creases. The Congo was considered a great prize because of its natural resources.

In November of '64 there occurred a particularly dramatic event involving hostages. The insurgents in the northeast, in the area of Stanleyville, the heart of darkness, the authentic heart of darkness. Stanleyville is now called Kisangani. It's deep in the jungles of the northeast. A group of Americans, including the American Consul General in Stanleyville, and a number of missionaries, a total of some 300 Americans and Europeans, were captured by the Simba insurgents and held as hostages in October of '64. The U.S. took the initiative to set up a rescue mission involving American planes taking off from Ascension Island off the coast of the Congo and flying Belgian paratroopers in to Stanleyville for the specific mission of freeing the hostages. I imagine there were a number of Belgians among the hostages. I can't recall what the price was, what it was that the Simba said; maybe give us this part of the Congo for independence or we'll kill all these white people. In any case the hostage crisis lasted I think more than a month; it was several months and there was a time, probably from maybe October 1st on, when there was a heavy presence of European and American correspondents. Congo was much in the news and I learned a lot very fast about how to talk to the press and when to and how to give them access to ambassadors and political counselors and so on.

Q: You know, that was called Operation Dragon Rouge.

RUSSELL: That's the one, Dragon Rouge.

Q: I've interviewed Michael Hoyt. It was a major event and I think some Belgian priests and nuns were killed. It essentially was a successful rescue operation.

RUSSELL: Correct.

Q: What were you doing there? I mean, what sort of- In the first place, what was the embassy like and then what was sort of the atmosphere in which you were working?

RUSSELL: We had two ambassadors during my tenure and they were very different. The first, Ed Gullion, was very traditionally State Department in his manner. And the second was G. McMurtrie Godley. Godley was a real go getter.

Q: Known as Mac Godley.

RUSSELL: Mac Godley, the same. Under Gullion things were strictly controlled and along traditional lines whereas Mac Godley had some ideas of his own. He worked very closely and very actively with the CIA station chief.

Q: I don't know if Mobutu was the top man at that point.

RUSSELL: I think that Mobutu was the top army man at the time. The president was Kasavubu and the prime minister was a man named Cyrille Adoula, the colorless, honest figure I think. We had our offices separate from the embassy. There was the American Cultural Center in the Congolese part of the city; that is to say, on Avenue Charles de Gaulle. It was a good cultural center that I guess had been built rather quickly. Or maybe it existed before independence. There were five or six people at USIS (United States Information Service) including an interesting PAO (public affairs officer), a man named Stephen Baldanza, who had been at the Voice of America. He had been a member of Senator Joe McCarthy's loyal underground at the VOA. He had been a source of information for McCarthy about people who, you know, were radical leftists who believe in the constitution of the United States. The fact that Baldanza had been a source for McCarthy apparently was well known to agency leadership. The day after McCarthy got his firmest comeuppance, Steve Baldanza was assigned as PAO to Kabal. And subsequently he was PAO in Israel, despite the fact that he had reputedly said while being interviewed that he really didn't like Jews. And whoever was interviewing him is purported to have said, Steve, that's why we're sending you there. You'll be tough, no, you'll be hard nosed.

Q: Did you have to deal with him?

RUSSELL: Oh, a great deal.

Q: How did you find him?

RUSSELL: With Steve Baldanza?

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: He had a very good sense of humor and was somehow, I think, not embittered about being thrown to distant places. He also was very proud of the fact that he spoke French. In point of fact his French was a kind of a bastard Italian, Italo-Spanish. I remember one very interesting incident with Steve Baldanza. I had met the Soviet press attaché and I had spoken with him in Russian. I knew Russian and had had those seven years of using it all the time, every day at Radio Liberty, which I don't believe I mentioned as a fact to the Soviet. His name was Petrov o Ivanov. Anyway, I mentioned to Steve that it was my first appointment so I didn't want to get misunderstood or anything. So I said to Steve, I met a very interesting guy, you might be interested in exchanging some view with him. He's the press attaché of the Soviet embassy here in Leopoldville. And he said that was great, that was wonderful, let's do it, by all means. Send him up as soon as you can. I've never seen a communist face to face.

So Ivanov came around and I had offered to Steve, I said I'd be glad, you know, to interpret in Russian. I had aced the Russian exam when I came in; I had a four plus/five in Russian; I was really on top of it. And he said oh no, no, mon Francais trés bien. You know, I can do it in French. So we had this 45 minute conversation or so with Steve saying, doing the best he could and Monsieur Ivanov answering. They were talking. He knew French and poor Steve obviously didn't. So Steve was very proud of himself at the end of the interview and he said good-bye, au revoir, bon chance. So we walked out to the door of the office there in the cultural center, and Ivanov said, you know, Mr. Russell, this was a very, very interesting talk. I just have one question. What did he say?

Q: I've seen reports from people like junior officer Frank Carlucci and all, the cables that came out of the Congo in those days were avidly read but they were talking about a government that wasn't really a government. I mean, if it weren't so tragic it would have been comic. How did you find things?

RUSSELL: I found things a little chaotic. One never knew quite what was going on. As a junior officer I wasn't, obviously, in on country team meetings. Steve reported back on what he had heard to us. And by the way, there was a very strong IO (information officer), new to the agency, Wes Fenhagen. He had been the editor of a newspaper somewhere in Maryland; a very good journalist, a very good journalistic sense. And the cultural affairs officer had been a professor somewhere in Utah or elsewhere; very, very competent and serious. And there was an assistant CAO (cultural affairs officer) and there were two assistant IOs and I was one of the two.

Q: Well you know, when you say "cultural affairs" it sounds wonderful. But to my knowledge, in the Congo, when the Belgians let go something like three or maybe five people, Congolese, had received college degrees.

RUSSELL: I think that was the legend. What one heard was that there were no college degrees, that there were 15 high school degrees.

Q: Yes. Well I mean, of that nature so that when you're talking about sort of a cultural affairs thing it's usually aimed at the college level or-

RUSSELL: It wasn't there. The CAO would do things like give talks on American politics in the cultural center and the audience was very much teenage and young adults. In Kinshasa the University was called, I believe Friendship University. Is that right?

Q: Could have been.

RUSSELL: I can't remember what it was called. There was, however, definitely a university and the CAO, John Fisk, was very active, was frequently out at the university and found his French was passable and it was quite a good scene. No, we were a good team, I think. The fellow who followed Steve Baldanza was one of the legendary, most flamboyant people that USIA ever produced. He was John Mowinckel. Norwegian-American family, big, energetic, outgoing, glad handing, party giving; he was a very energetic and impressive guy. Spoke beautiful French; had been CAO in Paris, was transferred from Paris. I can't remember why; there was some sort of funny reason. Mowinckel was all over the place. He subsequently was PAO in Brazil before I was there and I got to know him over the years quite well. He had panache. He really came on strong. He walked into a room and just took it over. A very good raconteur. Funny stories galore, quick minded, interesting fellow. Not very much substance. But boy what panache.

Q: You were working with the press corps there?

RUSSELL: Yes, oh yes.

Q: Was David Halberstam there when you were there?

RUSSELL: No. He would have been after my time because I would have remembered him if he'd been there. The names slip away as the years go by. Jonathan Randal was there for the New York Times.

Q: I think it was or maybe The Post. One of the two.

RUSSELL: Randal was there and did a lot of reporting and was out in the bush a lot. He was fearless.

Q: How did you find the reporting?

RUSSELL: Communications back then obviously were not what they are now. I don't recall that there were any serious problems. People knew that the Belgian legacy had been extremely weak and a lot of things in the country were not working and would not work for a long time. But I didn't have a feeling that there was consistent misreading of the story or getting it wrong. I don't recall that. They were very insistent, and I really pressed hard, to find out what they wanted to know, especially with the hostages, because the interest of correspondents overseas for stories that have a home angle is extremely intense. And I saw it in spades when the American television correspondents were

insistent on knowing who was where and how many Americans there were and what were we doing to protect the American. So there was this interest in Mike Hoyt and his family and I think his wife was there too, I guess.

Q: No, I don't think so.

RUSSELL: Oh, was she not?

Q: No. I think, as I recall it, Hoyt was ordered to stay on and he was rather bitter about Mac Godley telling him to stay. The idea was stay behind and you know, fly the flag, which eventually is ordered to be eat by the Simbas.

RUSSELL: He was ordered to eat the flag?

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: Oh really? I didn't know about that.

Q: Yes. Apparently it was a lot of fiber.

RUSSELL: Rather fibery.

Q: But he made the remark afterwards that he at least thought that well, if I'm going to really go down, so will Godley. I think he made that to Godley afterwards, saying that, you know, at least I took satisfaction, if I'm- it would not- you would suffer too. Anyway. It's in his account.

How about Stanleyville? Was Stanleyville, were there problems while you were there in Stanleyville?

RUSSELL: The area north and east of Stanleyville was a major rallying point for the Simbas, for the insurgents, which is why it took place there. I never went to Stanleyville; outside the city was infrequent. I'd been to Coquillaville and to Elizabethville but that's all.

Q: Elizabethville was the other one; was anything happening in Elizabethville?

RUSSELL: A lot was happening there.

Q: Elizabethville was Katanga?

RUSSELL: That's right. It was the capital of Katanga and there was a lot of effort by unscrupulous Europeans to get their hands on the minerals; there's gold and there's diamonds and a great deal more in that corner of the country.

Q: I've interviewed Terry McNamara, who was down there as the vice consul at the time.

Well then, what was the feeling? Was there the feeling that the Soviets had a good chance to take over the situation there?

RUSSELL: Well it was both concern about the Soviets and concern about the Chinese because there were signs that the Simbas had funding and weapons from the Chinese. So it was very much in the news. And there was a good deal of tension. There was really a feeling of great insecurity. Everybody was told if they're ever in a car accident, under no circumstances should you not hit and run. Get the hell out of there no matter what happens, no matter who or what you hit; do not stay because you will risk being lynched on the spot. And I was encouraged to carry a weapon in my car, a tiny little Spanish pistol. I kept it under the seat of the Volkswagen; never fired it in danger but there it was.

We had a very nice house with a swimming pool that had belonged to a Belgian businessman.

Q: Was there concern about safety at your house?

RUSSELL: We had next door neighbors, Belgians, who came over to see us the night we moved in to welcome us. they said in case any problems come up, if you ever have any problems, please don't tell us, don't ask us, don't phone us, we can't do anything. We can promise nothing. It had a fence around it; we had a full-time cook for no money to speak of, and a full-time guy cutting the grass with a machete. And a guard. I guess we had a staff of three, just the three of us.

Q: Well what was sort of the social life like there?

RUSSELL: Very active. We had good friends at the British embassy. The DCM during much of the time was Bob Blake, who was very gregarious and had parties and invited people to be merry. There was also an Anglo-American play gang, sort of dramatic association, and in the fall of '63 or so, we did "A Midsummer Night's Dream." We staged it, actually. I played Oberon, the king of the fairies; brilliantly, as I recall.

Q: Of course.

RUSSELL: We had great fun. We used to get together once a month or so, read plays and stuff. We made the best of it. And Mac Godley gave a Roman party; the idea being you would come in a toga or some kind of Caesarian outfit. John Mowinckel showed up with a modern beachfront Roman outfit with the floppy hat and beach pants that ended at the knees. I guess the ambassador commented, and John says, you didn't say anything about what period of Rome. He was a pistol.

Q: Well then, how did you find the press corps?

RUSSELL: The Congolese press corps was very meager. There was one newspaper, La Courrier d'Afrique. It had an editor who was very serious, very thoughtful and I had a

good relationship with him. I was in charge of dealing with the Congolese press. I recall visiting his office more than once and finding out from him what kind of topics he was interested in and then getting people in Washington to write articles about them and then I would have them translated into French. I had quite a good record of placement in La Courrier d'Afrique. These were the days when evidence of effectiveness was sought by USIA Washington. One of the evidences of effectiveness was column inches so I was pleased to tell them that I had had no less than 127 column inches in the La Courrier d'Afrique last month and I got a pat on the head for that.

I had a quick lesson about one aspect of public affairs. The fact that Operation Dragon Rouge involved Belgians, with all the colonial forces coming back a scant three years after packing up and leaving the zone, was for many Africans very painful. And the PAO decided it was really important, this is Mowinckel at the time, that there be a publication that set the record straight. And so he gave me the job of producing it and I worked like hell; I worked around the clock to produce it with photographs. I still have copies of it. We did it in English and in French. Three or four days after he said do it I had finished it. The IO wasn't there. So I had this heap of 105,000 copies, maybe two-thirds in French and one-third in English of my publication. It justified and explained why it was necessary for the Americans, the British and the Belgians to take this limited action, etc., etc., to save the lives of their fellow countrymen. And I got carried away. I just got caught up in the rhythm of the project. I was about to send copies off in special packages to Bamako and to Abidjan and Dakar and so on, getting it around to other African capitals. And then, in the midst of all of my arranging for it to go out, Mowinckel said, what are you doing? And he was very gentle about it, but he could have really slapped me around. I had absolutely no business taking these initiatives: deciding as AIO in Kinshasa whether to send more to Senegal than to Cote d'Ivoire and for the PAO not to be aware of what I was doing and how many I had done. I learned a very, very quick lesson in respect for the hierarchy. That was the last time that I wasn't PAO myself because in Moscow I was PAO almost from the beginning of arriving there in '69. But it was a real baptism by fire. I learned a hell of a lot about representing the U.S. and what to say and how to say it and to whom and at what point. I had no regrets about having invested a really intense time in Africa. It turned out that I never went back except as policy officer from Washington. I don't have any regrets as I look back on it.

Q: Well was there such a thing as sort of the equivalent of what was known in Saigon as the 5:00 Follies; was there a meeting of correspondents at the embassy at all, I mean a scheduled meeting?

RUSSELL: There was really intensive presence in the two or three weeks leading up to the liberacion, to the freeing of the hostages. And as I recall they were there every day. It didn't get formalized like the Follies but they were there, they wanted to know what was going on. I recall meeting with them and part of the banner was held by the IO, I was AIO (assistant information officer). The IO was an interesting fellow of German background named Max Krauss. He was very solid, very helpful. He kept me in line. I was press attaché and he was IO, but since he outranked we did together; we worked very, very closely. He wrote a book about Dragon Rouge as well.

Q: Well then, you left there when?

RUSSELL: I left there in February of '65.

Q: Now, what did you think about whither the cotton grow'th when you left?

RUSSELL: I was very discouraged. I had seen an awful lot. Mowinckel and I struck it off very well and he had included me in several meetings. I had met Chambray and I had met Mobutu and I was feeling that I had really understood what was going on. I was very, very unhopeful about the future. It didn't seem to have any bright moments and it's had very few ever since.

Q: Well then, where'd you go?

RUSSELL: I was assigned as CAO (cultural affairs officer) Warsaw.

Q: Cultural affairs officer?

RUSSELL: Yes. And at the time that I left that's what I thought would happen. There was a real feeling in Washington that the "I" should be dropped out of FSIO and that USIA officers would be fully recognized and given appropriate treatment as such. All our belongings were packed up and shipped to Matadi to be put on a boat to go to Poland. I had crammed for the Polish exam before going to the Congo because I'm really interested in Poland. And I scored a 3/3 plus or something like that. I was ready to go. But we now had this policy: The same kind of personnel rules, HR (human resources) standards that applied at State had to be applied to USIA, if FSIOs were to become FSOs. In '63 when I left the Congo, I had been abroad for almost 11 years. The need for re-Americanization was keenly felt in Washington. So my assignment was broken for Warsaw and my belongings finally got back to Washington about five months after they left the Congo. I had come back here for some R&R (rest and recreation) before going to Warsaw. Then the assignment was broken and replaced by a very interesting job as policy officer with the African area office. I had two very good years there. We had a big budget and made a lot of interesting movies, started a monthly magazine in English and French, set the standards for its contents. I must have made certainly eight films.

Q: What kind of films?

RUSSELL: Haile Selassie visits America. He comes and we decide that we're going to find a really good filmmaker and let that filmmaker do one whale of a report about the respect and affection demonstrated by Americans for the Emperor. And so we made such a movie; we made a movie about the Peace Corps in Chad. In probably '66, the first festival of Negro arts took place in Dakar. And I was able to time it in such a way that I was in Dakar at the time it happened. An African-American filmmaker named William Greaves was our contractor to do the job. Greaves was in Dakar, in Senegal the same time we were and Duke Ellington was there and Langston Hughes. I've got to get a copy

of that movie. It was 20 or 25 minutes long. He shot it in sepia and he caught the rhythm of the whole thing and it's a terrific short documentary. Greaves went on to build a reputation as the leading black documentary maker in the U.S. He's now very far along. I'm still in touch with Greaves, and he promised he was going to send me that film on DVD and he hasn't done it yet.

Q: Well USIA of course was under strict constraints about not showing anything in America, wasn't it, at the time?

RUSSELL: Not showing anything?

Q: Any of its products in the United States.

RUSSELL: Oh yes, that's right. It's called the Smith-Mundt Act. It was changed as far as I know for one thing only.

Q: "In Days of Drums."

RUSSELL: That's right. I think Bruce Herschensohn made the film about the assassination of President Kennedy.

Q: And the aftermath.

RUSSELL: Right. The magazine was called, Topic. It came out in English and French and was about the United States. It was like America, like the Russian language one but it had a separate editor, Dennis Askey. It was fun to try to distill what one knew about Africa and what the interests were and to lay out the editorial guidelines for the people who were making the magazine.

Q: Was there coordination with say the people- there must have been somebody doing it for Latin America and another one for Asia.

RUSSELL: I don't recall ever doing that. I just don't think so. The one that I knew was America because I distributed hundreds of copies of it when I was in the Soviet Union later. But at that time all I knew was that I had $700,000 to publish the magazine for a year and to give it the right pitch. We had a careful structure arranged so that PAOs, IOs, COs around the continent were encouraged to look really hard at it and to answer questions about whether or not it was relevant or worth doing in general.

Q: Well then how did you find the atmosphere with the Voice of America at that time?

RUSSELL: My time in Washington, '65 to '69 was evenly split between the African area and the Russian area. After two years in the African area a USIA officer, Terry Catherman, was assigned as PAO Israel. He was leaving and there was nobody to head the Russian service. So the area director there, whom I happened to know, knew that I was there, knew that I knew Russian, knew that I had the Radio Liberty background. He

managed to twist arms to the necessary degree so that the responsible person for the African area would say, you want Russell? Alright, goddamn it, you can have him. So my two years on Africa were wonderful, interesting years. I got back to the continent, went to Kampala, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cote d'Ivoire. I had an extended month-long trip in connection with the starting of the magazine. The idea was that if you're going to lay down editorial guidelines for publications it was a good idea to know what the people who were supposed to read it with interest looked like.

Q: What was the name of the African magazine?

RUSSELL: It was called Topic.

Q: Who turned out Young Africa?

RUSSELL: Jeune Afrique?

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: Jeune Afrique is published as a newspaper in Paris by Africans and with, I suppose, French money. There are lots of people in France who still care a great deal about former colonies.

Q: Well then, did you find that America was this a different kettle of fish than our Topic?

RUSSELL: The intent for Russians, with America was to really make him look at these pictures and say, my God they have that too? There was a real factor of showing off the liveliest, the most colorful, the most engaging stuff in the United States, and it was always in color. Topic was barely in color; it may not have been in color. No, it was sort of minimum. It looked like Scholastic Magazine. It was modest in its appearance; it was not Life magazine, sort of big splashy stuff that would knock your eye out.

Q: When I looked at America I always thought that it, to a certain extent replicated Life magazine. I mean, it seemed to be of that model.

RUSSELL: Yes, it was like that. It had text. I don't think I have a single copy of it anymore. I used to have some because it was really an interesting effort.

Q: It was a good magazine.

RUSSELL: Yes, yes.

Q: I used to see it when I was in Yugoslavia.

RUSSELL: Yes. The same people in Moscow who were cajoled into taking a radio along to listen to also had to take along 25, 50 copies of America magazine and forget it on the airplane, give it to the cleaning lady in the hotel.

Q: Yes, you know, leave it in the backseat of your unlocked car.

RUSSELL: Voila.

Q: Yes. That sort of thing.

RUSSELL: I hadn't heard of that particular way of doing it.

Q: Well I did that with something when I was in Saudi Arabia. Because I was vice consul in Dhahran and a car would be open and I'd just leave some of our magazines.

RUSSELL: With sort of a little sign there in Arabic saying "steal me."

Q: Yes.

Did politics, you know, I'm not talking necessarily Democrat or Republican but bureaucratic politics or anything, intrude on your America time?

RUSSELL: My America time is fairly limited overall. It's four years, two in African policy, two at VOA, followed in '75 to '78 by one year in the Senior Seminar and two years as director of film and television for USIA. Then I went to Brazil, followed immediately by Spain, followed immediately by China, so actually my U.S. assignments totaled seven years.

Q: When did you go to Moscow?

RUSSELL: I went to Moscow arriving on July 2, 1969.

Q: So this was after-

RUSSELL: The policy officer for Africa had been '65-'67; '67-'69 was heading the Soviet division of VOA. That was the period during which I made my first trip to the Soviet Union.

Q: And then you went to the Soviet Union.

RUSSELL: I was assigned as number two. I was by this time a class three officer and the PAO assignment in Moscow was an O1 position. So I was assigned as CAO, cultural affairs officer, and arrived with that job. And then something unusual happened. The new head of USIA was a man named Frank Shakespeare. He was a very aggressive conservative and he was maybe a Rumsfeld or Cheney of his day in political terms. He really wanted to hit them in the groin fast and keep up the pressure. So in July of '69, he called a PAO conference in Vienna. The PAOs from Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, and Hungary all came together in Vienna to discuss USIA programming and how, as quickly as possible, to bring down Soviet power, to undermine it and destroy it, weaken it at least,

with words and pictures and so on. In the course of that conference, I was not there, my PAO, Yale Richmond- have you talked to Yale?

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: My PAO, Yale Richmond, had left on home leave I think before I got there. I think he had left on June 30 and when I arrived I was acting PAO right away. While he was in Vienna, some of the questions that he was asked by Frank Shakespeare were very aggressive. They were aimed at putting not just Yale but everybody on the spot: to declare their deep anti-Soviet commitment and their readiness to work with Frank and with President Nixon to bring about the end of Soviet power. And the question, I have this secondhand, the question to Yale was: if the Soviet Union were to collapse, what kind of political party would arise from the ashes, would replace it? And Yale, I understand, said something along the lines, well, after 50 years of Soviet power there would be probably some kind of socialist government would be formed. And this apparently was exactly what Frank Shakespeare did not want to have or did not believe. And either at the same moment or when he got back to Washington, he fired Yale as PAO Moscow. He said you're not going back; you're out of there. Had you heard this?

Q: I think I have.

RUSSELL: You've heard lots of stories.

Q: I hear a lot and I'm not sure but I know Shakespeare was a problem.

RUSSELL: He was a problem. And the consequence was, as a seriously under grade officer who had only at that time been in the agency for seven years, I was acting PAO in Moscow.

Q: Okay. Today is the 15th of May, 2009, with McKinney Russell.

McKinney, so when did you go to Moscow?

RUSSELL: I arrived in Moscow with my family on the 2nd of July, 1969. And my assignment was, as cultural affairs officer, as number two in the small USIA contingent at that embassy.

Q: Can we talk a bit first, how would you describe both the situation in the Soviet Union and also Soviet-American relations in '69 when you arrived?

RUSSELL: There had been a lot of movement, some of it not too evident, in Soviet society after the ouster of Khrushchev in 1964. There were particularly efforts in the artistic and cultural communities to see how far it might be possible to press their luck. I arrived three years before the policy called "détente" that was launched in the early '70s. There was still a good deal of tension and mistrust between the Soviet Union and the U.S. and its NATO allies. It was not a particularly friendly time; on the other hand certain

cultural activities had started in the late '50s and were going forward. And they provided a lot of opportunities to interact with the Soviet intelligentsia, which made the assignment at that time a particularly interesting one. This involved an unusual amount of reporting. It was always the tradition that USIA officers were involved in interacting face to face with their cultural counterparts, their information counterparts, but that they would generally not be extensive reporters in the tradition of the Department of State. In my own case, during the time that I spent in Moscow, summer of '69 to summer of '71, there was a great deal that was of interest that one could write about and talk about. It was fortunate for me that when I arrived at the embassy in Moscow I was completely at home in the language. This made it possible to do all kinds of things that might not have been the case if one were still struggling with two or two plus Russian. My Russian had been graded at the time I came into the service in October '62, at four plus five and it was at that level solidly by the time I got to Moscow.

The USIA director decided as I explained earlier that he was going to fire Yale Richmond from his position as public affairs officer in the Soviet Union.

So three or four days after arrival I found myself acting PAO in Moscow in Yale Richmond's absence, but it looked like he would not be coming back, as indeed was the case. The secretary packed his clothes and they were shipped off. He went on subsequently to an extremely distinguished career. He was a key player in all the exchanges in the Department of State and he also has been the author of at least three books on cultural interchange, one called "From Nyet to Da" and one called "From Da to Yes." The consequence for me was that having at that time had altogether only two years of field experience with USIA I was rather seriously overmatched. And fortunately the Russian knowledge served very substantially to establish my capacity to function in charge of things on the public diplomacy side in the USSR.

Q: Did this action on the part of Frank Shakespeare send sort of a chill throughout the Information Service or not? Or did it get much attention or-?

RUSSELL: I don't know if it got very much attention. It certainly caused surprise among the middle rank of officers because at that time I was a class three officer. The position was a class one position. It was one of the most important and complex public affairs offices around the world and here is this youngish fellow barely 40 who thinks he can manage it. There was an awareness that Frank Shakespeare was very much an activist. He wanted things to happen and things to change. He had perhaps an exaggerated conception of just how quickly and thoroughly the instruments he commanded could effect those changes. He expected a great deal more from us than we were really able to deliver.

Two days after my arrival I was pressed into service doing interpreting for the Armenian magician hired to do magic tricks for the diversion of the children of the embassy. There was a Fourth of July party at the dacha that belonged to the American embassy, about 20 kilometers outside of Moscow. I found myself pressed into service right away as the one who explained what this magician was doing, what kind of tricks he was doing because

he spoke no English. My Armenian was non-existent but we found a common language in Russian.

It was a very active and busy time. I'm sure you've had conversations with others who watched or were involved one way or the other with the exchange of national exhibits. This is an absolutely essential factor in the U.S. arsenal for dealing with and promoting change in the Soviet Union.

Q: Well when you arrived, what was the first exhibit you had to deal with and how was it received and what were the problems?

RUSSELL: An exhibit was scheduled to open in Moscow in September and it had just opened in Leningrad. And there had been a lot of negative feedback about it. The subject of the exhibit was education in the USA. There were 25 or 30 young guides, Russian speaking Americans, in many cases the children of immigrants but not all. These guides had to explain standing in front of mocked up schoolrooms in the U.S., how the U.S. education system functioned. It had not been put together with much imagination and I recall, in July and August, having had some very intense exchange of cables between Moscow and USIA headquarters in Washington about the content and the presentation. And soon after arrival, within two or three weeks, I went to Leningrad to do a critique of the exhibit as it looked then. I sent a very lengthy and very detailed cable critiquing what seemed to be less than adequate in this exhibit.

Q: What sort of things were in it?

RUSSELL: The materials were not really very interesting. There were a lot of books lined up, as I recall, and nothing about what was in them. The director of the exhibit was someone without any experience in the Soviet Union. The exhibits were set up to go to six Soviet cities over a period of 13 months. They opened in Leningrad, were to run for a month there, take a month to strike the set and to move from Leningrad to Moscow in order to open at the beginning of the third month in Moscow. This particular exhibit was to go to six cities, starting with Leningrad, going on then to Moscow. The third, in the fall, was Ukraine, Kiev; the fourth must have been Baku, then perhaps Azerbaijan. The most interesting of all was the last one to be in May of 1970, in Siberia. It was the first time that an American exhibit had been shown at the university in Novosibirsk. There was a high level think tank in many areas at this place in Siberia. During the course of the year I had the occasion to be the opener of the exhibit a number of times, which meant that I had a chance to practice my speechmaking abilities in Ukrainian. The Soviets were paying a price for allowing us to have these exhibits. All kinds of radical, non-Soviet, anti-Soviet in principle ideas were being expressed, like freedom of choice for children about schools and any number of similar things. Obviously this deal was not something that we were getting free. We had to organize exhibits about some aspect of Soviet life in six American cities. The American exhibits that went to the Soviet Union, of which there were, over the years, perhaps 10 or 12, generated enormous amounts of interest. We would have people standing in line to enter our exhibits, 100, 150 people in the morning.

Q: Well what would they do?

RUSSELL: They would stand in line and they would go through the exhibits and they would see the guides standing in front of a room which represented a high school in Tacoma, Washington, say. And it was a reproduction of a school and the student. The guide would say, welcome ladies and gentlemen. The school which you see before us is Public School 15 in Tacoma, Washington. And the way the schools work is this. He or she would explain basic stuff about how the educational system worked. And then, even though our speaker had said nothing whatsoever about it, someone would put his hand up and say, do you own a car? Or a woman would put her hand up and say when you were in college did you have a separate room? The fact of having a real live Russian speaking American talking to groups of 40, 50, 60 Russians standing in front of something that he or she could point to and say this what this is and this is what that is, and then the questioning was extremely interesting. The reporting about what was on people's minds was a very, very interesting part of our whole effort in the Soviet Union at that time.

Q: While you were doing this I was consul general in Saigon. We had a little war going on. How did that play?

RUSSELL: We tended, in Soviet terms, to not talk about it very much at all. We put out a news bulletin in English which was distributed to other embassies and to people at the embassy. I don't think it was in Russian; I think it must have been just in English. And it was distributed by driver to other embassies and to the people at the foreign ministry so that they were aware of what was going on. And we would include statements about how the fighting in Saigon was going forward and what kind of challenges there were, but it was not a subject that we talked about very much at all. Later on, during the four years in Germany, there was a lot more pressure because the war was coming to an end.

Q: I was wondering whether Soviet authorities were putting provocateurs into the audience.

RUSSELL: That's a solid point. It very often did occur that there would be provocative questions. Sometimes the questioner either had been put up to it or was a convicted communist and wanted to make sure that they established their bona fides as not accepting a single word from the young American in the exhibit. To sit in on those presentations was extremely interesting. We had traveling along with the exhibit someone whose sole responsibility was to observe, take note of and write up what kind of questions were being asked. And for my own part, in part because I had just come from the two years at the Voice of America, I had VOA very much on my mind, VOA and Radio Liberty. So I set it up for my assistant information officer, who was the head of the VOA 20 years later, I said to him I want you, once a month to do an airgram that spells out to our broadcasters in Washington what the issues are that are moving people. I want you to spend time at the exhibit, I want you to talk to the observer at the exhibit who is reporting on what the issues are and I want you to give guidance to our broadcasters so they know what kind of themes they should be carrying in their broadcast to the Soviet Union.

Q: Well was it pretty well focused on economics of the free world?

RUSSELL: A lot of economics and also there was still a great deal of Soviet propaganda about race issues; a great deal. One of the first jokes that I heard during the time that I was there had this angle to it. It's about an American visitor who comes to Moscow shortly after the war. He is being shown the subway system, the famous Metro, that has patterns and exhibits everywhere. Well the American is taken through by his guide and he sees these beautiful mosaics. It's really a beautiful series of views of the underground stations. But after awhile he says to Ivan, this is really beautiful. I could never imagine that a subway system could be so wonderful. But tell me, where are the trains? And Ivan answers, yes, and what about the lynchings in the South?

One of the oldest gags about their focus on it. It came to an interesting, particularly interesting circumstance in '71 when Alvin Ailey and his ballet company came through.

Q: Which is a black-

RUSSELL: He was a black Texan who started the first all black classical ballet company. Somebody in Washington said, Ailey was having a difficult time financially, for whatever reasons, I don't know; things were not going well for him in his company and it was easy to persuade him to take a tour and to do several nights, three or four performances in Moscow and the same thing in Leningrad. It was an enormous success. It turned out to really affect the attitudes of ordinary people because the Russians think they invented ballet. The French may have had an idea or two but essentially it's a Russian idea. And because of that the idea that the downtrodden American negro should be able to master the skill and to put on a remarkable performance -- their centerpiece as you possibly know is called "Revelations." They were already doing "Revelations" back in 1969 or '70, when they came to Moscow and Leningrad. And the same dance is still being done; I saw it a month ago at the Kennedy Center, the same series, extended dance called "Revelations."

In any case the two years that I spent in Moscow I look back on them as particularly rich and interesting. I learned an enormous amount. I didn't spend much time at the ballet because the theater was much more interesting. There were very few, if any, of my colleagues in the embassy who went to the theater very much because they didn't know what people were saying. Their Russian was not good enough to follow what it was that was being said on the stage. So my wife and I went to the theater probably 50 times.

Q: Well now, were the plays pretty much the Chekhov type thing or were there modern plays?

RUSSELL: There were modern plays as well. The traditional Chekhov plays were done in new ways. One of the characters in "The Cherry Orchard" for example might be given a greater prominence in his presentation to emphasize his own particular social perspectives and problems. I got to know a number of the directors and several of the

actors personally by stopping by after performances to discuss things with them. And the KGB was very well aware of it. There was an outstanding young director named Tabakoff. I had stopped to talk with him after a performance at his theater, which was not far from the embassy. My wife and I managed to talk our way in just for an informal chat with him. After about 15 minutes the phone rang and he picked it up and he said da, da, da, da, da, da, I understand. Then he rather apologetically said I'm afraid I have to break off our conversation, Mr. Russell, as interesting as it is, and then pointed to the phone to say he got instructions from your KGB handler that that was all the time that he could give me.

Q: Well did you find- Often the theater is used to subtly, maybe not even so subtly, to criticize an authoritarian regime. Was this going on?

RUSSELL: There were several theaters that made a point of choosing these edgy plays that had messages like that. Yuri Nubimov was perhaps the best known one at his theater, which was regularly, because it dealt with provocative themes, sold out. I still remember seeing as many as 20 people standing in front of the theater, all begging for tickets.

Q: Were they doing any American plays? A little earlier, during the mid to late '60s I was in Belgrade and there they were putting on, well I can remember "Bus Stop" and actually La Mama came which is quite a revelation. Was any of that going on?

RUSSELL: I'm sure there was I just can't immediately come up with an example. It does seem to me that Tennessee Williams was being performed but I just simply draw a blank; I just don't know how it was.

Q: Was there much interest in what was going on artistically in America?

RUSSELL: A great deal of curiosity. There was a particularly eager and interested group is Moscow of jazz enthusiasts. You've heard it said that Willis Conover was the best known American in the Soviet Union.

Q: Yes. He was the jazz man-

RUSSELL: He was the jazz man.

Q: He would be mobbed.

RUSSELL: He had this wonderful program. He was never translated into Russian but he always spoke very slowly and very clearly to make his points. And he was really beloved. Five years after his death his fans in the Soviet Union, or maybe it was already Russia by then, organized a special tribute to our brother Willis who opened the door for us to music. I recall that a particularly popular visitor at the time was an American professor who was still active in this field named Fred Starr. Fred Starr is the head of the Central Asia and Caucuses Institute at Johns Hopkins downtown now. He plays the

clarinet and was very eager to find out what was going on. I recall through him meeting a number of young Russian, Soviet jazz enthusiasts and performers. There was a lot of interest in American art.

Q: Well I had, you know, we'd gone through the Stalin and Khrushchev period where there was sort of the classic denigration of modern art. I mean, you know, trash and all that sort of stuff.

RUSSELL: Oh yes.

Q: Was that still going on or was Soviet realism kind of dying out?

RUSSELL: I don't know if it was dying out but it was much easier at the time that we were there for Soviet painters to paint the way they wanted to. There was a particularly interesting collector who was a Russian speaking, Greek national. His affiliation was the Greek embassy. His name doesn't come immediately to mind but he was kind of a permanent resident. He was the permanent administrative officer of the Greek embassy. He had Russian connections, spoke very good Russian, and built up, as a private collector, an absolutely astounding collection of works. His apartment had works by some of the best known Russian avant-garde, Rodchenko and Malevich from the '20s, works that he had bought; he had a garage stuffed with it. He was an extremely interesting character and very interested in maintaining a contact with us as a kind of protection; if he's got good friends in the diplomatic community they will leave him alone, and they left him alone. Five or 10 years later he struck a deal with the government, which was changing its view about what belonged on walls, and he was allowed to export out of the country about one-fourth of his collection and the rest passed to the Russians themselves. Much of it landed in basements but in recent years a lot have come out of the basements and is on the walls.

Between the theater and the performing arts in general and the art there was an enormous amount of interaction going on. Three or four times during my tenure I attended events at the Writers' Club, which was a private club for Soviet writers, right downtown. I remember going with the poetess Bella Akhmadulina to an event there. Someone I got to know quite well was Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the poet.

Q: Where did he fit at this time?

RUSSELL: Well he was something of a chameleon because he managed to project an image of independent thought and maverick ideas on the one hand but on the other hand he paid obeisance to Soviet requirements. He did patriotic works that were of interest. He wrote a very moving and very widely quoted work called "Babii Yar" about the Nazi atrocities outside Kiev during the occupation. But he was a loyal friend. In May of 1971, the 7th of May, there was a full page article published in Literary Gazette aimed specifically and by name and with details at me. I was accused of subverting Soviet intelligentsia. It was very, very critical but it was kind of a parting shot because obviously the secret police knew all about my movements; they knew which theaters I had been to

and which not and they knew which unofficial artists I had visited in their apartments; my wife and I knew several of them. We have several works of Soviet avant-garde painters that we bought and brought with us when we came home.

In any case, the article in Literary Gazette asked the rhetorical question: what is this Mr. Russell, this so-called cultural fellow with the American embassy up to, undermining Soviet intelligentsia? My colleagues, who know these things better than I do, thought it was provoked by the announcement on the first of April of a lot of PAO changes. Because what had happened was that Frank Shakespeare was very unhappy with the presumed liberal tendencies of the then-PAO in Bonn. He wanted to replace him with someone else. That someone else was seriously under grade to run the program in Bonn. So they cast around in the spring of 1971 to find someone who would be an appropriate replacement for the man in Bonn, who Mr. Shakespeare thought simply had to go. And it happens that having just been in Moscow, this is almost two years through my tour, which was all I had altogether, that Mr. Shakespeare looked around and he said, this man Russell, how is his German? Since I had at that point already spent 11 years in Germany, I had been tested at a pair of fives when I came in so I had absolutely no problem functioning in German. So on the first of April, on April Fool's Day, the wireless file came out with this enormous list throwing up in the air PAOs from the ceiling and see where they landed. It was an enormous change that altered many people's lives. Among the things, it assigned the younger officer that Shakespeare had wanted to send to Bonn to Moscow to replace me and I went to Bonn to replace the liberal. Frank wanted to make it clear that the reason that I had been picked was because I had been effective up against the commie beast with its searing blast right on my forehead day after day and stuff like that. My colleagues on the political side of the house said the reason that that article was published in Literary Gazette is because they've got this whole dossier on all of the activities that you've been up to while you've been here; and they learned that you're being transferred out and they want to score some points, leave you perhaps limping on the way out, and also send a little signal, maybe a major signal, to the Soviet intelligentsia: look, they may seem like innocent, good hearted chaps, these young American diplomats, but watch out because they're here to undermine Soviet power.

Q: Well for you, of course, this is a tremendous pat on the back.

RUSSELL: It really was.

Q: Well did you feel, looking back on it, bearing in mind the political winds in USIA, Frank Shakespeare but others in Washington, so when you said things you said "and those horrid Soviets" and, you know, this and that? I mean, was this, did one have to adapt to that?

RUSSELL: I didn't. No, you didn't have to cotton to the vocabulary. You had to leave absolutely no doubt at all in their mind that you had no hidden sympathy for the kind of socialist structure that the communists had imposed in Eastern Europe and that you were resolutely opposed to it and that you could stand up and criticize it and speak out.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were in Moscow?

RUSSELL: In Moscow the ambassador the entire time was a career diplomat of the old school named Jacob Beam. Jacob Beam was a very spare New Englander, very tall, very slim and very- locked in. He wasn't a bon vivant in any sense but he was an extremely alert political observer. And I made a particular point of making sure that he and the DCM, Boris Clausen, that they were well aware of what I was doing, that the fact that I had quite broad outreach in the intellectual community and the capital. And I also knew some interesting people in Leningrad. I must have made half a dozen trips to Leningrad during the two years. And I look back on the two years with a fair amount of satisfaction, not just because of the "Literary Gazette" attack but I think what could be done in terms of understanding what was going on there and being a sympathetic interlocutor with Soviet intellectuals was something worth having done.

Q: Looking at a public affairs officer in the Soviet Union at that time, the normal public affairs officer is heavily involved with the press and all that, at a normal post. Here's a place where there's not much you can do with "Pravda" and "Izvestiya" and the like so your real field of battle was cultural.

RUSSELL: Oh no, I focused on the cultural side but the American journalistic corps was very large and dealing with them took a lot of time and attention.

Q: Could you explain what it means "dealing with them?"

RUSSELL: Bob Kaiser came just as I was leaving; he's senior editor of The Post now. I'm trying to recall who preceded him as Post correspondent. This particular journalist was a night owl and like many journalists wrote into the night to get his story out in time so that it could be printed the next day. And it happened a number of times, certainly half a dozen times, that during the time that I was there he would call me up at 11:00 or 11:30 at night and say Russ, it looks to me as if, and then he would describe something he'd think he'd seen. And he would say, now, I don't want you to- the phones obviously were being tapped and he knew that and I knew that, but he would say what's your hunch on that? If you think that I'm on the right track I wish you'd let me know. And the way to let him know he was on the right track was not to say anything, just keeping silent for 10 seconds, as if I were thinking, and he got the message.

I later did the same thing in one other place, Beijing, and that was the off the record meeting between the press and the ambassador. It didn't happen as often in Moscow as it did in Beijing but the information officer and I would set up an afternoon session from 2:00 to 3:00 next Thursday, during which the key players, The Times, The Post, NBC News, CBS, would troop into the ambassador's office at the embassy, sit down and exchange views back and forth about what they thought was going on. Everybody chose his or her words very carefully because they knew that the Soviets had bugged the building. But it gave the press a chance to try out their ideas against the senior diplomat and it gave him a feeling of what was on their minds, what they thought was important as they did their rounds.

There was a lot of that kind of cooperation. There was a very good feeling of being on the same side of the fence. Not that they weren't ready to criticize us but the embassy and our activities got a fair amount of coverage.

Q: The Soviets, particularly through the KGB, were they much of a harassment for you or for your officers?

RUSSELL: They targeted the military attachés much more obviously and aggressively. Things would happen not infrequently that the wife of the naval attaché, while driving to do her shopping, would have her car bumped into in the back. There was an incident with Ed Hurwitz, one of the few Jewish members of the embassy staff. He was the object of two very unpleasant events. An aggressive Jewish organization, I think it may be the Jewish Defense League, staged an attack on the office of Aeroflot in New York. they broke in at night and trashed the place. And the charming way that the Soviets had of getting even was to target poor Ed Hurwitz. He was driving his two small children and Norwegian wife back to where they lived on Lansky Prospect some afternoon a day or two after this thing happened in New York. He had a Volkswagen and he stopped his Volkswagen in the middle of the street in order to do a u-turn. Moscow is great for u-turns. It has a lot of eight lane highways and the only way to go somewhere is to go there and come back. While he was stopped for a u-turn a car stopped behind him, two hoodlums got out with iron bars and methodically smashed in all of the windows of his Volkswagen, in on his wife and two little kids. Charming. He was a jogger, early morning jogger, and some time later during his tour, to get revenge for Jewish miscreants doing things against Soviet presences in the U.S., somebody stepped out from behind a billboard while he was jogging down one of the main streets and stuck his foot out and tripped poor Hurwitz so he took a terrible fall, scuffed both knees. Really he was fortunate not breaking a leg altogether. But those kinds of things happened. For intimate things that my wife and I would talk about, we would get dressed and walk out of our apartment to take a little stroll down the avenue if we wanted to have a spat about something or disagreed on some point or another about raising the kids.

We had a friend in the ballet world, a choreographer whom we got to know fairly well. He happened to be Jewish, not that that mattered. We got to know him fairly well, my wife and I. At one point we gave him a lift in our car to his house. Then a week later somehow or another we came together again and he said, is it true what they told me about you and the dear wife? And I said what did they tell you? And he said they told me that they're not really your children and that you're not married and that you are both intelligence officers and that for appearances' sake you are being presented to the diplomatic world and to people in the Soviet Union as man and wife. Not only that but with three children. The three children were all orphans that had been assigned. And I assume this was to scare our friend from having anything to do with us because we were such a bad couple, intelligence gathering CIA baddies and so on. Wasn't that imaginative?

Q: How'd you find the exchange program worked? I've heard those dealing with it say in a way it seemed to be almost one sided, that we would send over somebody interested in Byzantine art, and they would send somebody over with atomic physics.

RUSSELL: The guys who did the negotiating on that were not embassy people. They were an organization called IREX. You may have heard of, which stands for the International Research and Exchanges Board, IREX, headed for a long time by an academic named Kassof. And he represented the American academic community, not the embassy. And he drove a very hard bargain. We would insist on getting historians and sociologists and people in very substantive academic areas to read as clearly as possible what the situations in the Soviet Union were, what archives could be opened. Kassof and his colleagues were very, very careful to match things up. Certainly there were some art historians who made it in for their purposes, but I've never heard anybody say that it was injurious to our national interests to have Soviet hard scientists come here.

Q: I assume you had Soviet Foreign Service nationals working for you.

RUSSELL: We had two working for the four of us. We were PAO, CAO, IO and an assistant IO. I think that's the way we were.

Q: Were you, at the time, sort of not just vis-à-vis Americans but were the arts an important element within Soviet society and had this changed from before? Because you know, I always think of that wonderful phrase _____, uncultured collective farmer running things. I mean, by this time how stood things cultural-wise?

RUSSELL: I would have to say that the overt shoe banging that characterized Khrushchev's disdain generally for the arts did not carry over. The Minister of Cultural Affairs during Soviet times was a woman named Fortsyva. And she was a hard nosed bitch, very, very, critical and very socialist minded. She was the object of her own joke, which I will now proceed to tell you.

Q: Alright.

RUSSELL: Madam Fortsyva was in Paris and she heard there was a very interesting art exhibit going on and so she decided that she would go. When she got there she found herself standing in line and there were several people in front of her. One of them was Picasso. When he came up to the door and wanted to get in, the snooty entry guy said, so, you say you are Picasso. I want you to prove it and show me. Here is a piece of paper. So, Picasso takes the paper and quickly draws something and the guy looks at it and says, oh, beautiful, thank you very much. Please come in Mr. Picasso. And the next guy who comes up and wants to come in is carrying a cello. The guy says to the person with the cello, monsieur, who are you? And he says, I am Pablo Casals. And the guy says, you say you're Pablo Casals. That is easy to say but you have to prove it to me. So he sits down, takes out his cello and plays a Bach chaconne, a few notes of it. The guy is very impressed; this is wonderful, terrific. Please come in and see our exhibit. You are most

welcome, Senor Casals. And then Madam Forsyva comes up and he says to her, madam, who are you? And she says I am the Soviet minister of culture. And he says, I'm sorry, you have to prove it because just now, when Picasso and Pablo Casals came through, they had to prove their identity. And she said, who are Pablo Casals and Picasso? And the guy says, ah, you of course are the Soviet minister of culture, welcome.

Now, who was in charge of culture at the time we were there, I honestly just can't recall. But the feeling that non-socialist realist art was somehow seriously undermining Soviet power was forgotten. There was a great deal more liberty. And the Americans and other embassy personnel, everybody had his own unofficial artist whom they would go to see. They were very popular.

By the way, there was an interesting example of cooperation that we worked out. The thing had been provoked by me and the German. The German cultural attaché and I contacted a group of our friends and said let's get together once a month and have meals at each other's apartments and compare notes about what's going on on the cultural scene here. We must have done it eight or 10 times. The group was rather heterogeneous: it was myself, the German, the Frenchman, the Englishman, the Finn, the Greek and the Japanese. Just happened that those were the people we knew, those were people who were connected to the Soviet cultural world. We'd signal interesting concerts that were coming and performances to each other; those were great fun.

Q: Was there any movement in the near abroad of whatever they call it; in other ways, now that Stalin-?

RUSSELL: The near abroad.

Q: They didn't, of course in those days it was the Soviet Union, there were the Stans and well, the Ukraine and Belarus; was there-

RUSSELL: They were very interested in making sure that nothing suggested, in any way, that the republics to which the exhibits also went, they were not all part of the Soviet Union. The national education exhibit started in St. Petersburg then went to Moscow then went to Kiev and Baku and then finally to Siberia. When we had an exhibit outside of the Russian Federated Republic, I, while I was there, always made the point of making my opening remarks in the local language, which the Russians did not like at all. I recall being chewed out by, his name might have been Andreev at that foreign ministry. We got back from Kiev -- I think he may even have been there for the opening. I had had three or four minutes of remarks. I had written them in Russian and gotten them translated into Ukrainian. So when I was cutting the ribbon as the ambassador's representative for the exhibit that was opening, while I was cutting the ribbon I spoke in Ukrainian. I don't suppose it was particularly brilliant Ukrainian but it was recognizable as being Ukrainian and that's what Andreev didn't like. He said, Russian is official language of Soviet Union, Mr. Russell. It was low key, he wasn't chewing me out. I thought it was extremely important to avoid sort of throwing bricks at each other. I worked very hard to be ingratiating. I let him know that I thought he was a good guy and

that I was interested in what he could tell me about what I should know about levels of Soviet culture so as to be able to share it with Americans on my return home.

Q: Alright. Well then, '71, you go to Bonn.

RUSSELL: Right.

Q: How long were you in Bonn, by the way?

RUSSELL: Four years.

Q: Alright, let's talk about German-American relations, particularly from the information cultural side. I would think that, you know, things would almost take their own course or not?

RUSSELL: The investment that we had put into Germany and Japan was truly enormous.

Q: Yes, the Amerika Haus were just-

RUSSELL: Amerika Haus everywhere and not only that but half a dozen of the best officers I know traveled around West Germany showing movies out of trucks back in '47, '48, '49. We spared no effort at bringing Germany into the comity of nations, not treated as an outlaw. I felt really quite at home in Germany because I had already lived in and around Frankfurt for 15 months, seven and a half years in Munich and two years in Kaiserslautern so I knew my way around and felt quite comfortable in Germany. A lot of interesting political issues came up, like our relationship with the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and Willy Brandt coming to power. The American presence was very substantial. We had the biggest USIA program by far in the world. My budget in 1971 was, as I recall, $11 million. We still had, in Germany six fully funded America Houses with American directors who were also branch PAOs; we had a big America House presence in Munich, in Stuttgart, in Berlin, in Frankfurt, in Cologne and in Hamburg. And I mean big operations with staffs of 20 and 30 and libraries and 33 RMP records to take out and movies to be seen. We had a very, very active program.

When I arrived in Bonn I found that there was, among the consuls general, this is particularly true in Frankfurt and Munch, among the consuls general there was the sense that they were really in charge of small countries. When I arrived in Bonn, Stu, the ambassador was an interesting man who had been Richard Nixon's law professor at Duke. He was a very, very smart fellow. He had two priorities: his first priority was defense of West Berlin. Second was the idea of maintaining our overall position in Germany and Central Europe. He also wanted to be sure that the officer who was consul general in Munich listened very, very carefully to what Bonn was saying, that there was not a sense that Bonn and Frankfurt and Hamburg each had their own specialized policies.

In addition to the six Amerika Haus we had five German American Institutes in Germany. In the late '60s the U.S. had said to its German friends in Bonn, look, we can't afford to keep paying for all of these Amerika Haus. We can pay for the six big ones but the five smaller ones are going to be downgraded and you will have to pick up the tab. We will provide you with a director, an American director, but you have to pay the bills. So, prior to my coming, the city fathers of Heidelberg, Nuremburg, Freiberg, Tribergim and Zweibrücken, of those five cities, the city fathers had all agreed to pick up all the costs for their America Haus, which was renamed the German American Institute and it became a joint undertaking. Those institutions meant that besides Bonn there were no less than 11 official USIA presences in Germany. The four years that I spent there were very busy, because I was as intent as the ambassador was on having a unitary public diplomacy policy for the whole country. So that meant that going out of Bonn and actually seeing what kind of programming was going on elsewhere was very much on my mind. I went to Berlin at least once, maybe twice a year.

Q: Well now, was there much in the way of American studies at the universities?

RUSSELL: Oh yes, very important. Very important indeed and an extremely extensive Fulbright program. I was on the Fulbright board for the whole four years I was in Bonn as PAO. The Fulbright program was certainly the largest in the world by far. Let's say it cost $3 million a year, in dollars of those years. The Germans paid 80 percent of the entire cost of the Fulbright exchanges. They considered it politically so important that there be Germans who understood Americans and Americans who understood Germans that they were willing to spend a great deal of money out of their own budget. Fulbright was very big and the Fulbright scholars provided a very interesting source of talented speakers. I had a wonderful, first rate CAO, Michael Wile. He was much more experienced in these matters than I was and I realized that very quickly. Wile was a Swiss American who spoke native German. He was an academic, very sharp, and I was really blessed with him the whole four years. We were both on the board and we were both very concerned at making sure that the American Fulbrighters, who were a great asset, were made full use of. We would get the Fulbright historian who was studying in Stuttgart and make sure that he was available for program activity in Hamburg or Munich or West Berlin for that matter.

Those were days when Washington had the strong impression that after all these years Germany had simply got to be cut back. I was the object, during my four year term there, of two full scale inspections going down to every installation. I think the number of inspectors was five. I had a very good area director who was a real fighter. Between us we managed to thwart the inspectors, proving to them that the programming that we were doing was so important to U.S. interests overall that the idea of closing down America House Stuttgart, given the American troops who were concentrated in Southwest Germany, was mad, it was just not to be done. We were really the object of a lot of scrutiny.

Soon after I arrived in fall of '71 we planned to open a new America Haus in Essen. The only American presence in the north was in Hamburg and there was a lot of pressure to

open in Essen. A site had already been discovered but soon after I arrived I got word that Essen was nixed because we needed that money to fight in Saigon. We backed away from it and cancelled the lease.

Q: Well did you find the German students seemed to love street drama and demonstrations and all, along with the French. Was this a period of- and we were still in Vietnam when you arrived; we were getting out but, did you have much in the way of-

RUSSELL: I really don't think so.

Q: Well there probably not.

RUSSELL: The reason city fathers in those five cities that I mentioned were willing to spend the money to keep the German-American hauses open was very real fear of Soviet incursion. There was an acute sense of being in the middle of Europe and having enormous Soviet military power nearby. And it was to keep the American presence in those cities that they agreed to pay the bills. The big Amerika Haus were extremely important centers for cultural activities. We had big programs going on, big film series, very good speakers from the States and from elsewhere.

Q: What was your impression of the German intellectual world as opposed to the Soviet one?

RUSSELL: There was a real sense of openness and curiosity and ready to go in any direction that the world was going. Germany was a very interesting place to be in and ideas were bruited about and there was an extremely lively, argumentative press. Intellectual life in Germany was extremely active during those years. The presence of the American troops, which was still very large and today continues to be very large, did not generate resentment or an army-go-home reaction.

Q: Did politics, American politics or German politics intrude at all in your work?

RUSSELL: I don't think so. My colleagues and I in Bonn, with input from the post, every year we worked very conscientiously on a country plan and defining what the themes ought to be of public affairs activities for the coming year. We made a particular point of not leaving out the big issues but they weren't first. Explaining American purposes in Southeast Asia was part of our country plan, but it was not number one or two among our goals. The number one might well have been reinforcing the sense of absolutely political, economic and social cohesion between the Federal Republic and the United States. We stressed that we were truly brothers. There was an intense feeling of commitment to each other, and to really reinforcing that we were allies together. There was an issue in 1975 of placement of Pershing missiles.

Q: Well the context, I think, was the Soviets had introduced the SS-20, which was a medium range missile, into Eastern Europe which was targeting, well basically Germany and all and not the United States. And therefore these missiles, we might not retaliate

with our big missiles if they came at us- if the Soviets had these medium range missiles. It was to try to break the- to break well Europe, Western Europe off from the United States.

RUSSELL: It was an intent political effort on our part. It brought together PAOs from all the NATO countries. I remember having a meeting on the matter in the spring of '75 in Paris. All the PAOs from Western Europe were there together to develop a public affairs plan to explain and justify the introduction of the Pershing missiles.

The loyalty of the German staff was quite something. There were a number of people who had been anti-Nazis in one way or the other. Not very many but there were several really quite special people working for us in the Amerika Haus and a lot of younger people who really saw the American presence and commitment and engagement in Central Europe as irreplaceable- as the model for their own future.

The officials who came through included Henry Kissinger.

Q: By this time, we're talking about the '70s, were we making any effort to make the German public understand the enormity of the Holocaust and of World War II or was this pretty much in German hands and we didn't have to worry about that?

RUSSELL: I don't recall that that was part of our programming at all. Eisenhower was very strong here in this area and the socialists were even stronger. Willy Brandt, for example. But I really don't believe that at that time that the American public diplomacy effort in Germany had any component where we were bent on saying never forget Dachau, don't forget Buchenwald.

Q: I must say, I just came back from a trip through Eastern Germany and the _____ was strong, memorials and everything, I mean, to this time so the Germans certainly have picked up the ball which I take it the Japanese have not.

RUSSELL: I think that's fair to say. The Germans have worked very hard at it. I suspect that for many Germans it's a bit of a surprise that they are as accepted as they are given the enormity of the crimes.

Q: Yes. Well, it's a new generation now.

RUSSELL: It was a new generation by then. The war had been past almost 20 years.

Q: But still the- I mean, that hangs on. It's just around now and we're talking about 2009 that the wartime generation is basically over now.

RUSSELL: By the way, the ambassador when I arrived was Kenneth Rush. He was replaced in'72 by an extremely talented career diplomat named Martin Hillenbrand, who was ambassador for three or four years. A very cool and thoughtful and competent person.

Q: Had Ostpolitik, Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, was that going when you were there?

RUSSELL: Yes, oh by all means.

Q: I mean, was there a concern and were we doing what we could to make sure it didn't get going to far of- Sort of the NATO nightmare was that West Germany might make a deal with the Soviets to absorb East Germany but become a neutral power. Was that at all a concern?

RUSSELL: The idea of talking to the East Germans, met with a lot of opposition from the U.S. and Ostpolitik, pronounced that way, was kind of a dirty word for people in the early '70s.

Q: Well were we, you know, as the political, I mean the propaganda arm of the American government, were we- you all doing anything to scotch this idea?

RUSSELL: You know, we really weren't. I recall that this was on a political level and that for us to bring in an American speaker, for example, who would warn German audiences about the pernicious Rusky, Russian, I just don't recall that that was the case. There was a growing sense on the part of the political leadership of the embassy that Bonn had to be much more important than the individual states. And in '73 I instituted a substantial change which met a lot of opposition from the consulates general. The situation that I found on arrival was that each of the six cities had two American officers; one who was the overall head of the America House and the other who was in effect PAO for the consulate and the consular district. It became pretty clear to me that we were not, with a relatively small staff in Bonn, going to impose a coherent national policy approach to Germany if we didn't strengthen our offices in Bonn. So we worked out a very far reaching reorganization which took one of the two officers in each of the six cities and reassigned him or her to Bonn and in the process moved the public affairs officer out of the embassy and into the America House. And this decision I really had to work very hard to sell to the ambassador and the DCM because the consuls general in other cities really, really didn't like it. They didn't like the idea of having one fewer officer under their command, under their direction. The idea of being able to have a coherent national policy that was heard the same from Hamburg to Munich to Freiburg to Nuremburg, was something that was much on our minds. If the ambassador had not been on our side I think there could have been some serious fireworks. It all worked out okay and we did make that relocation with the concentration in Bonn. As a result we were much better able to program on national issues.

But to come back to our starting point, I don't believe during my time there that the Holocaust, that setting the record straight, setting the historical record straight was part of the scene at all. I don't think so.

Q: What about German media? How did you find dealing with it? I'm talking about, obviously TV, newspapers and radio.

RUSSELL: We devoted a fair amount of time to it. We had particularly good relations with Second Germany Television. Their headquarters were in Cologne which was in effect part of the Bonn immediate district so we were fairly active with them. We produced, every day, a bulletin that was sent I guess by telex. We produced it in German as well as in English, I think.

The press was concentrated in Bonn and they paid a lot of attention to the American embassy. We had quite good relations with the media there. There wasn't any serious extreme left press. The left of center included the principle newspaper in Southern Germany, the Suddeutsche Zeitung, and the Frankfurter Allgemeine was right of center. Between them they were quite influential. There was a rather noisy tabloid called Das Bild" "The Picture," a tabloid that resembled the British tabloids. But the Germans had a very serious press and resembled the French press more than the American in that the news coverage tended to leave room for the opinion of the writer. The sort of cool effort at factual reporting that's characteristic of the American media was not where we were at. You knew where somebody who wrote a large 2,000 word piece for the front page of the "Allgemeine" where he was coming out, what his politics were. You could find out without any great difficulty.

One of the problems of getting a coordinated, centralized policy in Bonn was that so much of the main media were all elsewhere. I mean, the "Frankfurter" newspaper was obviously in Frankfurter, "Suddeutsche" was in Munich and you tried to develop contact with their reporters in Bonn but it wasn't all that high on our priority as I recall.

Q: Well then, you left there in '75?

RUSSELL: Seventy-five.

Q: Where'd you go?

RUSSELL: Came back to Washington and spent a splendid year with the senior seminar. I was in the eighteenth senior seminar.

Q: Yes. I was in the seventeenth seminar.

RUSSELL: You had warmed the place up.

Q: We'll just talk about this and then I think we'll quit for the day; but how did you find the senior seminar?

RUSSELL: It was time very well spent. We saw a lot of people who had interesting things to tell us like the mayor of Chicago. We had good speakers; we had the Canadian ambassador once. And traveled to the military bases; had very good military officers who were open minded and very interested in understanding how things looked outside

the military. I've stayed in touch with oh, four or five of the people who were in the seminar.

Q: Okay. Well we'll pick this up in 1976?

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: Then you were in Washington.

RUSSELL: I was in Washington for a very interesting three years, first as deputy head of film and television and then as head of film and television for USIA.

Q: Okay. We'll pick it up then.

Q: Today is the 24th of June, 2009, with McKinney Russell. We're going to be talking about when you went to China. Because I remember the last time we talked and recorded you were taking Chinese. How old were you when you were taking Chinese? [Note: Mr. Russell's tour as Assistant Director for Motion Pictures and Television, 1976-1978 and as Public Affairs Office Brasilia, Brazil, 1978-1982 were not covered in this interview.]

RUSSELL: Fifty-five.

Q: That's not exactly optimum time to learn a language.

RUSSELL: No. It was hard work. The thing about China was that that was strictly on my own initiative. I was having a wonderful time as PAO in Spain. I arrived in '82 and I believe we've already talked about the political situation seven years after the death of Franco. In any case, in December of '84 I looked ahead at the list of opening positions and saw that in two and a half years the PAO position for China would open up.

Q: Public affairs officer.

RUSSELL: And the idea, having never served in Asia, of going to China was very tempting. And so I let my interest be known back in Washington. I think I told you about a call that I got from the area director asking whether I was sure that I could learn Chinese, if I had ever learned a tonal language. And I told her that when I was a young journalist my Swedish was pretty good with a tonal intonation, it's very special. I had already scored good numbers in a number of languages. So I got the nod. In order to do that I had to leave Spain a year early; instead of leaving Spain in'86 I left in '85 and came back to Washington and began learning Chinese full time at a language school here down on 15th Street. That meant maybe four or five hours of study a day and work at night. It was full-time occupation. The political situation was developing in extremely interesting ways. We had recognized the mainland Chinese some years earlier. There were all kinds of exchanges going on and change was in the air and it was very tempting to be part of it. So I had about 11 months of full time Chinese at this language institute downtown Washington, not at FSI. And then I spent the next year, from '86 to '87 in Taiwan. My

wife and I moved to Taiwan in June of '86. There is a very good Chinese language school in Taiwan where people from the military and from State and from USIA and there may have been some from AID learned Chinese. The goal is to the three/three level; some make it and some don't. There are special dispensations to let people go to China even though they haven't gotten to the three/three level. I got there, but it was by dint of quite hard work because mid-50s is not a good age to start learning a language as complicated and as different as Chinese. I will say this, that I found that learning the spoken language was relatively easy. It was about three months before I was really comfortable with the four tones in Mandarin but I managed tolerably and did score a three/three. The writing is so alien to what we're used to and so demanding. I worked hard to learn characters; I probably knew maybe 800 or 1,000 by the time I finished and I've forgotten all of them.

Q: I'm just wondering, in a way, how important is it for somebody in your position to be able to read? I mean, you are pretty obviously not going to get up to the- anywhere near the literary level and wouldn't it be better just to concentrate on the spoken?

RUSSELL: Sure. There was a certain amount of feeling among the students that that ought to happen, but the tradition is you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound. You're in for the spoken language, you've got to learn the squiggles. It was very difficult. Occasionally you really hit the wall where you couldn't squeeze anything more in. I'm glad I made the effort because I spent just short of four years as PAO in China at a very tense, interesting time.

Q: You were there from when to when?

RUSSELL: I arrived in the summer of 1987 and left March 15, 1991. So the initial period was one of great expectation and hope and then the events of May-June 1989-

Q: This is Tiananmen Square.

RUSSELL: That's what happened. My colleagues were very much involved and I spent a lot of time on the Square.

Q: Alright, let's talk about before. When you went out who was our ambassador?

RUSSELL: Our ambassador when I went out was Winston Lord, a particularly talented political appointee during the Nixon years, a man of liberal spirit and conservative views and an excellent man to work for; good natured, had absolutely no Chinese and made no effort to learn any. He may have said hello and good-bye but that was it. An interesting thing about him is that his wife is a Chinese American from Shanghai. She emigrated to the States at the age of eight. Her Mandarin was native and she was very interested in cultural life in China. Her name is Betty Bao. She's the author of a number of reminiscences and novels, a very interesting woman, and she had a cultural outreach program all her own. I made a particular effort to make sure she knew everything that I was doing and I usually knew what she was about. She was in a sense a kind of extra super CAO. She knew very interesting people and had parties and until June of '89, that

period, ’87 to ’88, first part of ’89, was one of tremendous, what the French call _____, rising fast.

It was really an interesting period. The day before the Tiananmen march began the ambassador and I were at the foreign ministry or ministry of education, one of the two, to officially sign the inauguration of the first Peace Corps volunteers going to China. It happened on Friday and the march began on Saturday. The period up to the beginning of the demonstrations there was a lot of interesting access. I knew the people at Xinhua, the China news agency, and was on quite good terms with a woman who headed Chinese television called CCTV, Central Chinese Television. I had a good relationship with the director of the school of journalism at Beijing University. I visited him and spoke to his class on four or five different occasions. I was a welcomed guest at the Beijing graduate school of foreign affairs. There was a lot of interaction and a lot of good natured friendliness between the Chinese and us.

Q: Well exchange programs were really going strong, weren’t they?

RUSSELL: They weren’t on a very large scale; they were small but very good. There were about 25 Fulbright lecturers in China the first year I was there. The subjects that they taught were very interesting: sociology, history. I don’t recall that there were more than a few cases where a Fulbright professor would come to us at the embassy and say I can’t do my work because they keep interfering with my lectures and quoting Marx and Mao Zedong at me. That may have happened a time or two but I don’t recall it otherwise. There was among the Chinese a readiness to deal with us and with the West in general in the intellectual fields, in academic fields, an openness of spirit that’s quite surprising. The number of Chinese graduate students in the United States at that time was at least 70,000.

Q: Who was paying for them?

RUSSELL: A number of the Chinese were from the elite and their parents paid. The Fulbrighters were paid out of Department of State funds as Fulbright professors in the same way they would have been if they were in Paraguay or Mozambique or something.

Q: Yes, but when you’re talking about 70,000 you’re talking about -- these were -- I mean this had to be from sort of private sources within China basically?

RUSSELL: I believe that most of them were from private sources but I’m not certain on that point. It may very well be that scholarships were extended. The contrast between the Soviet side of things in this regard and the Chinese is very interesting. I hope 70,000 is an accurate figure but it’s in that range; it may have been 50, maybe it was 90. The interesting fact was that the total number of Soviet students who had come to the United States for study up to that time was less than the number of Chinese in one year. This suggests that the Chinese realized that once it became politically possible to interact with the United States, it was very much in their interests to raise a new generation that understood how American prosperity and system and social mores worked: to

understand, have experience with the United States and actually spend time here rubbing up against Americans.

Q: Did you find that the Chinese authority, the cadres is the term they use; they were sending their kids here?

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: Did you run across concerns that the kids coming back, I mean, kids always come back and disagree with their parents-

RUSSELL: Sure.

Q: -but-

RUSSELL: But a lot of what the kids came back and told their parents, I personally believe had a significant impact on the major policy changes the Chinese People's Republic has followed since they got over Tiananmen beginning in the period of '91 and '92.

Q: Did our lecturers and the people you were involved with on our side who were in China, before Tiananmen, were they preaching to- not preaching but lecturing to a pretty interested group?

RUSSELL: Yes, they were very well received. I think in the spring of 1987 or 1998, we had a meeting of all the Fulbrighters from all over the country in the southern part of the country. Up until May of 1989 was a period of great expansion. So in the spring or the fall of '88 we brought all of the Fulbrighters for a two or three day conference. Each of them reported on how things were going in their locale, compared notes and so on. I don't think they told the whole story because our Chinese hosts were of course very interested in sitting in. But some of the private conversations were genuinely revealing. The Fulbrighters were a real asset because as PAO my CAO, the cultural affairs officer, we knew where these professors were and what they were teaching. And I recall in several instances making it possible for a professor at one university to be invited in his subject to another university. It was a period of great encouraging openness. My colleagues and I, myself, the CAO and the assistant CAO on education, met about once a month with the Chinese at several ministries who were involved in the exchange with us. There was a great eagerness on their part, to put it bluntly, to exploit American savvy in fields about which they knew not much.

Q: Were you, when you had this meeting, or just the general meeting, was the decade or so of the Cultural Revolution when essentially the schools were shut down and all, did that sort of hang over everything?

RUSSELL: Not anymore. With Deng Xiaoping's coming to power the whole period of the Cultural Revolution was denounced as an unfortunate and truly regrettable episode in

Chinese history. And there was a great deal of excitement about the openness of it. I remember that if I had an American visitor in one of my fields, a journalist or a college professor or college president, the Chinese were extremely eager to be invited and attended in great numbers; there was a lot of social interaction.

I suggested an idea to Winston Lord. I said there have been, over the last 10 years since we opened relations, a steady stream of international visitors and Fulbright scholars and so on whom we have sent or helped go to the United States. Let's invite them all; let's have a reunion of Chinese who have recently been in the United States under government auspices one way or the other. Practically everybody we invited came. It was a marvelous event. We planned it with great care and made sure that when we put the economists at one table that with them were one or two of our economic officers from the embassy who could benefit from catching up and getting their perspective, developing a personal relationship. Lord was very enthusiastic about it and so was Betty Bao. In terms of intense cultural interaction it's one of the things in my years in the Foreign Service that I remember most actively.

Q: Well the exchange program has always been a problem; it would be the strongest and most powerful arrow in our diplomatic quiver.

RUSSELL: It's right up there, yes. It's right up there with other things.

Q: How did you find sort of the Chinese approach? You mentioned the numbers but was there really a real difference between your experience in the Soviet- well in Russia?

RUSSELL: Oh yes. It was really very different. The fearfulness and the mistrust, the belief that we were up to really no good, that we were out to subvert Soviet society and carry out espionage so it was very highly relevant. I mentioned some of the instances when we talked my time in Moscow but it was altogether different, altogether different. The year after Tiananmen a lot of hatches were closed. In the fall of '89, for example, the people that we had been regularly talking to at the foreign ministry and ministry of education were suddenly unavailable. The Fulbright exchange was cancelled, all of it; not a single professor, although there had been 25 the year before, none came.

Q: If you look at a program like this, I mean, these exchanges before Tiananmen, that any Chinese official would be quite justified in being suspicious, although we weren't trying to subvert. It wasn't a policy of subverting the exchangees, just that America itself has a subversive effect on almost all students who come here.

RUSSELL: I don't know if subversive; it certainly changes perspectives. What the correlation might be between young Chinese who had come to the West, had come to the U.S. in the period prior to Tiananmen and how much they were involved, I don't know what that figure would be. But it certainly is true that things got very, very tight after the crackdown on Saturday the fourth of June; within three or four days all dependents, American dependents, wives and children were all sent home and didn't come back until August. And we were a bit under siege.

Q: Well how did, I take it you were in Beijing during this?

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: What were your experiences as this thing developed?

RUSSELL: There was a real feeling of euphoria on the Square itself because the students all of a sudden felt completely liberated from any obligations of lip service to the communist party or anything else, and there were journalists on the Square and diplomats on the Square talking with them at all hours of the day. I was often there until 1:00 in the morning, in conversation with eight or 10 or 12. They were asking very pointed questions. I remember one question, a guy says, how is it possible to govern a country if there are three different elements running it, your White House and your Congress and your big Supreme Court? How is that possible? It was all in Chinese. It was not always easy to find the words to answer their questions but I could maintain a dialogue for as long as they were interested. It was a time of great fervor and ferment.

Q: Well when you were in- I mean, this situation was evolving where the students were, you know, allowed to continue- I mean, there wasn't- How long did it go before-?

RUSSELL: The first demonstrations were focused on a specific subject, namely the unhappiness among many young people about the lack of condign appreciation for a liberal leader who had died. His name escapes me at the moment; I believe his family name was Hu but I don't recall. In any case, when he died he had had a reputation among the young people as someone who had resisted the Cultural Revolution and who was someone young people could look with envy and with pride and appreciation. And his funeral arrangements were very stinted and short-limited. The initial reaction, what the students felt, this was an insult to someone in whom they had great faith and they believed was a real leader of China. And so the first demonstration, I can first see it, it came down past the embassy apartments where we lived, my wife and I. We were on the fifth floor, looked out through the window and there was this unexpected and unprecedented picture of people marching and shouting and calling for change with posters: do not dishonor Comrade Hu, whatever his name was. And then they settled in, within a few days, on Tiananmen in great numbers. The initial reluctance to crackdown hard on them was led by someone who was a key player in the leadership, Xiao Qiang, whose book has just been published. He wanted to have a dialogue; he actually went and talked to the students a week or two into the crackdown.

It was a remarkable time and was complicated by this circumstance: that on the 15th of May the Chinese government had very serious visitors; Mikhail Gorbachev came with a big retinue to make peace with the Chinese. There had been a lot of very angry feelings between the two countries over a long period of time. Gorbachev, as part of the change policies that he inaugurated as general secretary in Moscow said, we've got to get along with our Chinese comrades. What exactly he said I don't know, but he came and I think the very date was the 15th of May, which means that he arrived at a time when

Tiananmen was in great ferment. If they had any sense they would have put off the visit. Because of the size of the story and the events that were being reported by the Western press in Beijing, there was a tremendous interest in Gorbachev's visit. Not only did we find that the press corps was enormously expanded, covering the story day by day. The American media, the correspondents, and not just Americans, the Europeans and others as well, had come from Moscow as part of the travel party. I remember covering this as the senior information guy at the embassy and I was embassy spokesman. I went to the briefing by Gorbachev's spokesman. He was rather an oily character, not beloved of the Western press, sharp edged and not known for being very responsive. The press would come together at his hotel about three-quarters of a mile from Tiananmen Square. In the large room of the hotel he would brief every night. They had meetings for maybe three days. He would tell the press what the Soviets wanted them to know about the conversations with the Chinese leadership and not more. I remember this incredible tension. The press was there pressing about what was going on. At the same time that they wanted to be there and probe and cover the Gorbachev part of the story, they were being pulled and tugged because the shouting was going on in the street and Tiananmen was just down the block. It was a remarkable, I mean a period of such tension and uncertainty and pressure that I can't.

Q: I'd like to sort of reconstruct some of this period. You know, you as PAO would have been part of the country team and I would think that the- I guess it would be the DCM at the time because Winston Lord had just left, I think.

RUSSELL: Winston Lord left in the early part of May and his successor, Jim Lilley, arrived soon thereafter; he arrived right in the midst of things and had a very interesting time as ambassador for the next three years.

Q: How is this- these demonstrations started? I mean, you have the embassy, the various officers, yourself included, looking at this to try to figure out okay, what's going to happen here?

RUSSELL: Yes.

Q: Was there a thought evolving process or what was happening?

RUSSELL: The events were followed very closely by people on the ground with a lot of attention paid to what the media were reporting. We organized about 10 days before the crackdown an almost daily briefing for the press corps from NATO countries. And we used to meet at the USIA building. This meeting was chaired by the head of the political section, a very talented and experienced officer named Raymond Burkhardt. He was subsequently ambassador to Taiwan and I think he was ambassador in Seoul for awhile. This was an effort to exchange information and to get perspectives about what the Western press corps was seeing and learning and experiencing. We organized this exchange, Burkhardt and I, and a number of the correspondents, usually 20 or 30, would come and we would report on what our perception was about what was going on. They would recount their own experiences.

Q: As this thing started was there a feeling that this thing is leading down a slippery slope to confrontation?

RUSSELL: Oh sure.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the powers that be and I guess the commentary- I mean, not- I mean the politburo, what have you, was letting time go by?

RUSSELL: We sensed that there was not unanimity about what should be done. I believe we were aware that Xiao Qiang's position was one of reconciliation and willingness to listen to the young people and to bring the thing to a peaceful conclusion. We also knew that others in the politburo leadership were intent on cracking down. It went on as long as it did because of this indecisiveness. I assume that around June 1 or 2, a few days before the troops moved in, that the decision was taken: we can't put up with this, it's undermining the whole situation of order in the country. There were demonstrations that started in Shanghai and in other cities as well. Our assumption was that when that happened the idea of it spreading countrywide was a real shock and signal to the leadership that they had to move quickly if they didn't want to lose control of the situation altogether.

Q: During the Tiananmen demonstrations had sort of our business communications, you know, various things all shut down?

RUSSELL: Oh yes. There was very little interaction with the Chinese government. They were not accessible and the atmosphere of tension in the place was really extreme. The last day of the Gorbachev visit there was a press conference called by the Chinese. They gave space in an auditorium which was just off of Tiananmen Square for Gorbachev to do the final press conference. I was there and my friend, the Soviet press attaché, stood up very nervously, all by himself, and said we expect to have Secretary Gorbachev here very shortly. There were 50 or 60 mostly Soviet journalists who were milling around and said where is he, and why doesn't he come, and so on. And after 25 or 30 minutes of waiting the Soviet press attaché got up sweating profusely, he must really have been through the wringer, and said the Chinese have suggested that we hold this press conference someplace else and we are now moving. I got a ride on a press bus among about four buses of Soviet journalists who were taken from Tiananmen to another place where Gorbachev held his press conference. On the way there I was all alone with a truckload of Soviet journalists, all of them sort of talking to themselves in disbelief and in fear as to where this was going to lead and what would happen if something like this happened back in their country. Some very interesting conversations, really. At the press conference itself, Gorbachev had very little to say because the Chinese, with all this that was going on, were in no position to worry much about their relations with Moscow.

The Chinese couldn't pull their act together on getting some sort of control on the press. Bernard Shaw of CNN set up a studio in the Sheraton Great Wall Hotel, and he was reporting on all these things. His reporters were out on the street and calling in messages.

Ted Koppel got a visa by lying about being a basketball coach to the Chinese embassy in Rangoon. And Tom Brokaw was there. Oh, it was a scene. And then the morning after the crackdown I met the press at the embassy. 60, 80, 100 of them, all shouting and asking what's happened to the Americans who were here. What's the embassy doing to guarantee their safety? The local press wanted to know what the situation was at Tiananmen but they really put us on the spot. The DCM joined me and we did the best to calm them down and reassure them that we were working around the clock to protect Americans. There were no American casualties but there was a lot of shooting in the city for another two or three days; I was very glad to see my wife and dependents leave the following Thursday and they were away until the middle of August.

Q: As this was developing could you sort of see this shutting down all our operations?

RUSSELL: Oh yes.

Q: I mean, in a way we weren't particularly implicated or were we?

RUSSELL: One of the things that made a lot of Chinese believe that somehow or another the U.S. was involved was this model of the Statue of Liberty which the students somehow put together out of papier maché; I don't know how they did it. It was about 20 feet tall and was called the Goddess of Liberty and she looked a very great deal like the Statute of Liberty. There was so much intense attention to it. And that picture of the lone Chinese standing in the street with the three tanks coming at him went around the world. It had the same kind of galvanizing effect as the news of this young woman, Reza, who was shot to death recently in Tehran.

Things got very locked up and our good contacts at the foreign ministry and education and TV were all inaccessible throughout the fall. In October I suggested to my colleagues in Washington that there was very little happening on the ground here now; this is the time to see what's going on elsewhere. So I arranged for what turned out to be an extraordinarily interesting visit to Ulan Bator. My wife and I took the train, 42 hours, to the capital of Outer Mongolia. Nobody from USIA had ever been there before. And the winds of change were blowing much more steadily there and without a lot of hoopla. Outer Mongolia has changed a great deal; it's a lot more like Russia than it is like China, I believe.

In any case, I wrote a long, long telegram about the future of public diplomacy in Outer Mongolia. I talked to the head of the university and the leading newspaper and television. I had very interesting conversations and wrote them all up in great detail and two or three years later we opened up our embassy in Ulan Bator.

Q: Well as you say, Mongolia was moving more towards Russia than China; did you mean politically or were you looking upon this as a positive or a negative?

RUSSELL: We looked on it as a positive. As the Soviet Union became more and more shaky the pressure for change in Outer Mongolia grew very strongly. There were not the

kind of Chinese type demonstrations but there was this steady sense that things had to change, and they have indeed changed.

China became a very tough place to be PAO or ambassador in. Jim Lilley was very hardnosed and very effective. He grew up in China and had Chinese as a youngster so he was very comfortable in the country.

Q: Well how did- I mean, okay, after Tiananmen, I mean, there was tremendous pressure not only in the United States but elsewhere to shut down all connections with China and the Chinese were reciprocating. I mean, and you're in the business of having, you know, getting together with people. How did you-?

RUSSELL: Very difficult. There was resentment about some blunt language from Washington condemning what had happened and this was seen by the Chinese obviously as an internal affair and that we had no business sounding off about it. The decision at the highest level of the U.S. Government as the months passed to renew things was very important and at the time rather controversial. Brent Scowcroft, who was national security advisor, made a trip to Beijing, a quiet trip and somehow a photograph of him and other members of this delegation from the White House was published in the press. This was sharply criticized as indicative of a softening attitude on the part of the United States and acceptance of letting the Chinese get away with the kind of things that they had been accused of and the world was aware of in June. So things over time slowly lurched back to normal and, by the time I left in March of '91, it wasn't forgotten but it wasn't the first thing you thought about when it came to U.S.-China relations.

Q: Well what about, I mean were you faced with the problem that so many Chinese students in the United States who must have been pretty dubious about coming back. This must have created a particularly concern on our part since we were involved in the exchange program.

RUSSELL: Quite possibly. I simply don't recall anything in that regard. I don't remember that the Chinese students in the States had any particularly difficulty; I don't recall whether or not they were told to come home and get away from capitalist indoctrination in the U.S.

Q: Prior to Tiananmen were you seeing a change in the communist party approach to capitalism or would that come later?

RUSSELL: It really began in serious earnest in the middle and late '90s. The whole attitude toward non-communist economic and political structures was steadily changing and this change had already begun before the crackdown in Tiananmen. The quote was contributed to Deng Xiaoping, it may have been '88, '89, that there's nothing wrong with being rich; it is glorious to be successful, or some words like that. This was accepted as the signal to the economic classes that it was not going to get you into big trouble if you start thinking in capitalist terms, economic change and growth. So the Chinese

developed an enormous export market and the situation became more and more similar to something that we know.

Q: Yes. Well then, how did you find sort of on the plain cultural side, how about American movies, American plays, American painting, dance and all; how was that received in China?

RUSSELL: Generally it was not considered depraved or degenerate or any of the things that sometimes are thrown in our direction. The access of American cultural performers, singers and the like was fairly extensive. American plays were not a commonplace but they were not rejected. American cultural values were seen as of interest. It was not a time where you got thunderous condemnation. By the end of '89 and into '90, '91, there was a clear sense that getting along with the West and the rest of the world, particularly in economic terms, was the way things ought to happen for China. God knows that is had a very salutary effect on their balance of payments, to say the least. Hasn't it?

Q: Good to have.

Well then you left there when?

RUSSELL: March of '91.

Q: Where did you go then?

RUSSELL: I was tapped by the director of USIA to come back to Washington, to take the post of Counselor of USIA. That position was the senior career position in the agency. In effect I was the direct supervisor of the six area directors who correspond to assistant secretaries in the State Department. I had a very interesting time for a little over two years because there were all kinds of changes happening in the world. When the Soviet Union collapsed the question of creating an American cultural public diplomacy presence in Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere became a very active question. And in the early part of 1992 I had an extremely interesting visit to Moscow, to Kiev, to Almaty in Kazakhstan, to Kyrgyzstan. I spent about four or five weeks talking to the local authorities about the opening of American cultural centers. Got involved in negotiations about where they would be and what kind of programs they could have. We found an excellent site in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan. We were all set to open when the Kazakhstan government decided that the building that we had identified would be a perfect place for their Olympic teams. We got bumped and had to find another place.

We agreed to open an American cultural center in Moscow in the building of the Library of Foreign Literature and got very intense attention and membership and activity. It was a period of great growth in the former Soviet Union. The question of what they could do in the U.S. came up; there was a good deal of negotiating back and forth about what could happen and what couldn't happen. Those two years were very broad gauged. I visited parts of the world I did not know. I remember coming and going to Mexico for a

week to just get a handle on the politics and the public diplomacy dimensions of our relations with Mexico.

Q: Was there a conflict in USIA between what to do about China and what to do about now Russia? I mean, here you've got two main customers or targets going through real changes.

RUSSELL: There was a greater interest in the dissolution of the Soviet Union because there big change had taken place. Communism, the great red enemy, had bitten the dust. Boris Yeltsin had led Russia out of the Soviet Union. The interest was much greater in what was happening in the former Soviet Union than it was in China. There was still a kind of a temporal resentment in the cloaked relations with China but boy there was enormous interest in getting really engaged with Russia and making something different out of a Cold War that lasted a long time. Things had gotten quiescent in China; they were not in the mode for change whereas the former Soviet Union, having fallen apart, was ripe for serious attention.

Q: Did USIA get involved in this decision of Secretary of State Baker not to ask for money to open new posts in the former Soviet Union? I mean this is really a rather bad decision; I was wondering whether that-

RUSSELL: I don't recall a decision like that. By 1994, we had a cultural center and a library in Moscow; had one in Kiev as well. I don't recall that Baker said let's not open up anywhere.

Q: Well he didn't say don't open up but he was saying we'll put embassies in all these, I don't know, 13 Stans or whatever they were, the various- but we're not going to ask for any supplemental money to do it. But USIA might have been off to one side.

RUSSELL: Certainly there were embassies opened in all 15 former republics.

Q: Oh yes, they were but it was done on the cheap.

RUSSELL: I recall that the situation in Kyrgyzstan was, I mean the building that was our temporary embassy was rather pitiful, as I recall.

Q: It was basically an old log cabin.

RUSSELL: In Kyrgyzstan?

Q: In Bishkek, yes. I was out there actually kind of on a USIA grant as a retired consular officer to offer advice on consular operations so I spent three weeks there in '94.

RUSSELL: Nice clean little town as I recall.

Q: Nice clean little town and you know-

RUSSELL: Mountains nearby.

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: The joke about this place, which is out in the middle of Central Asia, the Kyrgys will say to you, our country is not the end of the world but you can see it from here. Did you ever hear that?

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

RUSSELL: They spoke wonderful Russian; it was amazing. I had a very interesting talk with the minister of education; absolutely perfect Russian. It was remarkable; not the slightest trace of a non-Russian accent. I don't know why.

They're all different, the Stans. I'd like to have spent more time exploring them. I made two or three trips over the years to Kyrgyzstan.

We had very good political leadership in the person of Eugene Kopp, who was the deputy director and the director, Henry Catto. Catto had enormous charm and a great deal of energy and Kopp was a tough lawyer who knew the world well. On a number of occasions I went to Secretary Baker's morning meeting when neither Catto nor Kopp could go. I probably went 10 or 12 times. And maybe to four or five meetings at the situation room at the White House. So I had no gripes. My final posting in Washington was productive. I enjoyed the people I was working with. I don't happen to be a Republican by choice or by inclination but that was never a problem.

Q: How did the secretary deal with- I mean, did you find yourself up against a tight little- a tight knit little group of-

RUSSELL: I didn't have that feeling, no. When I attended Secretary Baker's morning meeting I found appreciation and understanding of what our mission was and how it differed from that of the Department of State. I don't think that the notion of closing USIA would ever have occurred to Jim Baker.

Q: I was wondering whether you were feeling, at that point, any pressure from people like Jesse Helms or others about ending USIA?

RUSSELL: No. I left in April of '93 and up until that time there was no talk whatsoever about incorporating. USIA was incorporated into the State Department in October '99.

Q: Where were you looking, as the senior career person, where were your strong points and where did you feel were your weak points?

RUSSELL: As far as USIA was concerned?

Q: Yes.

RUSSELL: The strong points included strong focused support from Washington for field operations. The television, film programs were imaginative and well funded and quickly responsive to what people in the field reported that they needed. The exchanges people were extremely responsive. There was a very tangible feeling of identification with the agency. I had to call somebody at the Department about something three or four days ago. The secretary who took the message for the person that I needed to talk to asked for my name. When I told her she said oh, I'm a USIA person; I know you. This is 20 years later.

Q: Yes, yes.

RUSSELL: The domestic employees of USIA, every September, organized a USIA reunion. It's not the Foreign Service people; it's the people who did the support work, who organized the trips for the international visitors and who published the magazines and so on. And many of them were African Americans. It's quite an interesting phenomenon. I never miss that reunion. If I'm here in September I go no matter what else is happening because there is this real feeling that we had something. I'm not overstating it; it wasn't Camelot but it worked and we knew what the hell we were doing. And if a PAO in an important country came in with a major new approach to supporting policy with certain media elements it got attention right away. The area director was on the phone to me and I was talking to the director or the deputy director and we made money decisions very quickly -- not that we had all that many dollars sloshing around but the fact that we were our own boss made an enormous amount of difference.

Q: Makes a tremendous difference. Well, what did you do when- You left when?

RUSSELL: I left in the late spring of '93 and then had one more year before hitting 65. There had been a tradition of senior USIA men and women teaching at the Fletcher School up at Tufts. Because of a connection with Edward R. Murrow dating back to the '60s, his papers are at the Fletcher School. This was the place where I taught public diplomacy. It was easy duty. I had the fall to prepare my course which was in the spring semester. I had 20 graduate students who took the course in public diplomacy and loved it. It was great fun preparing things and drawing on my own experience. I'm sure I talked at length about China and Tiananmen and all those adventures but also about earlier times as well, what it had been like in the Congo in the early '60s. I covered the whole range of how you do your thing as a public affairs person with examples. And several of the people who were in the course later when into the Foreign Service and that was fairly encouraging, and the tradition lasted right up until four or five years ago. So virtually all of our really first rate men and women have taught at Fletcher.

Q: Now what did you do after that?

RUSSELL: I landed a full-time job with the International Research and Exchanges Board, managing a big institutional partnership project involving the U.S. and Russia and Ukraine. Had a $30 million budget and the aim was to create lasting, solid relationships between American universities and professional associations and their opposite numbers in the former Soviet Union, specifically in Ukraine and in Moscow. We set up about 40 such links matching up, for example, the Department of Landscape Agriculture of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst with the University in Nordberg, near St. Petersburg. To bring those two together we ran a big competition among American universities and professional associations. We put out and RFP, request for proposals. When you're going to spend some money you want to give the people who think they can spend it effectively a chance to compete against each other to either get it or not. That's an RFP. So we put out an RFP very early on with a short lead time. I had a lot of responses because there was a great deal of interest in establishing these international links and we picked out, 30, maybe 32. We picked out the ones who seemed most promising and then laid out a plan for the people, for example, in Amherst to go to Nordberg and the people, the faculty members from there to go to Amherst to sit in and to do actual teaching. Before we finished and had spent our $30 million, which took about four years, we had really wonderful personal relationships established between these institutions. And three and four years after we stopped providing funds some 80 percent of those linkages that we had created were still linked up, they hadn't broken up. It hadn't been just a temporary marriage of convenience to get U.S. Government dollars. I felt very gratified about the Institutional Partnership Project. It served as an example for several other things that AID has proposed.

I stayed on for a year as vice president of IREX and then in the last years since then I wound up with IREX in about 2001; for seven or eight years I did a number of short-term assessment trips for AID, usually to the former Soviet bloc to see how well AID funds in projects out there that were being managed by American NGOs were actually forming and then writing very specific recommendations about continuation or not. I probably did maybe 10 or 12 of those. Went to the Russian Far East for the first time; went to Vladivostok and Magadan and Blagoveshchensk.

Q: What was your overall impression of these various projects?

RUSSELL: More positive than I thought it would be, frankly. There were some very hard headed AID people in the embassy in Moscow in the '90s who had been steeled by being in tough places where AID really had to watch its step to make sure it wasn't being cheated, that money wasn't being siphoned off and so on. There was an AID director named Janet Ballantyne who had served in some tough places and she took no crap from anyone. Those Russians. When Janet said I want this, they said yes ma'am. It was a pleasure to see how effective our really good officers are, what balanced and hard headed management skills many of them have. Not all; some of the reports that I wrote were fairly critical but it was a very interesting way of keeping up on Russian and that was useful to keep the language alive.

The Flex program was a very interesting effort. Ever heard of Flex?

Q: No.

RUSSELL: FLEX is really a good idea. It was Bill Bradley's, the senator from New Jersey. It was a yearlong experience like AFS, like the American Field Service, for bright, promising young teenagers in American families and in American high schools. FLEX stands for Foreign Leaders Exchange Program, FLEX, and these are future foreign leaders, bright young men and women who were absolutely terrific. The program doesn't get much publicity but it's continued and by now there are, across the former Soviet Union, something in the range of 8,000 to 10,000 alumni of these programs, all of whom speak English because they were in an English speaking atmosphere, many of whom have been visited by their American moms and dads. Because when you get a youngster at that age strong relationships bring them to cohere in quite special ways. I really liked the program and the American NGO that was running it in Minsk, in Belarus, misbehaved badly. I don't know what the hell he was doing there but he got involved with marijuana. He was thrown the hell out and the Belarus government said we don't want FLEX anymore. So the people who were managing it, the NGO, sought me out and asked me if I would go and try to make peace. It was probably the most interesting one that I had because I spent little over a month. I just moved into a small apartment in downtown Minsk. I talked to the ministry and talked to the schools where the kids were. I talked to the alumni and developed an action plan to persuade the Belarus government that the project was not directed against them, that it was a good thing for them because it created a cadre of young, potential internationals who would do well and many of whom have done well. Fortunately, they agreed to keep the program open. I believe I've heard in the last few years that Belarus, has ended it after all.

Q: It's sort of a dictatorship.

RUSSELL: Yes. It's not like the Soviet Union but it's enough like it so that you really don't enjoy it. It's got a bad-tempered president for life, Lukashenko. RUSSELL: The only good thing about him is he's a good soccer player; he plays soccer in the streets. It humanizes him.

I'm active now on boards of several foundations with international programs that keep me interested.

Q: Okay. I want to thank you.

End of interview