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

MICHAEL SCHNEIDER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Background, Family, Education

Q: Today is the 24th of November with Michael Schneider, and this is done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training; do you go by Mike? Let's start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

SCHNEIDER: I was born in north New Jersey, March 28, 1937.

Q: Let's get started with your background; what do you know on your father's side?

SCHNEIDER: I'm the son of immigrants. My dad was a Russian/Ukrainian immigrant who came to the U.S. in 1905. He was one of 11 who started out, seven who survived - five sisters and a brother. They lived briefly in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, moved to Newark, New Jersey, and to the suburbs, the Oranges in the early '30s. We grew up in West Orange; I went to West Orange High School. My mother's parents were born in Poland and Romania and met in the small settlement town of Woodbine, in southern New Jersey. My mother's parents met and were married in Woodbine where my mother was born in 1906. By then her parents lived in Washington, D.C. After graduating from high school, her father attended Georgetown Law School in 1900, established a law practice on Louisiana Ave., N.W. near the DC and US court complex of today. He also sold real estate and life insurance. My mother could have gone to college but my grandfather insisted she start school just after mid-year graduation and attend George Washington University. Instead she chose to become the accountant for his law office.

Q: I want to go farther back, you say your father came ...

SCHNEIDER: He came from Odessa and his family name was Schnadin – one who cuts, or a tailor, in Russian. The name Schneider is German and also means "tailor" or "one who cuts" . I'm told that the family adopted Schneider when they arrived as immigrants in NYC.

Q: Did you get anything from the oral tradition, family experience, in Odessa?

SCHNEIDER: A great deal: My wife and I conducted an oral history of both my maternal grandmother's side and my dad's side. We've garnered a number of wonderful stories about their lives as immigrants. My dad came from a very fortunate family, actually. We did not have the classic Jewish shtetl experience. His family was well-to-do. His maternal grandfather, Silbergeld, had been in the Czar's army and was rewarded for bravery with a grant of land in coal and iron country in the Ural Mountains. He sold the land to French investors, and bought a wheat plantation in eastern Ukraine, near Kharkov. My dad's father was the Hebrew instructor for my dad's mother, he was about 10 years older than she; they eloped, wed and went to Odessa where there was a big Jewish community. It served as the conduit for the flow of grain from eastern Ukraine into Europe. Prominent Jewish trading and financial families such as the Rothschilds dominated the trade.

Q: Yes, Odessa was a major port and the great movie The Battleship Potemkin*... on the steps, the baby buggy going down the slope during a massacre by the Cossacks.*

SCHNEIDER: My dad was seven when he arrived in the U.S., but he really blocked out his experience in Ukraine/Russia. His elder sister, Lee, did remember very well and told stories of sitting on the veranda of their house, listening to the peasants singing while they were harvesting the grain. When my dad's father and mother eloped and went to Odessa, months later the grandfather blessed the wedding and set my grandfather up with a little tobacco shop in Odessa. He was a Socialist; not a good time to be Jewish and Socialist in Russia/Ukraine considering the series of pogroms or other violence aimed at JewBy 2005 with rumors of another outbreak of violence the family left Russia/Ukraine and made their way to France and then to the U.S.

Q: Any French experience?

SCHNEIDER: Nothing mentioned to us. There's anecdotal French experience on my mother's side.

Q: We'll come to that later.

SCHNEIDER: They went from Odessa to Williamsburg in Brooklyn, stayed a few months, then moved to Newark where an uncle who sponsored them set up my dad's father as a butcher. He knew nothing about butchering. His wife ran the store in addition to bearing and raising 11 children between Russia/Ukraine and the U.S. My grandfather was really unable to make the adjustment from Russia to the United States and was dependent on his children, all of whom grew up and lived in Newark and nearby suburbs. He lived to his late 70s and died in the 1950s. My dad's mother died in 1926 or '27, not long after my parents wed in late '26. My dad's three remaining younger sisters were farmed out to older brothers and sisters. My Dad and his 20-year-old bride had his 14-year old sister as a member of the family. They took care of my Aunt Esther, who just died at 103. Then they took care of my Uncle Gene who was my mother's kid brother, 12 years younger, for another couple years in the late 1930s. That was not unusual, family

members cared for younger siblings and aging parents. In the 50s my folks also cared for two cousins whose father had severe health problems.

Q: Did they say anything about the Jewish community in New Jersey?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, but more about the community than the religious dimension. Our family attended a Reform temple in Newark, New Jersey, B'nai Jeshurun. It was a big temple with a very large congregation – probably a couple thousand members – with a very formal service, featuring lots of English and a large choir and organ, all influenced by German Jewish socio-cultural patterns which are very different from Eastern Europe. The services were more performances than community participation. My brother and I called the High Holy Days Services, the "Early Show and the Late Show" for all the pomp and formality. In the late 1960s with the great move of middle-class professionals out of Newark to the outer suburbs, B'nai Jeshurun also moved. The synagogue was purchased by followers of Father Divine.

Otherwise my parents were assimilationist – we didn't keep kosher, celebrated Christmas as a secular family holiday; my dad went out with our neighbor (and family dentist, Charlie Crankshaw) to serenade the (mixed) neighborhood with Christmas Carols.

Q: This is one of the great divides; a classmate of mine in college wrote a book—he just died, Steve Birmingham - called <u>Our Crowd</u> which was about the German Jews—Your family fit into the German pattern, coming from...

SCHNEIDER: Yes but he was describing German Jews who arrived in the mid-early 19th century, Baruch and Warburg and others, East Side, so-called "silk stocking Jews" who were financial leaders.

Q: On your mother's side, what do you know?

SCHNEIDER My maternal grandparents were born in Poland or Romania. They came from very modest backgrounds in Europe. Both families moved to Woodbine, a small agricultural town in central Jersey with the support of Baron deHirsch, a wealthy German Jewish financier who brought Eastern European Jews to the U.S. to Woodbine and a place in Connecticut as well.

The area in Central New Jersey had been a real estate speculator's dream; first populated by Italian immigrants to farm grapes and create wineries. That didn't work so Baron de Hirsch bought the land and brought in Eastern European Jews. There was a kind of noblesse oblige from the point of view of German Jewry who were established in the United States towards Eastern European Jews. Within a generation the younger generation of Woodbine sought work in Philadelphia or New York. My grandfather, Joseph Tepper, came to Washington to go to law school; in those days you didn't need to go to a four year college. Family lore has it that he was the first Jewish student at Georgetown Law School. When he completed his law studies, he married my grandmother, Mary Collegeman. However, as the second of five or six children, he

couldn't marry until his older brother wed, so he pushed the older brother and they had a joint wedding ceremony. He was a successful attorney and real estate developer in the Washington area; District Heights was one of his projects. My mother, Rena, attended Western High School and then-Central High School (now Cardozo). Upon her graduation in December 1924 she became the accountant for my grandfather's law firm. He had offered to send her to GWU, but she wanted to move away for school. My grandfather was active in liberal causes. He managed the mid-Atlantic campaign in '24 for Robert LaFollette. My mother drove La Follette and Joe Tepper to events from Delaware to Richmond..

Q: How'd your mother and father meet?

SCHNEIDER: The story of their meeting is somewhat convoluted. To back up – my Dad, Tom Schneider, didn't attend college. He left high school in his junior year to help his older brother Charlie pay for attendance at Springfield College, a physical education college in Massachusetts. My dad found his first job, in New York City, by walking along Hudson River Drive in lower Manhattan facing New Jersey. There were a lot of food wholesalers there. He went to a company called Leggett Company -- Premier Foods was the brand. This is right out of Horatio Alger: he wangled an interview with one of the vice presidents and asked about a job. The vice president said, "We don't have any work for you." Tom pushed back, "You don't have any work for a hard-working boy who's going to do well for you?" The Veep hired him. He was in the office for a couple of years; served in the U.S. Army for six months at the close of World War I, and then was given a sales route that covered the mid-Atlantic area.

Tom belonged to a high school Jewish fraternity, Mu Sigma, which had chapters all along the East Coast. When he visited Washington he made contact with one of the members of the fraternity, who introduced him to my mother. They quickly fell in love. Every Friday night he would take the late night train from Newark to DC ending on the porch of my mother's home on Northampton Street, off of Connecticut Ave., N.W., sleep on a glider until the morning, spend the weekend with her and her family and return to Newark Sunday evening.

The grandparents were opposed to marriage because Tom wasn't a college boy and didn't have the status or income that they expected for their daughter, but he and she persisted. Tom took Joe to one of the classic DC restaurants, Paul Young's on Connecticut Ave, and convinced him to allow the marriage. He was 28, she was 20 when they were married December 19, 1926, amid a snowstorm. In the middle of Prohibition, my grandfather's friend Gerber, who owned a major regional pharmacy chain, People's Drugs, provided medicinal bottles with booze at each place setting.

Q: And so your father did what?

SCHNEIDER: He sold canned goods wholesale to hospitals, summer camps, hotels and schools up and down the East Coast. He sold a great deal because the profit margin was only 1-2%. He succeeded through building the trust of his clients, quality food and good

service. He set an example for my brother and me; he would work 16 hours a day from January through early fall. As his sales grew, he was able to take more time off. He and my mother traveled abroad widely from the early '50s until just a few years before he passed away in 1989.

Q: Did he have problems with unions?

SCHNEIDER: Not that I recall .

Q: I was thinking of the truckers...

SCHNEIDER: He had problems in getting the company to deliver the orders correctly on time and in good condition. He constantly battled the rest of the organization to make it work for his clients.

Q: Then to you - did you start off, born in New Jersey...

SCHNEIDER: Born in New Jersey, went to West Orange High School, University of Rochester, Columbia for an MA .

Q: Let's go back to elementary school. In the first place, as a kid were you much of a reader?

SCHNEIDER: I was a slow reader. That was a great impediment; I read but not a fraction of what my kids read. In fact I was able to read children's literature through reading with my kids. I remember a handful of books that I read as a child.

Q: Was this dyslexia or something like that?

SCHNEIDER: No, just vocalization and eye training. I hadn’t learned to read to the point. I liked to savor the reading, too.

Q: What was your neighborhood like when you were a real youngster?

SCHNEIDER: We lived in an upper middle class neighborhood in West Orange, New Jersey, about 25 miles west of NYC

Q: How did you spend your leisure time?

SCHNEIDER: Sports, sports, sports. The first house we grew up in was a very nice Dutch colonial on a long, sloping street, Clonavor Road. We used the street for sledding and skiing. When I was 12 we moved to the house behind our yard. It was a large Victorian on an acre which my parents bought in '49 and renovated. We had playing fields all around the house; we could play football in one part of the yard, we created a baseball park against the barn 200 feet behind the house, and we painted a strike zone on

the barn doors, and even stole signs from the local buses to define the outfield wall for home runs just like in the pros.

Basketball was our year-round sport. My older brother Pete and Dick Duboff, our neighbor and Dick's younger brother Andy and I went to the local Y and retrieved a big heavy wooden backboard they were dumping. We took it home, mounted it on a large pine tree in the drive behind the house. Eventually we strung outdoor lights so we could play basketball 24-hours-a-day all seasons. Toward the back of the house was one of many entrances, with a large closet that held all the sports equipment we needed. It was the neighborhood storehouse. Anyone could – and did – come by and borrow whatever they needed and bring it back sooner or later.

Q: The contrast to today - you all as kids organized your sports?

SCHNEIDER: Totally.

Q: None of this Little League stuff?

SCHNEIDER: School softball was the extent of it at the grade school level; organized sports progressively beyond that. But they didn't have MSI, organized kids' soccer, didn't have the diversity of organized sports that exist today, and of course no sports for women and girls, aside from tennis and golf. Nor was play time so structured, with play dates, etc. as in the modern era.

Q: Did you get involved in band, plays, anything like that?

SCHNEIDER: I sang in glee clubs throughout school and was the scarecrow in a 4th grade play. I stood throughout the entire play with my arms out, scarecrow style, and only came to life when Toni Natelson kissed me on the cheek toward the end of the play.

Q: In elementary school, what subjects grabbed you and what ones didn't?

SCHNEIDER: I loved geography and history. English was OK; I struggled with math throughout my entire academic career. I would like to think I might have responded better if I had someone who could explain the math in English I could understand. In high school we were fortunate that two young faculty had just graduated with PhDs in chemistry and physics and were able to make those subjects really interesting. I did well.

Q: With your geography - were you into maps early?

SCHNEIDER: I loved/love maps, especially making them in elementary school, with paste flour and paint, topographical maps!

Q: As a kid, pre-war, I loved maps and I had a globe, looking at where I wanted to go. In the Pacific there was this island called Wake Island... "Gee this would be a great place to

go." On the way to the Korean War I landed there on a plane and thought "My god, this is really desolate." High school...

SCHNEIDER: I went to West Orange High School. It was a mixture of about 50-60 percent college-bound students and those headed for commercial training and mechanical training schools. Elementary school was very homogeneous; it was a mixture of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant and Irish, Italian Catholics and Jews, a handful of African-Americans and no Orientals. Junior and Senior High School were only slightly more diverse in the 40s and 50s.

Q: Was it a big high school?

SCHNEIDER: Not very big actually; West Orange is geographically large, about 14 square miles divided into seven areas, each with its own elementary school and distinct socio-economic makeup. The high school incorporated all of them. It was a town of about 30,000 people at the end of the trolley line 25 miles from New York. The town spread over the first range of mountains from New York City to the west, where the trolley ended. At that time there was very little development beyond the mountains. West Orange and the high school were still mainly white, Protestant-Catholic, some Jews.

Q: Were you aware of anti-Semitism?

SCHNEIDER: No, that's the amazing thing about my background. We had no family that suffered in the Holocaust. Whatever family was left in Russia -- the Soviet Union -- we didn't know about, and I assume some of them didn't do very well either in the Soviet era or in the German invasion if they were in Ukraine. We had no contact unlike so many of my friends with family or personal links to the Holocaust; we were shielded from it. And there was no anti-Semitism in our neighborhood, nor did I experience any in school.

Q: I'm surprised, I think of the Oranges being a bastion of Wall Street and all of the prejudices that grew up in New York City.

SCHNEIDER: It's interesting because we were right on the edge of South Orange, which was very well-to-do; West Orange was mixed, middle class, upper-middle class, and working class. But we had truly not one experience in my childhood. My parents may have experienced it. Certainly my dad did as a child. He told us stories of being chased by Irish kids on his way home from school in Newark. The Oranges were socio-economically and ethnically stratified: South, then West Orange were the most well-to-do. East Orange had pockets of upper middle-class people, Orange was more working class and minority.

Q: How did you grow up? Was your family very religious?

SCHNEIDER: No, not very. My dad had more of a traditional background but it was not apparent to me until I met my wife Mical in 1968. My mother’s family nominally belonged to a reform temple but was non-practicing.

Q: Speaking of politics, what affiliation did your family have?

SCHNEIDER: They were Democrats. My dad was a centrist Democrat, my mother was more liberal. As I mentioned earlier, her father ran La Follette's ’24 campaign in the mid-Atlantic.. My Uncle Gene was named *Eugene Debs* Tepper, after the popular Socialist labor leader from Chicago.

Q: How big was your family?

SCHNEIDER: My dad was one of seven who survived out of 11 born in Ukraine. My mother was one of three, her mother was one of nine, her father was one of five.

Q: Any left in the area?

SCHNEIDER: In 2005, the Schneider family celebrated the 100th anniversary of their seders in the U.S. - Some 125 people attended. There are probably 200 members of the extended family after four-five generations. The family has lived mainly in Jersey, but various members moved around the country. The family seders have been joyous occasions. We’re a very musical and fun-loving group. Invariably after a brief and highly orchestrated ceremony and a big dinner, we would gather around a piano and sing show tunes. The evening generally concluded with “ The Bells of St. Mary” – Charlie’s favorite, and “The Whiffenpoof Song”, Tom’s favorite. Cousin Bobby performed his encore version of Meredith Wilson’s classic “ Trouble in River City.”

Q: Were you brought up in a home with a lot of people around the dinner table?

SCHNEIDER: My parents, brother and I, and annually from about May to October my maternal grandparents were at the table. Additionally, Cousin Steve, then his younger brother, Larry stayed with us for a year or so in high school. There was plenty of room; we frequently hosted family visitors on weekends.

Q: Much talk of world events?

SCHNEIDER: A little, mainly via my mother’s interests, but it all depended on the season: during his busy season my dad would come home very silent and tense , so it was a pretty quiet dining room table. My brother and I learned pretty quickly to stay out of his hair except on weekends. Not upset the apple cart. On weekends he would unwind by hard work out in the yard and by mid-day lunch would be a different person. For the six months when our grandparents stayed with us, there would be more conversation about politics and international affairs. My mother was very involved in various voluntary activities such as the Community Chest, American Red Cross, PTA and League of Women Voters.

Q: Your high school, did you find yourself involved in activities there?

SCHNEIDER: I was always on the move. In high school I was the co-editor of the high school paper; I ran track, worked on various student campaigns and sang in the glee club. The newspaper, The Roundup, was my passion. Although the faculty adviser was a very controlling person and a self-styled curmudgeon, he allowed me to do the makeup of the newspaper monthly.

Q: Did you dabble in trying to provoke authorities?

SCHNEIDER: Not really. We were brought up to not rock the boat. My mother's side was reformist, but my father's side was much less politically motivated. I was brought up to be reformist but not revolutionary. Perhaps my father was more aware of his limitations – certainly he always felt less empowered because he hadn't gone to college –and was somewhat critical of my maternal grandfather's reformist ideas. This could have been just a difference in personality, but also my grandfather felt empowered and my dad didn't.

Moreover the 1950s seemed to encourage moderation rather than radical change. This was the era of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* and *The Silent Generation*, about the Princeton University class of '56. If you recall the late Charlie Bray who was such an activist reformer at State in the early '70s, was in that class. Turns out these were very reform-minded individuals at Princeton although their generation was described as staid – and the '50s as an era of bored comfort. described. Obviously, a lot was bubbling under the surface but at the time this wasn't recognized. High school in the early 1950s for me was not a period of dramatic contention or issues; civil rights were just becoming broadly contentious. The first jarring notes were the integration of Little Rock High School after Brown vs. Topeka

Q: Did the plight of the Negro in the South rise to your attention either at home or in school?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, this was not something we discussed often, but our family values were quite strong about the ongoing secondary status of Black Americans. Particularly my maternal grandfather, mother and aunt Bobbie (my mother's younger sister. Margaret.) The family worshipped Eleanor Roosevelt who led the way in public discourse to eliminate social injustices. Yes.

Q: And of course in Florida, it was very Southern.

SCHNEIDER: Sure. But, they lived in Miami, which had a strong liberal Jewish community. My grandfather supported all the liberal social justice causes. After LaFollette in the mid-20s, he became an avid supporter of Norman Thomas, FDR, and later in the '50s Adlai Stevenson.

Q: What about Israel?

SCHNEIDER: The Israel of Chaim Weizman, David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir was a source of great family pride but we had no direct or even remote family connections to

Israel, so I recall Israeli independence and survival was a concern but not uppermost. My grandparents gave me an Israeli bond on my 13th birthday which I've kept. That was about the extent of our involvement – no trips nor particular charity donations I can recall.

Q: What were your favorite subjects in high school?

SCHNEIDER: I loved history. The English courses were also enjoyable, but in my junior and senior years, the English course doubled as journalism.

Q: Was there any commercial newspaper that you read or used as a guide?

SCHNEIDER: My family got the Newark Evening News, my dad would read the New York World-Telegram & Sun on the train. New York had seven papers in the '50s. He would on occasion look at the Wall Street Journal . By the 60s they had switched to the New York Times. They also subscribed to the Reader's Digest, Coronet, and occasionally Life or Look Magazine.

Q: Did you have any mentors in the newspaper world?

SCHNEIDER: My high school English teacher was kind of a mentor. Strange guy. His name was Atwell Thomas. We called him Inkwell Thomas for no better reason than that he was a domineering and somewhat caustic guy, always chomping on a big stogie.

My real mentor was Fred Korpel, the linotyper for Bittner Press in Rochester, N.Y. Fred was an Austrian Jewish émigré who escaped at the outset of World War II. He was a brilliant individual who should have had the opportunity to go to college. Instead he did the night shift at Bittners Press in downtown Rochester. It was an incredible experience to watch him type on that incredible machine – to see the long ingots of lead slowly lower into a funnel at the top of the large machine, hear the constant clacking as Fred typed away. This included dropping in spacers between lines and paragraphs. The type would pour down a chute from the machine landing in a long tray angled upward to catch a column's width of type that could be carried to a flat-bed press and arranged in any way called for by the makeup editor.

Over my four years at the UR, I helped put our twice-weekly Campus-Times to bed Monday and Thursday evenings and worked closely with Fred. He fumed at our slovenly makeup and text editing and commented acerbically about our writing. Fred was the leader of the Rochester Area Great Books Discussion Group, so his erudition was unquestionable, even by the likes of us college kids. He taught us precision, a passion for high standards of writing, ethics, and responsible journalism. He was also a generous person and stimulating thinker. Being with him was like taking another combined ethics/history/current politics course.

Q: This was before your time, but were there still - the Lindbergh kidnapping?

SCHNEIDER: No it didn't come up. William Allen White, a famous editor of the Emporia Gazette, was another model for me, though remotely I read his wonderful book, *The autobiography of William Allen White* that captured my imagination and among others, interested me in a career in journalism and also in the Progressive Period.

Q: All right, you're off to college, where?

SCHNEIDER: I went to the University of Rochester. I only applied to two schools. Swarthmore and Rochester -- both had an honors seminar program for juniors and seniors that intrigued me. The program centered on seminars with no more than eight students in a class.

Swarthmore Admissions lost my application and as a courtesy put me on the waitlist. My interview at Swarthmore was with the Dean who grilled me for two hours! We had a long discussion on the proposed U.S. recognition of the PRC. He very politely allowed no generalization on my part to go unchallenged. I knew from that interview that if I went to Swarthmore I would be studying all the time. I wanted a little more balance. Rochester accepted me and I took part in the seminar program there for the last two years.

Q: All right, let's talk about Rochester - this is Rochester, New York? Where the sun always shines and there's no snow.

SCHNEIDER: Right (laughter). That's why there are tunnels everywhere under the main quad. The UR weather experience prepared me for winters at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University much later in my career. Fortunately for me I only had to make a brief visit to the SU campus in the winter. My work is in DC. Some 50 years later, the cold is really biting but I like to tell my friends that I have the best of all academic worlds in DC, no snow and no committees.

Q: What years did you attend the University of Rochester?

SCHNEIDER: 1955-59.

Q: Just before the '60s started. Was there a movement or anything happening on campus?

SCHNEIDER: Campuses in those days were beginning to go from complacent to reformist. Certainly not revolutionary. Rochester was a wonderful university, then only 1200 undergrads, an excellent liberal arts program, renowned sciences and engineering research, very strong pre-med. The Eastman School of Music was highly respected. The city boasted a high degree of high-tech industries and a well-trained work force.It was known as the home of the typography industry and with Kodak flourishing then, its world leadership in photography. The city also had an enclave, largely on the east side, of poor African Americans, quite isolated from the rest of the city.

Our News editor on the Campus-Times, Ed Alderman, who grew up in Rochester, suggested a series on the isolation of the Black community. Ed wrote five or six articles

which we published on living conditions and structural discrimination against African-Americans in Rochester. The dean of the college was upset by this series. I think he was worried about public perceptions of the UR. He called me on the carpet and basically insinuated that the series was upsetting and made the university look bad. I tried to convince him to the contrary. Not much came of the series to my recollection. I don't think we sparked any significant local policy or political action. Indeed the complex issues of race remain to this day on the East Side of Rochester. The University School of Education has adopted East Rochester High School to help strengthen its academics.

Our other serious connection to the world around us was a series of articles on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. I asked a student who had fled Budapest to write the articles and draw maps of the conflict. He made a strong impact on the student community, but not, as I recall, beyond the campus – I don't recall that he was interviewed by the two local papers, although the American press followed the ill-fated revolution closely.

Q: What subjects were you taking?

SCHNEIDER: I took history, English, politics - at that time political science was undeveloped as a field. We had one young scholar, Richard Fenno, who became one of the leading American experts on the Congress. He was a terrific teacher and used one of the most influential texts on American politics – V.O. Key, *Politics in America*. It's analysis remains central to my understanding of decision making, with its emphasis on who is hurt and who is helped by decisions. I took Fenno's first political science/government course in my junior year and his seminar on American Politics in my senior year.

Q: Political science in those days had not gone computerish?

SCHNEIDER: No, not yet "data heavy." In fact the department was the Department of Government. It was experiential, empirical. Data development, rigorous scientific theorizing was nascent. That was OK with me.

Q: I agree completely! Then it was "how governments work."

SCHNEIDER: Yes - or don't.

Q: Given your later profession, were you taking any particular interest in events abroad?

SCHNEIDER: At that stage, I had no experience overseas and not a lot of interest. I took a seminar on American foreign policy that was taught by Professor Charlies Vevier who opened my eyes to the impact of national self-image and domestic culture on international engagement. The seminar explored the conceptual origins of American foreign policy, the national identity that helped shape our policies.

Vevier had a theory he called Continentalism, which is an embellishment on the idea of Manifest Destiny. It was really more about America, about the United States, than it was about issues abroad. He argued that our self-image drove our foreign policy. How we saw our history and future as a nation shaped our policies and influenced our actual actions. This was a precursor to contemporary concepts of exceptionalism. According to Vevier, Americans have traditionally seen our nation as different from others. Europe was considered decadent and disintegrating. It would be the role of the U.S. to rescue Europe from its decay and bring moral superiority to uplift the heathen in Asia and Africa. The flip side of this excess of pride was the xenophobia directed at people abroad.

Q: What was the social setup at Rochester?

SCHNEIDER: Rochester was an old-fashioned university. It had about a dozen fraternities; they couldn't serve the whole student body. The University had dorms for others; the dorms were beginning to organize and get more active socially. I joined a local fraternity which was not a house fraternity but had a wing in a dorm, Omega Alpha Kappa. We affiliated with a large national fraternity in my junior year called Tau Kappa Epsilon. Social life really centered around fraternity life.

The UR was a moderate school in its social and political outlook. Its athletes competed with other small schools, largely in upstate New York or nearby New England.

Q: Through your work on the paper, did you have much contact with the faculty?

SCHNEIDER: My faculty contacts were through the seminars in the last two years. We took two seminars, wrote a 15-20 page paper every week and a five-to-10 page critique of somebody else's paper every week, so you had one large and one short paper every week of the semester. Very intense. Lots of reading, which for me as a slow reader was not easy; I had to plow through a lot of material. But it was so exhilarating. The history faculty at Rochester in the 1950s was one of the best in the country -- Arthur J. May, a prominent world historian, as well as John Christopher who co-authored the major world history textbook of that era; also professor of American history Richard Wade, professor of world history and Asian history Harry Benda, and Charles Vevier, the leading diplomatic historian I mentioned. The seminars were really challenging yet rewarding.

Q: Were you tempted to look at other countries?

SCHNEIDER: Harry Benda organized a seminar on Revolutionary China. At that time China seemed to threaten all our assumptions and values of human social organization and governance. Benda was a Czech Jew who fled Europe for Indonesia as a young man and worked in Indonesia until imprisoned by the Japanese . After the war he studied in New Zealand and earned his doctorate at Cornell. He taught at Rochester for a couple of years and ended up at Yale as head of the Asian studies program there. In 1959 China was a new subject for him too. We all learned about China at the height of the revolution.

Q: And China was not on the forefront of most colleges.

SCHNEIDER: Not that I knew of. But there it was, massive, conflicted and foreboding. The Maoist Revolution represented a totally different way to organize human society. This was very provocative.

I kept in contact with Harry through the years until his untimely death in late 1971. Periodically he lectured at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) in the worst times of the '60s and railed against U.S. policy in Vietnam. We frequently met for lunch during his visits to D.C. These were painful and touching, since I was then supervising USIA media output on Vietnam and Harry was among the most knowledgeable and articulate critics of the war. I listened and learned from him.

Q: Was there much contact between the students and the faculty?

SCHNEIDER: Lots. Home visits, seminars once a week. Terrific. Great mentorship.

Q: What were you thinking about at that time, for yourself?

SCHNEIDER: I was going to be a journalist. Indeed, having been a journalist in high school and college and a stringer for the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle with my courses oriented toward current affairs, going into journalism was a career goal.

After graduating from the UR in ‘59, I was a Woodrow Wilson fellow at Columbia in American history. Columbia in those days had a huge master's program in history and a very small and elite PhD program. The master's program would crank out MAs. My MA research focused on the Christian Socialism of an influential progressive theologian in the early 20th century, Walter Rauschenbusch. He studied and taught at Colgate Rochester Divinity School and his papers had not been opened to the public.

Rauschenbusch sought to marry European social policies with American Christianity. It was a way of making Socialist politics and theory acceptable in the U.S. context. In some ways the reformism of the populist period in the late 1890s and the progressive era in which he lived helped Rauschenbusch and like-minded clerics gain a hearing for common sense solutions to problems of social injustice and particularly to the congestion, ill-health and various inequities of America’s booming cities and expanding immigrant population.

Q: I was going to say, being in New York City, this was a hotbed of Jewish socialism, dominated by Jews but I guess Russian socialism...

SCHNEIDER: I’m not sure, I guess that Jewish engagement in social reform related mainly to urban issues and immigration was largely directed toward providing benefits for the Jewish immigrant population, rather than to changing national policies. The Jews were active in socialist and labor parties or factions, especially later, in the thirties, before some intellectual leaders such as Norman Podhoretz who were strongly anti-Nazi turned to the right in an anti-communist reaction against the USSR in the 40s and 50s.

Q: Did you get involved in progressive or activist social reform activities?

SCHNEIDER: Not really: I was an Adlai Stevenson democrat – not very radical! As I completed my MA Essay in 1960, rising conflicts in the world started to intrude. The U.S. was becoming more involved in Southeast Asia and the government was calling up troops to be sent to Laos and Thailand as advisers. The French had departed Vietnam after the 1954 Dien Bien Phu disaster, and the Kennedy Administration was about to fill the void in the early '60s.

I experienced the rising tensions through the draft: One day in mid-'60 I received a call from the National Guard saying I was about to be drafted into the army. The National Guard recruiter urged me to join the Guard and avoid the draft. I weighed the choices: I could choose three years in the army and go to language school in Germany to become a cryptographer which I thought overall would be a very interesting experience. Or I could do a six-month tour of reserve duty or some National Guard unit. In those days you could take a competitive exam and jump ahead of the queue in the Reserves or the Guard. I chose the Air Force Reserve Medical Corps, to train to be a "Medical Service Specialist" aka bedpans and shots. I went into the Air Force Reserves in the fall of 1960 and completed my basic and nursing training in the spring of '61.

Q: Were you involved emotionally or doing stuff in the election of 1960?

SCHNEIDER: Very much so. As a Stevenson supporter, I was hoping he would run again, despite his protestations My dad had a friend from his high school fraternity who was a power broker in Mercer County in New Jersey, and he wangled me a job as an intern for the New Jersey delegation to the Democratic National Convention in early July, 1960. Three other students, a college fraternity brother of mine, a distant relative, and the son of columnist Murray Kempton and I drove out to LA (Los Angeles) - I had a Volkswagen Beetle at the time - and participated in the convention. It was really fascinating; it was all about Kennedy versus maybe LBJ (Lyndon Baines Johnson), Hubert Humphrey, and maybe Stevenson. LA was a very liberal town and there was a strong push to get Stevenson to run again. His supporters held a big demonstration the night before the convention opened. Stevenson came to speak at the rally around a massive bonfire, it was like a football pep rally. But…. Once again he wavered!

Even then, the next day when the convention opened, his supporters put his name into nomination, hoping to build a groundswell that would convince him to run. They bribed one of the guards to let them into the LA Coliseum. They came into the gallery and when Stevenson's name was put into nomination, they flooded the floor and there ensued a thirty-minute demonstration in support of Stevenson. David Kempton and I tried to steal the Jersey stanchion and parade it around–we got about two feet before the union guys who were in support of Kennedy stopped us.

Kennedy had it all sewn up. The governor of New Jersey, Robert Meyner, who was the Jersey delegation leader – and, by the way, married to a cousin or niece of Stevenson --

refused to support Kennedy on the first ballot. The Kennedy brothers were irritated and others were very upset, but JFK passed the word on to the Jersey delegation through Bobby not to worry, support on the 2nd ballot would suffice.

So Jersey turned to Kennedy in the second ballot, and the rest is history. I was initially ambiguous about Kennedy, I didn't think he deserved to be president. He was too young, too immature, too pushy. I was a staunch Stevenson supporter. In the summer of 62, I visited Rochester and went to see Jake Wade at the UR and asked, Why was he supporting Kennedy? He looked at me and said, "He can win!" That was the way it was. Kennedy was going to win control of the democratic party and win the election.

US Air Force Reserves

Q: After Columbia, what?

SCHNEIDER: The Air Force Reserves for six months, medical corps specialist.

Q: What were you doing?

SCHNEIDER: Bedpans! We had basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, then went to Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama to get medical training, to be kind of nurses' aides. I got myself onto a heart shock team. Then we had a commitment of six years – one weekend per month and two weeks or each summer - to go to the Martland Medical Center in Newark, New Jersey for duty.

Newark Evening News

After completing my AF basic and nursing training, I found a job as a reporter at the Newark Evening News. My uncle Charlie, who was the director of athletics at Weequahic, high school in Newark , knew many journalists he had coached and he set me up with one of his “boys”, Mickey McMenamin. I interviewed, got the job, and I was assigned to the Belmar/Jersey shore bureau covering central and southern Jersey. About six months into my newspaper career I realized it was going to be a long time before I made it to Trenton or DC because right ahead of me were a group of slightly older, more experienced, and frankly better journalists. Jersey politics was in their veins, and they had a reportorial edge that I didn't have.

Q: Did you find that you really had to know something beyond the mechanics of newspaper? Had to have a hook, either sports or politics?

SCHNEIDER: You had to have a sense for, how to put it, an eye for detail and for the flaw in whatever situation you were covering, to be a really good political reporter. In a way, you had to have an instinct for the jugular and I didn't have that itch, that desire. These guys who came from Jersey City, grew up with politics -- that's the boss-controlled, hard-edged politics of the notorious Mayor Frank Hague. They were good at it and they liked it. I liked covering the regional planning meetings and town

council sessions, looking at the larger picture. My parents had moved from West Orange down to Shrewsbury near Red Bank. This is an area that was mainly rural, becoming suburban. The challenges for that region were demographic and economic. Where would the Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway place their next exits and who owns the land to build new housing developments, etc.? All kinds of issues that I was more interested in. I didn't care for the down and dirty city politics.

One story I have to tell relates to the ethnic and social class differences in the Belmar Bureau. There were four Irish guys either assigned to or working out of the office – Joe Sullivan, Mike O'Sullivan, Al Sullivan (who later became USIA White House correspondent), John Farmer, one Hungarian – Al Klimcke, one Sicilian – Joe Periale and me. The Irish guys attended St. Peters College in Jersey City and I had gone to UR and Columbia for my MA. They were friendly toward me but were constantly on Periale's back. The ethnic and class lines were pretty clear.

One day I helped level the differences a little: I was assigned to write a piece on a new special warfare training program at Fort Dix. I visited the base, did a number of interviews and wrote a nice, lengthy feature. The staff photographer came along to take pictures. I turned in the draft to bureau chief Joe Sullivan. The next day when I walked into the office everyone stood up and started jumping up and down while thumping their chests and sort of howling – I had spelled guerrilla warfare - gorilla warfare – 22 times. So much for my fancy education! At least I was consistent.

Beginning Experience with USIA Foreign Service

Q: So then what happened?

SCHNEIDER: In graduate school at Columbia, one of my roommates brought in a pamphlet from USIA that he'd picked up, with a photo of Edward R. Murrow on the cover. It was the classic black-and-white image of Murrow, the light on his head with a cigarette angled off in one hand, smoke swirling up in the light. The pamphlet described the Foreign Service and USIA. That caught my attention and came back to me when I was thinking about options to wait my turn with the Newark News.

Just out of curiosity I applied to the Foreign Service. It took a year-plus to get through the process. I took the written exam and the oral exam was administered in New York City by two officers. One was Richard Wooten who was a policy officer in USIA with extensive service in Latin America. The second interviewer was a State Department officer. I was accepted into the October 1962 class, Number 19, in USIA.

Both State and USIA JOTs began training together for eight weeks. The Foreign Service had established a parallel career path for USIA-- the Foreign Service Career Reserve system. After the first eight weeks of a six-month training program we focused on different paths.

Q: We'll stop here and pick it up next time with your Foreign Service class and experiences.

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Q: Today is the 3rd of December, 2015, with Mike Schneider, the second interview. You just joined the Foreign Service; when did you enter?

SCHNEIDER: Our class was sworn in October 22 1962—this was the day that JFK announced our quarantine of Cuba, essentially a blockade of Soviet ships heading toward Cuba. The Cuban Missile Crisis had begun. We were all hyped for Edward R. Murrow to swear us in; he had attracted most of us into public service. We were very disappointed when he didn't show up to the swearing-in ceremony. Instead, Tom Sorensen - Ted Sorensen's younger brother - who was the assistant director for USIA policy, led the swearing in. We were very upset and wondered what we were getting into. The U.S. and the USSR seemed on the edge of nuclear war; it was quite a frightening time.

Q: It really was. I was in Belgrade at the time and our ambassador was George Kennan, and he was explaining the situation, he had all Foreign Service families together there. We all had the vision of sitting there watching missiles go over head, both ways.

SCHNEIDER: That was close.

Q: What was your class like?

SCHNEIDER: We had 20 in our USIA class and there were an equal number or more State JOTs . There were four, five, maybe six women in the class. Compared to the class before and after us, we were the mavericks, perhaps a little more outspoken than the two other groups. I think only six or seven of our class stayed on in the Foreign Service or in USIA for more than a year or two.

Q: That's pretty unusual.

SCHNEIDER: It was a low number. I'm not sure what expectations were like in those days, but it was still a low number. The six months training program was a downer. The training folks didn't really know what to do with us; we took the same counterinsurgency course three times. It was not taught well, obviously the second and third time were totally repetitive.

The most fascinating part of our training was the lectures by noted cultural anthropologist Joseph Campbell. He came down from Sarah Lawrence and gave wonderful talks on Buddhism and Asian culture. We had some role playing which we thought at the time was kind of corny, where we had to answer questions and have a debate with a "Soviet representative" who was Chuck Vetter, who was in the training program at USIA. Chuck also taught at American University. We had more role-playing exercises with two other

Foreign Service officers. We were young, eager to get our hands on real world challenges abroad, so the six months really dragged on, from October to April, ‘63.

Q: Where were they coming from?

SCHNEIDER: The 20 people? They were very diverse in that respect, geographically. From both coasts, from middle America. Religiously diverse. However no Asian-Americans nor any African-Americans.

Q: Had they had much media experience?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, media and international experience. I had media experience, but most of my fellow students had more international experience than I. We had one former Air Force pilot, Richard Overturf, who was just on the age limit of 31. Dick had seen conflict at the end of the Korean war. Others had public relations, some academics and cultural affairs experience. As I recall almost everyone had at least several years of professional experience.

Q: Was there any curbside general opinion about what to look for and what not to look for in USIA?

SCHNEIDER: I think it was the “well-rounded” officer, the person who had some experience, was smart and personable. Probably more emphasis on personality and communication skills than on analytic skills or depth of knowledge of foreign policy.

Q: Were you open to the world?

SCHNEIDER: Oh yes! When it came time to list overseas assignment preferences, I put Japan, Yugoslavia, and India in that order as my three choices. Each assignment included learning a “hard” language which gave the JOT some credit toward promotion. All three offered interesting cultures and politics and from a policy standpoint were very important to U.S. interests, pivotal in their regions and enjoyed improving relations with the U.S.

Q: As you got into this, did you want to change your mind?

SCHNEIDER: No. I was quite happy to be in the Foreign Service, I felt it was prestigious and challenging. The people I was working with were terrific.

Q: This is one of the things that one forgets. There was a book written, a sort of a derogatory tale, but it sums up things a bit in the Foreign Service, called A Pretty Good Club. The people you're working with, the way it's recruited and all - it's lively people for the most part.

SCHNEIDER: In some meetings especially with Department officers I felt there was a “correct” and an “incorrect” way to behave, but I didn't feel alienated.

Q: It wasn't manners, it was intellect or breadth of interest.

SCHNEIDER: Not manners in terms of social niceties, but to be substantive and maybe not be too outspoken. Instead of speaking in the first person, “I think” or “I believe” one should say “ It seems” . This was particularly so for written correspondence.

Junior Officer Assignment to USIS Calcutta

Q: What happened? Where'd you go?

SCHNEIDER: I was assigned to Calcutta. USIA had a large and comprehensive program in India: In addition to Delhi, there were big programs in Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) with about 10 Americans and 100+ national employees in each. And USIS had a one-man post in Lucknow, Bangalore and in Hyderabad, plus a center in Patna staffed by Indian employees. USIS India had ample capacity to host junior officers in training. Our training program was 18 months, including six months in Washington and a year in the field, unheard of today. We were junior officer trainees, after being in DC for six months. That gave us the luxury of integrating into the field in a harmonious way.

Q: What about living in Calcutta? People who've been there say particularly when you get there you're overwhelmed by the humanity, the poverty, and all this. How did you find that?

SCHNEIDER: Initial exposure could be overwhelming. A brief anecdote about “culture shock”: I took the renowned Pan Am One flight to India. At about 3 a.m. it stopped in Delhi. It felt like 100 degrees at least. Just after the plane taxied closer to the terminal in came the Indian health team in their khaki uniforms, spraying DDT (a pesticide) all over the plane to kill whatever insect life we were carrying. Of course we were all breathing the DDT.

We arrived in Calcutta at five in the morning. The secretary from USIS was there with the station wagon to meet me. Going from Dum Dum Airport into Calcutta was like playing dodge cars, with cows and other animals strolling alongside carts, rickshaws and people all crowding into the lanes. The airport was about 10-15 miles north of Calcutta; the road to Dum Dum had not yet been developed as a highway. I sat in this air-conditioned car looking out at people doing their morning ablutions right next to the road and defecating in the fields; the intensity and amount of life piled upon each other was amazing to me.

It was early May, just about the hottest time of the year, really a great change in temperature and humidity for me. Mid-day naps helped me adjust to the heat and the density of the population, the noise level, the things that you would chance upon. There were organized rings of beggars who were deposited at different corners -- their lack of limbs, the evident sickness, it was quite compelling.

Gradually over time, I adjusted to the noises, smells and congestion. Then, only when something especially bizarre occurred—or wondrous—that reminded me in a different way of the struggle and sometimes the courage of that struggle—did I react emotionally. Like the time I heard what I thought was the pitter patter of little feet but instead saw a man drenched in sweat with every muscle, sinew and nerve in his body straining to the tearing point to pull a huge cart of iron rods.

On the other hand, Calcutta teemed also with cultural life. It had a theater district with a street devoted to Shakespeare, a street with theaters devoted to contemporary plays, a street devoted to murder mysteries, a street devoted to Bengali translations of the classics. And dance drama, music and a Western symphony which wasn't great, but it was there. And films of all kinds. Bookstores the likes of which you've never seen with current books from the West which were important soon after publication in the West. Five or six daily newspapers, very vigorous, representing various political parties. Literary magazines, poetry, traditional dance-drama, Bangla film production …. for anyone who likes big cities and culture, you can't beat Calcutta.

Once friends took me to the film studio of Satyajit Roy, the world famous director. He was rehearsing the music for a film in production. He was a very imposing man—well over six feet with a large head, hands and feet. Dressed in a white Punjabi and dark grey vest, he sat in the center on the floor with four different small groups of musicians around him. Each was playing different instruments that interacted. Somewhat like breaking a chamber ensemble of 20 or so into separate groups. Both Western and traditional Indian instruments.

Q: What language were you learning?

SCHNEIDER: I was assigned to learn Bengali. A month before the course was to start at FSI, in February or March, FSI staff discovered they had no course nor teachers. All they had were manuals from the U.S. Army in the Burma campaign, with everyday Bangla, but inappropriate for my work. For example one sentence I've long remembered: "Please pass the mashed potatoes" in Bangla.

After I arrived in Calcutta, the Hindi/Urdu linguist in New Delhi came in on TDY, advised me on how to structure a course, andhired three tutors. I wrote daily lessons in English and he corrected these a little and the three tutors translated the course from English to Bangla and then taught me six hours a day for six months. I lived in a residential hotel called the New Kenilworth, not far from the consulate in Calcutta.

The New Kenilworth was a wonderful old-fashioned residential hotel, run by an Armenian-French family, very congenial, very international, with all kinds of people living there. My three tutors, Mrs. Mukherjee, Pabrito Dey and Ashok Chatterjee came to my apartment to drill me, review vocabulary, pronunciation, definitions, phrases and some idioms.

Around the fourth month I realized my tutors were not teaching me contemporary Bangla. Rather it was a blend of antique bookish vocabulary and Rabindranath Tagore. Imagine learning Shakespearean English.

I was at the home of Bengali friends, the Karlekar brothers, and their mother started teasing me about my use of words. She pointed out I was using very high-flung words that were no longer used, and I realized my tutors were teaching me a fine form of the language, but not one that would be used every day. Although Bengalis were quite pleased if any outsider made an effort to speak Bangla, I would have been considered quite an oddity had I continued on that path.

Several other friends had a family member who was the head of Shantiniketan. It was founded by Tagore at the turn of the 20th century and included a K-12 school and a liberal arts college. I arranged to stay in the guest house and attended third grade for a month! That was the level of complexity I could handle. The kids' voices were absolutely bell-clear. In that bucolic rural environment, none of the noises of a city such as Calcutta intruded. I could hear the students very well and speak and listen to Bangla all day. A wonderful experience that helped my spoken Bangla immensely.

I became proficient enough to give talks in Bangla, which I did, mainly as part of our University Program and to civic organizations such as the Rotary. I wrote the lessons with public affairs and current issues in mind, so I gained proficiency in complex terms related to policy, but I couldn't really say in any detail how I felt or talk with any nuance about literature or the arts, which is so important in Bengal.

The ‘final exam’ so to speak was an annual national contest held in Calcutta, the Nikal Bharat Bangla Pasha Prashar Samity – the all-India Bengali Language Furtherance Society. This centered on poetry recitation. One of my tutors chose a Tagore poem and helped me memorize and recite it. It was a classic poem set in the heart of Bengal, “Sonar Bangla”—Golden Bengal—the rice growing countryside in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Given the Cold War context of the early 60s the event had a little more significance for us. The Soviet consulate had their young Bengali speaker as well who recited a poem as did I and others. I won a medal for “efficiency in Bengali,” presented by President Radhakrishnan.

Q: Could you cut loose from these other—

SCHNEIDER: Yes. I had no other responsibilities. When I first arrived in Calcutta, the PAO, Gib (Gilbert)Austin, said "You're here to learn the language, first and foremost. We don't want you in the office, we want you to learn the language. Anything extra you want to do is fine with me." So during that six month language-learning time, from 9 - 3I learned Bangla. When time allowed, I helped at the Bi-national Indo-American Center. It was a thriving venue run by an American grantee, Harold Bergman and his wife Trudy who were directors of the center. It was well-supported by the community in Calcutta.

Helping Organize the Duke Ellington Band Visit in October 1963

I helped Harold organize the week-long concert series by Duke Ellington and his band, which was a memorable experience. They came through on a worldwide concert tour in October, 1963.

Q: Was jazz well received?

SCHNEIDER: Oh, yes. The Duke Ellington Band was a big hit in Calcutta. They were housed in the Grand Hotel in Calcutta, one of two major big hotels with a large lawn and garden courtyard enclosed by the hotel buildings. We organized the concerts, found a local construction team to install a grandstand for seating facing the stage. The concerts were sold out. The band was there a week, I don't think they slept a moment. They were everywhere, all the clubs, impromptu jazz events. They played fantastically.

At one point Ellington called me in the middle of the night and asked me to bring a tape recorder to his room. I went over around one in the morning. He was there with his Iranian or Argentine sweetheart. They were sitting up in bed having dinner. He had a tape of the band's concert in Stockholm en route to South Asia. He had written the "Stockholm suite" and had first played it in Stockholm. So we listened to that for about an hour, then I packed up the Grundig and went back to my place.

That's the kind of week it was. The band, with Billy Strayhorn and the other stars, played and partied all week long. After the concerts they played more at the various clubs in Calcutta. Ellington and Strayhorn visited music schools and met some of the great Indian performers. The audiences were great; there were enough people in Calcutta who knew jazz and appreciated it. Not to say that Calcutta was a jazz lover's city but it had all kinds of classical music and the musical instruments and rhythmic patterns that Ellington and Co. were able to pursue in Bengal were much more complicated than ours.

JOT Experience

Q: I'm told that Bengal is sort of the poetic capital—. Did you get out in the boonies?

SCHNEIDER: I did. In addition to the month in Santiniketan I took part in a USIS university program team that visited colleges throughout the Calcutta consular district, in Bengal, Orissa and Assam. The University Programs were like three-ring circuses, including visiting speakers, American Fulbrighters in the area, several American officers and national employees. A mix of lectures, exhibits, film showings, quiz shows and debates were featured at such events. We opened doors for further communication with students and faculty and built ongoing contacts with local leaders.

Our university program made an effort to reach out to colleges and universities where we weren't necessarily popular. A good friend and USIS colleague Supreo Bonnerjee, the senior cultural affairs employee in Calcutta, arranged a visit to Burdwan University. Burdwan is an industrial town about 70 miles from Calcutta. The university was a hotbed of young, smart, left-of-center professors who were very critical of U.S. policies and

American culture. Supreo and I went there and spoke with students, met with faculty informally, just to open the door for a more formal program. They were reserved but cordial with me, mainly because of their respect for Supreo. I don't know how he did it, given his own identity as a liberal who nevertheless worked for the U.S. In part I think his ability to reach out to leftist critics came from his earlier student leadership at Presidency College. And he was known as an independent thinker, such as his identification with the Brahmo Samaj movement – somewhat akin to Unitarianism in the West. There was also receptivity to who we were and what we were representing in 1963 that wouldn't have existed in the 50s.

Q: Did you find a divide between the older generation and the party members and all who had picked up disdain for American culture, and the younger people who were hot for it?

SCHNEIDER: That was a fascinating aspect of Indo-American relations: timing was very important. By that, I mean that our relations improved markedly when we provided arms support to India during its conflict with China in the remote Himalayas border war 1960-62. I arrived there in the spring of '63, as our relations which had bottomed out in the 1950s began to improve. In the prior decade we had 'tilted' toward Pakistan with the creation of CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) and Pakistan's involvement. Our arms assistance and training for Pakistani military threatened India. All too often a conversation about current affairs could turn into a diatribe of resentment at our alliance with Pakistan.

And we and India tended to lecture each other. We each criticized the other's internal order. India was highly critical of racial discrimination and segregation in the U.S., while Americans shot back against caste in India and its failure to condemn the USSR. We wanted nations to join our alliances against communism; Indian intellectuals and many leaders sought to remain independent from Cold War rivalries and lead the so-called 'Third World' non-aligned nations. We were two moralizing democracies with conflicting interests in the '50s until the Sino-Indian war and the advent of the Kennedy Administration.

Q: Indians and Americans both have the word and they don't really accept the other person's word.

SCHNEIDER: Right. We had more of a global missionary complex than India then, for many reasons. Their media and many intellectuals and activists on the left were good at seeing our flaws. At any rate our University Programs sought a dialogue over these and other concerns with young faculty and students. In USIS Calcutta a very active and engaging officer, Dan Miller, was university programs officer. Our post was typical of the USIS presence in India -- 11 Americans and 110 national employees, with all those rupees, PL-480 (Public Law 480) rupees to spend. We had a massive translation program; books printed in Bangla, Hindi, Assamese, and Oriya. Very active cultural programs. A library that handled 500,000 people in a year, air conditioned, right on Chowringhee, one of the main streets. Also a major press service and contacts effort, some 400 feet of

window space at a major intersection, and we supported a USIS India publication program that included SPAN, the major bi-monthly glitzy magazine, a labor publication and indigenous language versions of other USIA magazines and special publications.

Q: You might explain what PL-480 was

SCHNEIDER: PL-480 was Public Law 480, which allowed the use by U.S. Embassies of local currencies earned from the sale of grains -- mainly in Indonesia, Egypt, India, Pakistan and Poland. In order to avoid the disruptions of converting 'soft' currencies into dollars, the countries buying massive amounts of food aid allowed the U.S. to keep the currencies in bank accounts nationally and draw on these accounts for 'housekeeping' activities – e.g. purchase of various items, some in-country and international travel and other activities. In India, the U.S. sold a *lot* of grain for rupees and drew on our account to pay local employees, fund aspects of USAID projects, publish and distribute books and other printed materials, etc. Initially India desperately needed an infusion of grain to feed its burgeoning population, but by the late 60s, Indians came to resent the implicit pressure of U.S. control of so much of their currency. As I recall, President Johnson was also irate that India joined the Soviets in condemning the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and withheld some grain shipments, India then stepped up its rural development policy. Improved Indian grain production and our own desire to untangle the relation led to winding down the program, which came to an end in 1973. We had 11 billion rupees in our accounts; there was real worry when the program ended that rapid conversion of those rupees to dollars would be disruptive. So the USG slowly wound the program down as well as our USAID presence over several years.

Study of USIS in India After 25 Years

With the end of the PL480 program, announced by the U.S. Ambassador, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, USIA leaders thought it was timely to take a second look at our presence in India.

Bob Haney, a former PAO, and I were asked to conduct a study of the USIS India program after 25 years. We traveled by train from Delhi to Bombay to Madras to Calcutta and back to Delhi where we presented our findings to the PAO, Al Hemsing and then to Amb. Moynihan. Actually after being ushered into his office and presenting a copy of the written report, we listened—attentively—to Moynihan critique Indian development and economic policy. He was quite cogent, though I thought at the time somewhat dismissive of India. He was responsible—probably wisely—for ending the PL-480 program in India. It had come to symbolize Indian dependence. Decades later I enjoyed several encounters with him when I was working for the Maxwell School where he had taught in the early 60s.

Impressions of Student Life and Politics in India

Q: Let's talk about students in Calcutta. Were they a mixed crew? Was it from one society, one sector?

SCHNEIDER: Calcutta was always a hotbed of student energy including radicalism, though how to define ‘radical’ is a challenge. First, there was a huge student population - Calcutta University itself had 100,000 students. Then there was Jadavpur University which was created on the American model with AID assistance; it probably had 20,000 and included an American studies program we helped finance and supported in various ways. There were smaller colleges run by religious groups. This is in a city then of about nine million so they were absorbed in the population.

Many student leaders hailed from Presidency College, the elite college of Calcutta University. Those students largely came from the advantaged castes; caste was not an articulated preference but if you were to observe the students in the early '60s you'd say they came from the middle class or the middle caste and higher. The political leadership of the student movements in Calcutta also included many medical students and to some extent engineering and law students, what they would call post-graduate and we would call graduate.

There was a student Congress Party and there were Socialist and more radical counterparts. There were pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese Marxist or Maoist parties. The Naxalite movement really emerged with great force in the mid-late '60s. It was very radical and sought to organize the peasantry in the tea-planting areas of northern Bengal as well as industrial unions.

My youthful appearance and Bangla occasionally led students to invite me to their activities. I was allowed to sit in their debates over future direction and what to do.

One of my good friends in Calcutta was Bacchu Roy. Bacchu was a senior foreign national employee in the consulate. Bacchu and I roamed Calcutta on Saturday mornings, visiting the student coffee houses. These were immense meeting halls in north Calcutta, near Calcutta University – a thousand students could sit in one cavernous hall and just schmooze and have wonderful Madrasi coffee, very thick and rich and sweet. The operative phrase is "give adda" meaning to talk, to gossip. Just meet with students and chat and so on.

Q: As you look back on it, where did you think India was going? Were there problems with this vast nation and so many different beliefs, so overwhelming they probably would be involved with themselves so much they probably wouldn't be much of an influence abroad? I remember as a young soldier in Korea, Krishna Menon ,the foreign minister, was really evil (laughter).

SCHNEIDER: He epitomized what some Americans loathed about Indian leaders: superior, intellectually arrogant, critical of every aspect of American policy, life, and culture. I felt he represented a significant political and intellectual element of Indian society, even though with improving relations the litany of complaints about the U.S.

gained less public attention. I was exposed to that aspect of Indo-American relations. It could pop up any time in the course of formal events or just a conversation.

Q: Did you find that members of the Congress Party were sniping, were they working on the old schedule or on the new one with America being the "supporter of our troops" up in the Himalayas?

SCHNEIDER: More new than old. Less carping, less throwing those barbs at us.

I wasn't surprised by moments of criticism of American culture and society. And I wasn't particularly exposed to a lot of that; I didn't always feel on the defensive. My Bangla cast me in a different light. Few Americans spoke Bangla. It was too easy to slip into English. There was a small group of American scholars led by Ed Dimock, American expert in Bengali language and culture from Chicago University. Ed started the Indian-American Studies Center, a private cultural center in Calcutta. His center, which was also his residence in North Calcutta, was a haven for visiting American students. I met one couple, Mark and Bonnie Franda, who landed at Maryland University after completing doctoral studies.

Q: What did you feel was your major job there? How did you achieve it?

SCHNEIDER: I was there for a year of junior officer training, so the first responsibility was to learn the language and use it, which I did every occasion I could. My JOT training was mainly to fill-in for those on leave: acting motion picture program officer, acting university programs officer, acting exhibits officer. With 400 feet of window space there was a lot to fill. I spent a lot of time creating and designing and actually producing with the staff the window exhibits and displays.

Gib Austin, the PAO asked me to write a chapter to update a book, The Negro in the United States, by the African-American historian, Rayford Logan. My update covered the late 50s and early 60s. In retrospect I didn't really capture the extent and impact of racial discrimination, even though by the early 60s we were all treating race as a national problem, not just a fault of the American South. In my chapter the glass was half-full, which is what I very mistakenly believed. This was before the intensification of activism regarding race in the mid-late '60s.

I did some press contact work for the post as well. Among the contacts was a visit to a major Bangla daily Jugantar and its editor, Amitabha Chaudrey. We became friends and I visited Amitabha and his wife Neepa for dinner several times. My friendship with Amitabha led to one of my most embarrassing moments in public service. Shortly after LBJ engineered the Congressional Gulf of Tonkin resolution, at a party Amitabha asked me about it. Had Johnson faked the incident? Out of naïveté, I said I couldn't believe that he would fake or mis-report the conflict. Of course I was absolutely wrong, that's exactly what Johnson did, much to the chagrin of a lot of people in the policy world.

Q: What were the major interests of the people you were seeing, particularly the students, in the United States? Or why were they interested?

SCHNEIDER: They were interested because we were important to India. The student community in Calcutta was fascinated with the U.S., including a range of emotions, from admiration of the opportunity and achievements to criticism of U.S. military support for Pakistan. We had a developing aid relationship; they didn't like the dependence but they did need the PL-480 program and some other foreign assistance at that time. India then was more reliant on Soviet arms support and other assistance even though the barter arrangement was disadvantageous. India traded produce and some consumer goods for military support.

The Indian students I talked with were really interested in the race issue in the United States. I think this interest is related to caste in India but students would have denied any similarities.

Q: We talk about the kettle calling...

SCHNEIDER: Exactly.

Q: Race is built into their whole culture in the form of caste.

SCHNEIDER: There was a disconnect between their assertions towards the U.S. and their understanding of themselves. So often Indian students insisted that caste is not at all the same as race and cited constitutional reservations of places in higher education, the government, etc. for lower castes. Well, it *was* discrimination based on color and group identity. Skin color made a big difference—the paler you were in India the more attractive. Although there were regional differences, I found that caste or social class, particularly in the villages and rural areas did affect opportunities for individuals.

Q: I'm told that the newspapers have want ads for husbands and wives which distinguish, they wanted such and such a color skin.

SCHNEIDER: It was real—I saw their defensiveness over similarities of caste and race as stubborn denial at least.

Q: It's not a very good argument to say, "You're one too;" how did you deal with that?

SCHNEIDER: We were very earnest about race, and it was a really difficult issue to deal with because none of us, not our older more experienced officers like Gib Austin and certainly not the CAO (cultural affairs officer) Sterlyn Steele or the IO (information officer), Phil Gould were going to try to sweep this under the rug. USIA policy was to speak openly about race; we had moved away from the period in the 1950s when race was considered a regional problem and the centerpiece of Soviet attacks on the American

way. We talked in the early '60s about race being a serious problem in American society and politics and culture and we acknowledged it was a national issue.

As the decade evolved, so too did the realities of race and conflict in the United States reflected by the civil rights movement. By the end of the '60s the challenge was different from earlier. In the early '60s we were upbeat, thinking the civil rights movement was a sign of the ability of the country to reform itself, and we talked about reform, about problems, instances of success and achievements, MLK, the optimism that we felt, all of us. That made our friends and supporters in India happy or reassured that non-violent change is possible. Progress in race relations in the U.S. tended to temper the criticism of those who didn't particularly like us or know us, who were more left of center.

Calcutta might have been this "hotbed of radicalism" but, to over-generalize a little, I thought that Bengali culture was sweet, not quite as aggressive as other Northern India cultures. In my experience in the early-mid 60s, the intensity of Bengali political criticism of the U.S. was somewhere between the North and, say, South India which was much more taciturn, more measured, less conflicted. We faced criticism and opposition, but we didn't have daily strikes and protests in front of the American consulate in Calcutta in the early 1960s as they did in the late '60s over the combination of Vietnam and civil rights problems .

Later in the decade, East Indian politics particularly became far more intense, with the rise of leftist parties affiliated with Moscow and with Beijing and radical movements such as the Naxalites. Harrington Road, where the U.S. consulate was located, became a symbol of protest, an embarrassment for national leaders in India and certainly for the U.S. Bengal authorities changed the name to Ho Chi Minh Allee. Just a little twist there which I found amusing—maybe not everyone did. I believe in the long run we and Indians in general benefited from an overall change in bilateral relationships and from the Indian economic reform movement that had started to take off in the late '60s. We could talk about race and caste more openly, also about dependent development and India's need to rely less on outside assistance. This was a major theme in the early 70s when Daniel Patrick Moynihan was U.S. Ambassador.

Q: Did our position vis-a-vis Pakistan come up in your discussions?

SCHNEIDER: Inevitably. All the time. "Why are you supporting them? Don't you understand that they're up to no good, that they're milking you for your military support, that they're going to create a situation where we have to defend ourselves, that they're corrupt, that Islam is a hostile, aggressive religion?" Yes, we constantly heard that kind of criticism.

Q: How did you find the Soviets were perceived by the people you were working with?

SCHNEIDER: My impression was there was deference to the Soviets. There wasn't a great deal of warmth. The student movement was not yet totally radicalized and I don't

think the Soviets had that much influence, they weren't that good at it. Somebody was funneling money to some of the students on the left-left. But the greater movement of the time in the early '60s in India was center-left, and that wasn't virulent. In the late '60s one would see the Soviets' competition with China for support in the far-left student movement.

Q: How about the Vietnam War?

SCHNEIDER: Vietnam at the time was not a major issue. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution really raised the salience. Up until 1964-65, we were hewing to the French limit of "614 advisors" in Vietnam; that was what Dean Rusk called "the fig-leaf of respectability;" we could go up to that level that had been agreed upon when we assumed more responsibility post-Dien Bien Phu and the French departure. The movement of troops into Vietnam in '65 through '67 marked the major expansion of the conflict and received intense media and public attention worldwide. Opposition in India rose accordingly. I also think that leaders of the non-aligned nations saw the drain of U.S. and others' resources into the conflict in Southeast Asia and felt more pressure to take sides—a pressure they had carefully avoided.

I was transferred to Dacca in '65. With support from Gib Austin I wanted to stay with the post in Calcutta. We were planning to open a student center in north Calcutta, near the university. I had done the research and spade work for the center and Gib Austin tried to get a slot to keep me. However there was a longstanding assistant information officer vacancy in Dacca and the Agency needed a Bangla language officer there, so that was that.

Assignment in Dacca, East Pakistan

Q: At that time Dacca was part of Pakistan?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, it was the capital of East Pakistan.

Q: I hate to leave this fascinating period, I could listen to you forever on this, but I think we better go to Dacca. What was the situation when you got up there?

SCHNEIDER: On several levels, the policy relationships within Pakistan were not good. East Pakistan was a separate wing from West Pakistan. It felt separate, antagonistic to the West. The Bengalis had a derogatory word, "BhooT", which means "ghosts", that they aimed at Biharis, who were a large proportion of the East Pakistan population. They respected but didn't like the Punjabis and the various other ethnic groups from West Pakistan. So East Pakistan was a problem for Pakistan. Pakistan did its best to try to retain some sovereignty and some affinity, but from a cultural standpoint it was totally impossible. Politically, they ran PIA (Pakistan International Airlines) flights back and forth from Karachi and Lahore to Dacca. They made a show of trying to retain the affiliation of the East but that was never going to work. It didn't take a lot of prompting in terms of world events or developments for the East wing to pursue its own goals.

Of course, the Indians were inveigling all the time against the East-West connection. In 1965-66 there was the first of the Indo-Pakistani Wars. In '70-71 East Pakistan with Indian support broke from West Pakistan. It was interesting because we had long been accused of tilting towards Pakistan in our relationship with India, Kissinger in particular. Then when East Pakistan was breaking away, our position was ambiguous. We had no leverage to force East Pakistan not to break away.

At any rate I arrived in Dacca in late ‘64 at a time of some sensitivity in our relations with Pakistan and East Pakistan, because of our changing relations with India. We were still a military ally of Pakistan. My East Pakistani contacts were defensive about their cultural achievements compared to the West; they were always referring to what life was like in Calcutta and West Bengal. When they would go on vacation often the elites would go to Calcutta, because they had family or contacts. I felt their kinship was far greater with Bengal, West and East than as citizens of Pakistan.

There was a significant Hindu population, maybe 10-15%, in East Pakistan. There was also a significant Bihari Muslim population. There were scant others; I think I knew the last Jew in East Pakistan, a guy named Cohen. There was a tiny Armenian community in Dacca, as there was a larger one in Calcutta; an old Armenian church where we used to go to make temple rubbings.

Our mission there was basically all about Pakistan's development and continuing U.S. relations with Pakistan. To assure that the U.S. diplomatic community didn’t side with either wing, newcomers were sent on an acculturation tour to the opposite wing; for two weeks I visited our posts in West Pakistan - Karachi, Lahore, up to Peshawar. The capital was in Karachi, the new capital in Islamabad outside Rawalpindi was just under construction.

The Americans in service in both wings took on somewhat the tincture, the attitude of the host wing so we were not terribly fond of the west wing. I enjoyed the visit and meeting Americans in the official community. The U.S. U-2 base outside of Peshawar interested me. The base was totally fenced off and isolated from contact with local people. The base was like an implant of American culture in it had bowling alleys, theaters, baseball fields, all the Americana displaced American military could desire. But the Air Force personnel were never allowed to go into the town without an escort, and all in groups. No - zero - fraternization with the people in Peshawar. I found Peshawar to be a dusty little district capital, sort of a throw-back to an earlier time.

Karachi was a big city, very much like the Indian major cities, and Lahore was charming and beautiful, Mogul architecture, the film industry, the university, I loved it.

I had good work to do in Dacca as assistant information officer in charge of exhibits, motion picture production, distribution, shows, and radio production. We did all the Bangla features for the Voice of America (VOA); we would do it in our studio, ship it off to the States, and they would do the news from DC. Bill Haratunian was then head of the

Near East-South Asia division of VOA and visited Dacca periodically to meet with me and our staff about what we were doing. Bill and I became good friends and our careers intersected a couple of times .

My work mainly centered on overseeing radio-TV-exhibits production and showings. One highlight was to supervise the Bengali voice-over for the feature-length documentary, JFK: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums. One of our lead radio voices, Kaffey Khan, narrated the film. He had a deep mellow voice, the equal in Bangla of Gregory Peck, who narrated the English version. The translation was challenging for me; we had experts help our staff and I reviewed the script as it evolved, mainly for tone; hardly for grammar.

Our post with a large library and offices, including studio facilities for media production were located not far from Dacca university. As in Calcutta the library faced a major thoroughfare with large display windows needing content. There was an active cultural program. We also had an active motion-picture program at the Center and at other venues in Dacca. There were five or six mobile units - these were Jeeps that were outfitted with film equipment. They would go out into the countryside showing films and distributing printed materials. These had traditionally been a mix of old technologies – kerosene-lit projectors – that could show film strips on development themes, including health and agriculture subjects. The mobile units were also equipped with 16mm Kalart projectors. We had a film library of 1500 little filmstrips and about 1000 16mm titles that we had made or were supplied by the Agency, many translated into Bangla.

Q: Was there more interest in developmental matters than in cultural matters?

SCHNEIDER: Marginally more than in Calcutta. Pakistan had an active radio system - Pakistani official radio, as did India. I helped Radio Pakistan in Dacca organize their television station and network. The Japanese won the contract to put in the equipment, but were less comfortable with personnel and training, in part because they didn't speak English. So we would fill that gap by working with the folks in Pakistani radio/TV. We provided our entire film library. The first year of broadcasts, they were very reliant on our documentary films , many translated into Bangla. At first Dacca TV relied on long, tiresome lectures and panel discussions. Gradually as they became more capable at production, they used less and less of our material. Still, our staff had wonderful relations with the arts, communications and educational communities in East Pakistan. We produced a labor newspaper, a student magazine, an intellectual magazine, and an all-purpose popular magazine – all in Bangla as well as English versions. Our production in Bangla for East Pakistan of printed material was quite thorough.

Q: This is all the benefit of PL-480?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, indeed. We would take boilerplate items from the U.S. which was produced by the publications folks or the wireless file staff in the U.S. Some of the content of the various publications was of general interest, some geared directly to the interests of the audiences in East Pakistan, some of it about America. Our staff translated

articles into East Pakistani Bangla. In other words USIS media presence in Dacca was impressive and impactful. I doubt such a presence would be acceptable today; it would have been seen as intrusive.

Q: In the university system there, did we have much of a representation?

SCHNEIDER: We did not have, at the time I was there, a full-time faculty member in Dacca University. We had people who passed through and spoke at Dacca University and other institutions in other cities. We had a branch post in Mymensingh and Chittagong administered by Pakistani staff .I'm guessing that it was either too expensive or less important to locate American faculty in the East Wing, even though we had PL480 rupees that could have been used for housekeeping expenses.

In Calcutta American Fulbrighters were helping build an American studies program at Jadavpur University, which was more open and had been built with PL-480 money as well. Dacca University was a little more remote, a little more difficult to get to. I didn't do as much there in the university program because I had other responsibilities.

We were located about a mile from the university, and we were right on the pathway for demonstrations. There were marches and demonstrations all the time in Dacca, so much so that our windows were repeatedly broken by demonstrators; Vietnam was starting to heat up so that was the excuse. One time about a week after the windows were broken yet again, the contractor for the glass windows installed the new windows, and we asked how he was able to respond so quickly. He jokingly said, "Well I knew this was going to happen again, so we stocked up on the glass." (Laughter) Clever man.

Dacca was just not Calcutta; it felt like a village of a million people – at that time no western movies, plays, music, restaurants—.The novel thing to do was to drive to the airport to witness the newly established weekly Thai Airways flight, a Caravelle jet, come and go from Bangkok.

Q: In later times when it became independent, the politics really turned vicious, you had these two widows—

SCHNEIDER: Decades later they're still fighting.

Q: —with various sections. Did you run across that local viciousness?

SCHNEIDER: No, and you know one of the troubling aspects of the course of events in Bangladesh these days, half a century later, is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. We didn't see that; if it was there, it was suppressed. The population of Bangladesh when I arrived was 42-45 million people in a country the size of North Carolina or Missouri, and even then you couldn't go anywhere in the country and not see people. Today it's 165 million people.

Q: And waters are rising—

SCHNEIDER: Yes, but they made progress in creating huge earthen berms on the Bengal coast. A major typhoon can still flood low-lying areas, but not so badly as in the past. Some 100-200,000 people would be killed or displaced in a major typhoon in the '50s and '60s. That's been mitigated, but not eliminated. With climate change, millions of people who live within 50 kilometers of the coast are threatened..

SCHNEIDER: The Bay of Bengal funnels all of the moisture toward the Himalayas, about 150 miles from the coast, the monsoon rains cascade down in the foothills of the Himalayas. It's responsible for huge rivers which are necessary for the cyclical crop development and farming throughout all of northern India and Pakistan and Burma. I'm not sure what they'll do if the rains are so sporadic, and so heavy at times that there's no capacity to absorb all the moisture gradually and give it off. I think climate distortions will really be felt in coastal India and Bangladesh.

Q: I forgot to ask, when you were in Calcutta, you were there when Kennedy was assassinated?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, that was horrendous. We were just getting back from a university program in Bhubaneswar, which was the capital of Orissa state. As we walked along a platform in Howrah Station, an incredibly congested place, the USIS driver, Mr Rose, met us and told us about the assassination?" He showed us the newspaper. We were stunned.

Gib Austin called Jane Prindeville, another JOT (junior officer trainee,) and me into his office and we talked about what we could do. We thought about just honoring Kennedy and possibly about any parallels between the assassination of Gandhi and the assassination of Kennedy but there wasn't much we could say. Of course there was much talk about violence in America. Of course, we wanted to say this was just the action of a lone killer; we didn't have any evidence that it wasn't, and we worried about having to deal with all the possible conspiracy theories. The assassination was so discouraging for Indians as well as Americans, because Kennedy represented youth, change, energy—. The consulate had a memorial book that people could sign, offering condolences to the U.S., and the line outside the building was long for several days.

Q: He really touched people. I think it was a lot of show but also it did represent the feeling that America had something, and something was lost.

SCHNEIDER: Right. We had come out of an era in the later ‘50s of some artificial tranquility at home and Kennedy with all his energy and youthful appeal charged up our nation and others. With Kennedy, the Cold War actually intensified—East-West competition grew after the Berlin Wall and the Cuban Missile crisis. JFK was actually more aggressive ideologically than Eisenhower. That youthfulness, energy, dynamism, his intellect impressed people around the world. Also many looked at their aging leadership, at their impacted problems, and they saw hope for a brighter future in Kennedy leadership. This image of course was lost with his death and our global

leadership deteriorated by the mid-late '60s. So I was in India at a great time, a little misleading in a way just as, later on, Glasnost would be misleading in future U.S.-Soviet/Russian relations, but those were heady times, really heady.

Q: Back to Bangladesh. Were there rumblings about West Pakistan taking a heavy hand in Bangladesh?

SCHNEIDER: Absolutely. They were offended by West Pakistan, by the heavy-handedness of the leadership, by the policies that were intended to continue to subsume East under West, by the unfairness of the distribution of wealth and resources, by the cultural disparities—all of them. Because the U.S. had largely supported the West Wing of Pakistan, the East Pakistanis were barely civil in many ways towards the West. They said the right things of course, but many weren't happy as Pakistanis.

They had one asset over West Bengal, 'Shonar Bangla'. That means the homeland of Bengali rural culture – golden Bengal. For all the delights and complexity of urban Bengal - Calcutta - their mythic identity was with the golden rice grain harvest, with the monsoon season in the east wing. The agricultural center of Bengal was really more east wing than west. The poem I recited in Calcutta at the poetry contest was about how a mother tells her son that he can't go out in the monsoon rain because it's going to be too cold and rainy for him, and he has to stay inside, lest he fall ill. It was one of the classic Tagore poems about his birthplace in East Bengal. So all Bengalis on both sides of the border shared this nostalgia, which created some affinity between east and west and between Hindus and Muslims. I haven't been there in many years, I don't know whether identities have shifted.

Q: You left Bangladesh when?

SCHNEIDER: 1966. I had extended for a year.
By February '66 it was time for me to complete the assignment in Dacca and head back to DC. I wanted a Washington assignment, but in those days USIA insisted on more years abroad, so I transferred to the Civil Service and was assigned to the Wireless File as a reporter.

Transfer to the Civil Service; Assignment to the Vietnam Working Group in USIA/IAF

Q: So that was early on?

SCHNEIDER: Yes.

Q: Did you find your USIA colleagues gave you the side look?

SCHNEIDER: No. Most were sympathetic but I imagined most of them were basically saying, "I think you're nuts, why would you want to be in Washington, not in the field?"

Q: You didn't fall for the lure of the Indian culture? It does absorb people.

SCHNEIDER: It sure does and with the language you'd think that I would really "go native," but there was some part of me that held myself in reserve, I guess. I loved it, and had a wonderful time. I really enjoyed learning the language and using it. It made me special in a way, different from other representatives. But no.

And yet what happened back in DC—and this is also something I hadn't expected—I found a big gap between what goes on in Washington and what goes on in the field. And I think I helped fill that gap and pave the way for more flexibility in the personnel process of USIA. I always had an affection for foreign service and how important it was for everyone in DC to understand the needs of the field posts. That was a role I sort of carved out for myself for several years.

After six months as a reporter in the Wireless File, a Foreign Service friend, Talbot Huey, recruited me to work in the East Asia-Pacific office of USIA where I stayed from 1966 to '70: two years full-time in the Vietnam Working Group, then creating and conducting regional development projects.

In the Working Group I was assigned to coordinate USIA media worldwide on Vietnam. I was the junior person and yet was assigned to be media coordinator. This was not an easy assignment. Most of my colleagues in DC and in the field didn't want to deal with it.

Q: Well they'd have to. This was THE issue, so like it or not—.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, like it or not, you're professional, you have to do your best.

The head of the Working Group, Sandy Marlow, was an experienced PAO who went out to Vietnam after the working group for a year or two. He was succeeded by a remarkable military officer on loan to the Agency, Otis Hays, who had been in psyops (psychological operations) in the military in World War II. He was a journalist for a while and was recruited back into the Army during the Korean war and completed his government career in the Working Group. Otis was really an academic in a way; his first love was to write history books based on his World War II experience, including one on the fate of American airmen downed in Siberia, and another on the North Asian presence of the U.S. that threatened a second front against Japan and protected Alaska and the West coast. Otis was one of the most decent people I have ever had the honor of working with --- thoughtful, modest, low-key, principled.

There was another military officer Jim Richardson who at that time was single, bachelor, sort of hale-fellow-well-met, and an FSO with East Asian experience, Ted Liu, also Patsy Redding who had been a Foreign Service Secretary and was a force of nature – and you guessed it, from Big D! Also Delores Brabham – who made everything every day work well.

Media coordination meant in particular working with the East Asia-Pacific branch of the Press and Publications Division (IPS). They published articles daily about myriad aspects of the situation in Vietnam, U.S. policies, regional perspectives, some human interest, and of course the debate in the U.S. Other regional elements of IPS drew on these for the posts in their regions. Ultimately either in DC or in the field the articles were published in various languages, some used for USIA magazines, some for placement with local media abroad. Or they served as backgrounders for field officers and contacts. We often sought articles from American or other private sources we felt would help the field posts explain the situation in Vietnam and Southeast Asia and U.S. involvement.

I also worked with the Motion Pictures Service (IMV) which actively engaged in dealing with the situation in Vietnam and U.S. engagement. In those days IMV oversaw regional film makers who rotated into Vietnam from different posts – Ed Hunter and Bill Bayers were among the best. The challenge was to put out something that was professionally competent, that was policy-consistent, that wouldn't offend people around the world who were attending to what we were saying. There was a kind of imperative for posts to do something supportive on Vietnam. But if you were in Latin America or Africa where nations stayed away from choosing sides in what was perceived to be an East-West conflict, bold stands on behalf of the U.S. policies in Vietnam offended important opinion leaders. The posts that weren't related to the issue were telling us, "It's alienating us from our audiences."

Fortunately the posts had operational flexibility in advancing U.S. policies. The field adapted to the extent they could to support broad U.S. interests while dealing with bilateral relationships. With a highly fraught issue such as Vietnam, intensely debated yet mandated on high in Washington, the posts varied greatly in the extent and the approaches they used to deal with the issue. My task was to coordinate media output that recognized the different approaches in the field and to make sure that media reporting from the U.S. and around the world was circulated to the foreign affairs community.

The Vietnam Roundup

In particular one understated but very important responsibility was to help publish the Vietnam Roundup. The officer who was in the job before me, Harry Manville, set it up with the East Asia office of IPS, the USIA Press and Publication Service. Five days a week we put out a compilation of articles from American and international media. This grew and grew to 12 - 16 pages a day of clips distributed to several thousand readers—we were clipping and pasting together what the world press was saying about Vietnam. And it was on LBJ's desk every morning. American media reps sought it out. The selection of articles was open and honest, showing the varied of standpoints of who perceived what on the American engagement in Vietnam and the situation there. As you know, every agency has its clip service but it's largely kept to itself. This one was widely circulated in Washington. Probably the most impressive aspect, we included the full range of editorial cartoons.

Talk about swimming upstream. My family, friends, colleagues from Washington were all out there demonstrating against Vietnam, so I was on the wrong side of the issue from their standpoint - but so were so many of our colleagues. In later years in classes I've taught I always brought up this experience as an instance where one should consciously make decisions about whether you stay in the service or you leave because you can't agree with certain policies or abide by your involvement. I felt a larger concern for staying with USIA for the long term and a responsibility to my friends and colleagues who were stationed in Vietnam.

Overall, the two years working on Vietnam was an unhappy time for me.

Q: When you take the person's shilling, you have an obligation.

SCHNEIDER: I did. I didn't feel good about the issues, but I did my best.

Q: Was there much dispute within your professional group over what was happening?

SCHNEIDER: Not really. Otis had long experience dating back to World War II and was quietly upset about the situation in Vietnam. Jim Richardson who was more gung ho nevertheless knew the challenges. Ted Liu and I, others in the bureau, knew this was not a winning cause. By nature, by training, by self-selection I think most people in USIA weren't hawkish. That wasn't a role we played anyway. There were varied points of view overall about American politics; some right of center, but mainly centrist, slightly left of center when we talked politics.

I may be jumping ahead but I spent about a month, five weeks in Vietnam on TDY (temporary duty) the month before the Tet Offensive. I went out in November/December, traveled around with Barry Zorthian, the minister-counselor for public affairs at JUSPAO. Then I spent a week up in Na Tranh, where we had a post in tea plantation country, with Frank Starbuck.

Q: How did the Tet Offensive hit you?

SCHNEIDER: I wasn't surprised. I'd been reading the classified clips. We had a daily board of clips, secret, occasional top secret, confidential cables from the field of what was going on. When I went to Saigon and got the mandatory briefing from a light colonel on the situation in Vietnam, I couldn't believe what he was saying because all the reporting I had read was contradictory. The military and political situation on the ground were really worrisome There were hints of some big push by the VC (Viet Cong).

Unfortunately in the immediate aftermath we weren't able to show the Tet Offensive had actually been a military failure; the VC lost a lot of personnel. But in terms of propaganda and public affairs, it was a big win for them. It was an important turning point in American thinking.

I know there are still people today who argue if we'd only hung on and hadn't had the media negatively influencing American opinion, we would have won the war. But I don't think that's the case. We bombed the hell out of North Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and that deeply hurt did not fundamentally change the will of their political leadership, their combatants and their population to fight the war. They just had another colonial enemy to fight. There's so much more to say, but I drew a simple—maybe simplistic—conclusion that as the war proceeded we took over—personnel, weapons, technology, organization —. But we couldn't substitute for the ARVN or the government. All those resources poured into Vietnam with *our* political/policy deadlines—not theirs—and it just intensified the corruption.

Q: You were with this working group for how long?

SCHNEIDER: Two years, and then two more years in the bureau, all-told, 1966-70. In '69 - '70 I was a regional special projects officer. For a while, I doubled up being on the working group in the morning and doing special projects in the afternoon. A little bit of context - the Area Office Director, Dan Oleksiw, was instructed by Leonard Marks to rework our presence in Vietnam, meaning to oversee the end of JUSPAO and return to a traditional USIA operation. Marks came back from meeting with LBJ at some point, must have been early1968, and instructed Dan to change our presence back to a traditional USIA program in Vietnam. This was after four years, '64 to '68, of build-up of this massive presence of the interagency, Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office. It was quite an important experiment in inter-agency coordination and deserves more careful analysis, even now, as we engage in long drawn-out conflicts.

JUSPAO had some 130 people doing everything from press relations and the daily media briefings – the famous "Five O'Clock Follies" led by Barry Zorthian, to large-scale media output for use in-country and regionally, to exchanges and cultural relations, to some media support for psychological operations. There was a large unit that analyzed Vietnamese public opinion and handled messaging and media aimed at the VC and North Vietnamese. Some officers worked on helping the South Vietnamese build physical communications capacity and on training and counseling the leadership in communications functions of the government of Vietnam. as well as across the South. And a number of USIA officers served on integrated field ops teams throughout the country.

We had a huge presence and budget and faced complex challenges, taking on often thankless tasks. And the South Vietnamese didn't have the political will at the top. They were corrupt, inept, and what separated them from the North was the lack of leadership will and ability to organize. That's a hard truth. Time is another factor; we didn't have the time. The Brits had 11 years in Malaysia with a core of colonial representatives who had family histories in Malaysia, who were of Malaysia as much as Britain, to work out the relationships with the rival indigenous groups in Malaysia so Malaysia could survive. The idea that counterinsurgency British-style was going to win in Vietnam was based on premises that we couldn't duplicate.

Q: They brought General Robert Komer, who'd been running this counterinsurgency thing, over to Vietnam but this was different.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, on my TDY to Vietnam in late ’67 I rode on Amb. Bunker’s plane and Komer was on that flight. He cut quite a figure, but I can’t say he made a decisive difference in rallying rural support. My information was at best second-hand, but my readings in those years and what little I saw on the ground led me to believe we wouldn’t win the counterinsurgency battle.

Q: We run across this in the Middle East now.

SCHNEIDER: Sure, of course. Not to go on about it, but the idea that we can invade, supplant the Saddam Hussein regime, then easily install a new and effective regime that can resolve the intense Sunni/Shi’a conflict etc. is ludicrous.. Colin Powell, who had experience in the field in Vietnam, was trying to convince the president not to go there. We didn't learn the fundamentals. We learned a lot of lessons, there are a lot of post-operation reports about Vietnam by the military, yet very few at State and none that I know of at USIA.

Q: You stayed with Vietnam until when?

SCHNEIDER: 1968. After the Tet Offensive, Dan was sent out to Saigon to tell Barry Zorthian about reverting to a traditional USIA program. Barry fought it but he was out of there in a year or so and the post was gradually reduced in scope and size to a traditional USIA post conducting more traditional activities.

Even though “Vietnamization” meant turning the war fighting over to the ARVN and Government of Vietnam. Nixon significantly intensified bombing North Vietnam and the Cambodia/Laos border areas with Vietnam to try to halt or slow their supply lines and put enough pressure on them to back off and go to the negotiating table. And they persevered until '73, wasn't it, until the Paris negotiations and talks. So you might say this approach brought the warring parties to the table, but not without great cost and a large number of lost lives. One can debate whether that's a good idea or not. I don't think it's settled at all, what worked and didn't work in the Nixon era.

Q: I was consul-general in Saigon in 1969-70. I was just doing my job, not sitting on the seats of the high and mighty, just running the consulate. Looking back on it, it's easy to say "I was opposed to it, it didn't work" and all, but I have a feeling that if we hadn't been there—and we could have done it better—Indonesia probably would've gone, Sukarno was moving in that direction, and I think this—. We were stopping something, it could have been done with a lot less people and all—.

SCHNEIDER: I grant you that. In fact, I think the same thing of what's going on in Iraq today. I made a comment to my students a few weeks ago and it brought guffaws from the class. I said, "You know, maybe in 50 or 100 years people will look back on our invasion and occupation of Iraq and say, 'Well, they bumbled into it but the ouster of

Saddam and the ensuing political mess started the democratization process in the Middle East.'"

Q: It's quite possible. The thing is up for grabs. The other guys, the fundamentalists, aren't doing a very good job.

SCHNEIDER: In the mid- '60s, Sukarno was about to meet his end. I'm not sure if we had not been in Vietnam—let's see, his downfall was in 1964-65 wasn't it?

Q: Yes, 1965.

SCHNEIDER: That was working, maybe we were helping it, but the Indonesian military was working up a head of steam to supplant him. Our worst times were in 1968 through '73. Who knows? You can't really go back in history, but yes there might have been that sense of compelling movement of Communist forces, the Domino Theory—.

Q: The Domino Theory, discredited because people say it's discredited, I'm not sure.

SCHNEIDER: I felt we should put our chips on Thailand and Indonesia, to me they were important. They were where we should have engaged more, which we had in Thailand. I visited Thailand in 1967; Jack O'Brien who later became Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia/Pacific was our PAO. I met him and sat in on staff meetings—. The Thai had a coherent government and sense of national purpose which hadn't existed in South Vietnam.

Q: Sukarno was a dictator who was moving, according to people I've talked to who served there, moving to become a counterpoint to China on his own terms.

SCHNEIDER: I felt we over-emphasized the idea of a Communist wave in East Asia. The neighboring states had a long history of rivalries and conflicts and they all worried about Chinese domination.

Q: As soon as the war is over in Vietnam, the Vietnamese and Chinese are at each other's throats.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. And as I recall the Vietnam Working Group closed down around 1969 or ‘70 as JUSPAO was phased out.

Vietnam Vietnam

One internal battle in USIA I recall I was involved in was a feature-length film “Vietnam Vietnam.” In 1969, Bruce Herschensohn, was appointed Assistant Director for Motion Pictures and Television for USIA. He was an award-winning documentary filmmaker who worked with a major production company, Charles Guggenheim Productions, in St. Louis, and made some of the best documentaries for USIA in the early ‘60s. Bruce was as conservative as Frank Shakespeare, maybe more libertarian.

The films that USIA had made on Vietnam attempted to deal with humanitarian aspects of the war in Vietnam. A very talented author/filmmaker, Bill Bayer, produced a film, "Night of the Dragons," that showed the Tet Offensive in early 1968 and its impact on Vietnamese people celebrating Tet. Bill was one of several excellent filmmakers who went out to Vietnam or were stationed there (we had regional filmmakers as well) to produce video clips and documentaries on aspects of the conflict in Vietnam.

Herschensohn wanted to do a feature-length film on Vietnam. He had written and directed the feature-length film, *John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums* in 1964 that was a winner overseas and was authorized by Congress to be shown in the U.S.

Q: The one on the Kennedy assassination—.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. Gregory Peck was the narrator. It made Kennedy not just heroic but larger than life.

Q: Yes, normally USIA's not allowed to distribute films in the United States to avoid propaganda, and this was known as the one exception. Beautiful film.

SCHNEIDER: It was very well done. By the way, over time through FOIA requests a number of USIA motion pictures have been made available via YouTube.

Bruce sent out John Ford – a giant among Hollywood directors – to Vietnam. After several months he reportedly shot 50,000 or 70,000 feet of 35mm raw footage, but it didn't amount to a film. Bruce got a hold of John Ford's footage and all of the footage shot by Bill Bayer and Ed Hunter and other USIA cinematographers. I heard this amounted to a couple hundred thousand feet - that's a lot of footage - to produce a feature-length documentary on Vietnam, aptly titled "Vietnam Vietnam." But he apparently had no script, nor treatment, not at least to share with us. I, being the media coordinator for Vietnam in the East Asia bureau, asked to see a treatment and script. The standing process was that the producer of the film always shares the treatment and the script in the "roughcut" stage of production with relevant Area Bureau policy people, to see whether it would work for the field as well as convey the messages that Washington wanted. But not "Vietnam Vietnam".

I kept complaining about the lack of transparency and finally Dan Oleksiw took Bruce and me out to lunch, to a restaurant across 19th street from the Palm, and we argued for about an hour with no agreement. Bruce wasn't going to share the video and that was that. Finally Dan called a halt to it and we went our separate ways.

Bruce finally completed the film in late '71 or early '72. Frank Shakespeare viewed it and decided just to send one copy to the posts for the record and each post's decision as to whether and how to use it, without broad distribution. I was surprised at this outcome.

Years later Nick Cull (author of *The Cold War and U.S. Information Agency*) told me the video was available to the public online. The film was divided into two parts: the first half dealt with the conflict in Vietnam and tried to show the pain and suffering inflicted on people in the South by the North, and featured U.S. military assistance. The second half described the opposition to the war and the national debate in the U.S. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNxmZDNy__g)

I thought the film was more circumspect and less polemical than I had expected. Charlton Heston narrated a somewhat convoluted story. There were powerful images but these came after years of similar images broadcast daily here and abroad. The video's history was ambiguous and flawed. It seemed to lack conviction. He showed support from prominent American leaders from Ike to Nixon and the case against the war by leading opponents, but I couldn't see where he was going with the narrative. Much of the film was dedicated to the intense debate here at home, including the major anti-Vietnam demonstrations. The film insinuated that the American public actually approved our purpose and engagement.

When Frank Shakespeare departed, he was replaced by James Keogh, former editor of Time magazine who'd grown up in the Time family, had all that corporate experience, and was a good executive. Keogh brought in the legal counsel from USIA, Gene Kopp, to be his deputy. They were a pretty effective team. Keogh was moderate, right-of-center and Gene a little more conservative, both decent people who listened to professional advice. Keogh was very circumspect while Gene was outgoing, with a hearty sense of humor and strong commitment to the career corps and our work. Gene later returned as Deputy under Bruce Gelb.

Q: How did you feel as a Civil Service officer in this? Did you feel threatened? You were in the middle of a lot of disputes.

SCHNEIDER: I didn't feel threatened; I wasn't in the center of USIA policy. In the '60s and especially when I was in the Vietnam Working Group, I felt badly about the course of the war, all the loss of life, suffering and destruction and our inability to reverse the chaos. I thought we were mistaken to have intervened even though the VC and North Vietnamese were brutal. But I never felt any political threat .

Q: This is probably a good place to stop.

Regional Development Projects Officer in IAF

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Q: Today is December the 10th, 2015, with Mike Schneider. Mike, we left off, you were at the end of your discussion of being with the Vietnam Working Group but you wanted to talk a little more about East Asia before we move on?

SCHNEIDER: Vietnam had overwhelmed the resources and the focus of the agency and I think the whole foreign affairs community. Yet, we knew there were other important issues in the region. Dan Oleksiw, the area director -- formally titled Assistant Director for East Asian Pacific Affairs in USIA, akin to a State Department regional bureau Assistant Secretary -- asked me to divide my time between the Vietnam Working Group and regional projects. From around early '69 through the fall of 1970 I was full-time regional projects officer.

Q. What did it involve?

SCHNEIDER: This meant planning and helping carry out several projects which Dave Hitchcock, the policy officer and I developed. Consulting with the posts, we created several projects that helped the posts respond to special needs.

Essentially each project centered on a regional conference and varied follow-up activities. One was on the role of educational television in development in the Philippines. We partnered with Ateneo de Manila University, the Jesuit-run university, and Father Leo Larkin. A second event was on the "City as a Center for Change in Asia", a natural for Hong Kong. Attendees came from several nations. There was a third project on population growth and support for communication efforts on behalf of public health activities with the Colombo Plan.

We developed plans with the field, found speakers and relevant media resources, defined the subject matter of the conference in consultation with the missions, and then I went out to help organize the conferences. I spent a couple of weeks in the Philippines, and then in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand, working on the Hong Kong conference. I didn't go to Colombo, just communicated back-and-forth. The conferences were very useful; they responded to what the field felt was important and represented a different way of looking at the U.S. relationships with Asia. Each began a longer-term effort by the field, integrating in-person communication, information distribution, international visitor activities and led to longer-term exchanges and organizational ties.

Q: Say television in the Philippines - what was the state of it? Was this "high Marcos?" Was this being used as an instrument or what?

SCHNEIDER: It was very rudimentary; television was just coming up in Asia, in different countries. Nations with strong private sector influence over the economy led the way, while nations such as India with large public sector dominance of telecoms lagged because the government through the PTT controlled communications for decades. In the Philippines, we were dealing with a niche element of broadcasting, the role of television in educational development. There happened to be a very active program at Ateneo de Manila University in educational development, and they were interested in TV, so I found specialists whom we could bring out to participate in that conference.

Similarly, in the urban context – Asia had more than its share of great metropolitan areas that were beginning to be magnetic centers of commerce and creativity and also

explosive population growth and pressures on basic services. They were undergoing visibly major changes as the new high-rise density apartment complexes replaced traditional buildings. You could see in Hong Kong and Singapore just remnants of older, colonial times.

Policy and Politics in the Shakespeare Leadership

Q: Did you have the feeling that, "This is how we'll sell this, get through these hardnosed people, we're getting a revolution underway but we're not announcing it, they don't know what's happening?"

SCHNEIDER: As I recall, our reaction was less complex – try our best to cope with the broad criticisms of US involvement in Vietnam around the world and to deal with other challenges in their own terms. Vietnam and the war remained a significant priority nationally and for some posts, but there were other issues out there.

When Frank Shakespeare became Director of USIA in '69 he emphasized the battle against world communism, but I don't recall that he particularly pushed the Vietnam issue, except to frame it in the world struggle of two ideologies that he talked about all the time. It seemed almost like a religious matter to him.

For example, he made a big distinction between talking about Russia and the Soviet Union, correcting people who used Russia as a synonym for the USSR. There was some re-education involved also, such as sending groups of senior PAOs on briefing tours of the USSR and its neighbors to educate them about communism.

One time in which his ideology was insulting to the professional corps stands out. After he visited South Africa, Shakespeare invited Agency officers to a debrief on his visit. Probably more than 100 people attended, up in room 1100 – 1776 Pa. Ave. He had with him John Reinhardt who was African-American and was the Assistant Director for Africa and another African American PAO and Ambassador, Beverley Carter.

Q: He was involved in a kidnapping or something, in settling the problem.

SCHNEIDER: These were very capable leaders at the top of their game. And Shakespeare had them at the podium with him. He proceeded to present his findings after his trip to South Africa. This was at a point of time where opposition to apartheid was bubbling up as well as opposition to U.S. looking the other way. Shakespeare's point was "The glass is half full." He gave an hour long talk with no notes, no text, very articulate, and laid out his findings and point of view. This is 1970, maybe 1971.

He turned to Bev Carter who very diplomatically said something but didn't directly contradict him. Then he turned to John Reinhardt, who said, "Well Mr. Director, I'm afraid I have to disagree with you, I can't support your point of view." John didn't go much further than that but didn't need to. The difference was absolutely stark.

Back to your question, there was no organized conniving to do an end run, and officers individually sought to find common ground or find areas of agreement. For example, in response to Shakespeare's concern about the mix of materials in our libraries abroad, I think most career officers agreed that the libraries lacked important books and magazines with a conservative point of view.

Shakespeare promoted his more intense anti-communist views but stopped short of imposing his views on USIA procedures after allegations of a "prohibited list" surfaced. Mel Elfin, the Washington Bureau Chief of Newsweek, (its Washington bureau was housed in 1750 Pa. Ave) ran a story about USIA banning liberal books in our libraries abroad and speakers we sent abroad. The story reminded some of the book-burning tactics of Joe McCarthy and his notorious staffers, Roy Cohn and David Schine, who visited USIS libraries in the early 50s and literally pulled books from the shelves.

Shakespeare didn't want such notoriety and turned to Hal Schneidman who was then Assistant Director for Information Centers Services to develop a policy for the selection of books and magazines and speakers for USIA centers and programs abroad. Hal came up with a politically brilliant *and* principled decision that the selection of reading materials and speakers would be the responsibility of USIS posts based on their judgment of needs and interests in bilateral relations and the availability of a broad spectrum of materials locally. This put the onus on the PAOs, certainly spreading the responsibility broadly and abroad, not to be manipulated by what was in current vogue or politically correct in any Administration in the U.S. or from the Congress.

Q: You were all in the same profession.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, even though there were differences in our worldviews in the Shakespeare years. It was really fascinating to see all this play out, even in the cultural domain, not just in the realm of policy or what announcements we put out or how USIA projected itself. We were able in Washington to protect the ability of the field to do what it thought was best in each political or cultural context; there was no "You must say or do this despite the fact it will lead to your rejection in important circles in various nations abroad."

Young Officers' Policy Panel and Dissent in USIA

Domestic American opposition to the war was very high by '68 but as I remember intensified even more at the outset of the Nixon Administration. I was involved with a young officer's policy panel in '69 that Frank Shakespeare established. The State Department had set up a formal dissent channel in the late '60s, probably '67-68. I Remember Charlie Bray and Lannon Walker and a small group of young State FSOs pushing for this and for broad reforms in the Department.

Q: I'm not too familiar, I was out in the field not dealing with any particular policy.

SCHNEIDER: The dissent channel was paralleled in USIA by the creation of a young officer's policy panel. I think it was Frank Shakespeare's way of seeking fresh ideas from younger personnel and also providing a channel for dissent. We did some good actually. For example we were able to cashier a very expensive management study by the Arthur D. Little company, a management consulting firm in Cambridge. Barry Fulton and Paul Blackburn wrote a cogent critique of the Study plan and early results that led to the cancellation of the $300,000 project. Adjusted for inflation wouldn't it cost about $3 million today? The study interviewers never seemed to understand our work and we were able to convince the leadership not to buy into it further.

During the Mobilization on Washington which brought so many protesters to DC, Shakespeare called me into his office and asked me whether I thought there was a revolt about to occur among young people within the agency. I said I didn't think so. There were professional people in USIA "…. of all sizes and shapes with varied views on Vietnam." I didn't go much further than that however and regret not having said more.

Q: How did you treat the opposition to the war? Not just in Vietnam, but around - this was the cause of the left at that time.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, overseas opposition to the war was fierce, particularly in Europe and some nations in the non-aligned movement. There wasn't a lot USIA could do to convince opinion leaders and critics on the left abroad, and each of our posts dealt with criticism in different ways. Beyond representing or advocating U.S. policy on Vietnam, the field posts tried to find some areas of common concern with host nation publics, reminding our audiences of other shared interests.

Thinking about U.S. policy in Southeast Asia in those years, we didn't understand the diversity of views within the Communist world nor the deepening rivalry between the Soviet Union and China.

We only learned about our limitations the hard way in Vietnam and more recently in Iraq and in Afghanistan. The dilemma of our world leadership strikes me as like the old adage about two sides of the same coin: One side contained the ambition, the idealism, the confidence, the can-do spirit, the pragmatism of a kind that would allow us to become the leader of the world in so many sectors, to make incredible contributions to the rest of the world. The opposite side of that coin are naivete about our ability to make changes abroad and the real human and financial costs of engagement.

Q: One of the things I've noticed as I've done these oral histories, I often ask a person, "OK you were ambassador to so-and-so and you were pushing country X to free political prisoners and human rights and all; what were the other embassies of other countries doing?" And the answer is usually "Nothing." We're usually in the forefront or the only power trying to do something. I can't help feeling it would be quite a different world today if the United States wasn't there.

SCHNEIDER: It would be indeed.

Q: I belong to this 'sense of mission' school, with limitations.

SCHNEIDER: It's interesting that you raise this, because last night for my graduate class on statecraft Robert Daly, the director of the Kissinger Institute, talked to the students about China and the Chinese world view, the leadership's sense of the role of China and themselves. We talked about a lot of things, but among the topics that he raised was China's sense of virtue. He translated the concept from Chinese to English, but translations don't really give you the full meaning. For China, the Middle Kingdom was not just being in the center of the world but being between the natural world and the higher order of things; it was China's version of exceptionalism. China's view of their role was to be the virtuous state in all the connotations of the word.

I chimed in as he was describing this and said The United States has long had its own theology of where we fit in the world, and it's Manifest Destiny, the missionary impulse that flourished in the late 19th century to bring Christianity and commerce to the poorer areas of the world and, at least until the late 19th century avoid Europe's entanglements, but to be prepared to enlighten them as well at some point. As we became a creditor nation we began to explore the uses of economic and military power globally.

Q: Your time in dealing with India; Indians and Americans in policy positions do tend to preach to each other without really listening to the other side.

SCHNEIDER: The "two greatest democracies" have talked right by each other. Partly out of self-interest that each side masks to itself, not just to the rest of the world. I was always impressed by the Indian style of covering gut interests with layers of sophisticated culture just as the U.S. justified hard interests with idealistic statements about democracy.

Academic Training, Transfer to USIA Information Center Service

That period rounded out a time for me in the East Asia and the Pacific Area Office in USIA, and in 1970 the Agency—this was Dan Oleksiw's doing—selected me to go for university training, something I wanted to do. Dan was supportive. It was unusual for me as a Civil Service officer at that time to have university training but a wonderful opportunity to really make some headway on courses I was taking towards a doctorate.

Q: You were taking them where?

SCHNEIDER: At American University.

Q: What was your field?

SCHNEIDER: It was a hybrid called International Studies – partly classic IR and partly political science. I was interested in international decision-making and really my focus became decision-making from the standpoint of political science or international relations theory. I wrote my dissertation on the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961. The topic greatly

interested me and would help me prepare for further work in USIA Washington on policy matters. That was a role I could see myself playing and there were opportunities in the policy shop of USIA, more so than in the regional bureaus. Somewhat analogous to going from EAP (Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs at State) to S/P (Policy Planning Staff) at State.

Q: As a retired Foreign Service officer, talking about policy and particularly having done these oral histories, there are policies but these quickly get lost by the wayside in dealing with the here and now. George Kennan went through this. You develop a nice policy and there's a coup somewhere and it's all thrown to hell. How did you find this problem?

SCHNEIDER: Policy in USIA terms was a little different from policy in the Department. We didn't have to worry so much about what they call now the interagency -- the process of making national security policy and the relevant agencies in the U.S. government. Basically policy for us meant translating national security or foreign policy into communication terms. It was how you support and implement policy rather than how you define policy.

I had a special interest that went beyond that role of policy at USIA, because I really thought that U.S. policy lacked proper attention to the public dimension abroad. It was too focused on the government that we were dealing with, the nation-state as an entity, and on the immediate circle of elites around the government. It missed the dynamic of broader circles of influence beyond the core of decision-making in another country. These were and would be increasingly important. Time has certainly borne this out. So my particular interest was in not only articulating policy and helping our field posts articulate policy, but helping them report back to Washington on the effects - on what works, what doesn't work, what people in other countries thought -- those who were beyond the political elites and the leaders of the country that the political officer or the pol-mil officer or the econ officer in the embassy was talking about. These outer circles included media, academics, business, labor, cultural and religious leaders who happened to be influential.

Dissertation on the 1961 Berlin Wall Crisis

Q: With your academic training, had the digital explosion happened? There was an awful lot of bean-counting of votes in political science which I felt was wrong, sort of a false path to take. I mean, it had its points. Was it happening, did you find it useful?

SCHNEIDER: No, the digital explosion was yet to come, though we did learn the basics of computer applications in social science research and SPSS, the computerized social science tool.

The academic work I did was extremely useful for me. I was fortunate, because the person whom I chose to be chair of my committee was a former USIA officer. Glynn Wood, who completed his Ph.D. at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Glynn had a social science background and excellent field experience. He did his doctoral work

on Nehru in India. He had been PAO in Bangalore before I arrived. We were sympatico and shared interests in political leadership. The other faculty on my committee were Prof. Matt Bonham who later became the head of the IR (International Relations) program at Syracuse, which is why I ended up at Syracuse after I retired. And Professor Hamid Mowlana, Persian-American specialist in communications and politics.

Studying at American University added to the insights and experience I gained overseas. It was a very harmonious process. I chose the dissertation to give me some background and depth in policy issue areas that helped me prepare for a range of policy work at USIA and State.

My dissertation dealt with the first year of the Kennedy Administration and the Berlin Wall Crisis. My research included extensive visits in ’74 and ‘75 to the Kennedy Library, then housed at a GSA building in Waltham Massachusetts, and a number of interviews of former officials.

GSA staff used my research requests to open a number of file folders in the Presidential and National Security files related to the first year of the Kennedy Administration. We spent two weeks - my summer vacation - at my college roommate's house in Marblehead while he and family vacationed in Maine. My wife Mical and our very young son David stayed there while I daily drove over to Waltham to do my research.

It was possible to interview pretty much everyone who was senior in the Kennedy Administration relevant to both Vietnam and Berlin in 1961, except Robert McNamara - he was the only one who refused an interview request. McGeorge Bundy said he'd give me 20 minutes and we ended it at 40. I had a long interview with the Air Force general who was in charge of the Bay of Pigs operation. Also the CIA station chief in Berlin during the ’61 crisis. With family approval, I was able to read the long oral history about the Bay of Pigs that was conducted with Richard Bissell, the former Deputy Director of the CIA. Foy Kohler, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, and his deputy met with me in Coral Gables, Florida.

The many interviews also led to visits to Savannah to interview former Assistant Secretary of State, Walter Dowling, and to Athens, Georgia to interview Dean Rusk. In '75 I was in England on TDY for about six weeks and went over to Bonn to meet with Amb. Martin Hillenbrand who was then U.S. Ambassador to Germany and had served in State/EUR as the Germany desk officer in ’61. I also met with Foy Kohler and his deputy in Coral Gables. These occasions were a real treat and gave me insights that documents couldn’t.

Q: It's interesting. I've interviewed a number of people dealing with Berlin, and one thing I got was - can't remember who - talking about how nervous they were when the Kennedy Administration came in, because they were saying "Maybe we can talk to the Soviets, make a deal" and forge this compact with the Soviets; you only lower the back flap of your truck six inches, do this... There were a lot of things, the Soviets were continually trying to slice at this. The Kennedy Administration came in, saying "Well these things

don't matter, we can talk to these people;" one doesn't think of the Kennedy Administration as being a particularly weak one, but the people in Berlin in the early stages were very nervous about this.

SCHNEIDER: They had every right to be nervous because I don't think they knew where Kennedy came off, nor did Kennedy at the outset have a clear and firm understanding of how to deal with the Soviets. Exactly as you said, on one hand he was tough-minded, on the other hand he had run on a campaign of saying "The Republicans give us a choice of capitulation or nuclear holocaust." He raised the missile gap issue but should have known there wasn't really a missile gap.

In the run up to the Bay of Pigs fiasco Kennedy, despite doubts, acquiesced to Alan Dulles and Richard Bissell and a plan put in motion in 1957 that turned out to be kind of a catalogue of everything that could go wrong. It escalated from a very small effort to land some American-trained guerrilla warriors in the Sierra Madres mountains, to a major invasion by Cuban expats trained by the U.S. with our air support if needed. The mistaken assumption was that the Cuban people were so dissatisfied they would rise up. Meanwhile, there was a tug of war among the Army and the Air Force and the CIA over who would control the project. They misunderstood and overestimated the capacity or the interest of the Cuban people to revolt.

Kennedy's first meeting with Khrushchev on June 4, 1961 also turned out terribly and I think had implications for Khrushchev's decision to put missiles in Cuba. Kennedy thought he could go and reason with Khrushchev, but Khrushchev seriously bullied him. This is validated by an interview with James Reston right after Kennedy walked out of the meeting with Khrushchev. Kennedy looked ashen; he sat down with Reston and he leveled on the fact that Khrushchev was "one tough cookie" and he wasn't going to be listening to reason.

Q: Also Khrushchev came away with the impression that Kennedy was one soft cookie...

SCHNEIDER: Exactly. Inexperienced, green, shallow...

Q: ... and so he could get away with this missile thing. It was really, we nearly came to a nuclear holocaust over the misunderstanding, this one meeting.

SCHNEIDER: We seemed to be inches away from a conflict over the Soviet missiles in Cuba. And to his credit, JFK and Robert Kennedy ignored the second letter and just relied on a response to the first. Otherwise we would have been in deep trouble. It was very un-Soviet of Khrushchev, too; people who know Soviet decision-making say the Soviet military were worried about his decision to put the missiles into Cuba. You recall how he acted at the UN General Assembly after the Soviets shot down Gary Powers – the bombastic speech and banging the shoe, all that, it was characteristically heavy-handed theater. I'm not sure why Kennedy truly thought he could reason with him, at least at the outset of their relation.

My dissertation touched on these problems early in the Kennedy Administration as lead-ins to the Berlin Wall crisis. I examined whether decision-makers make decisions in terms of their world-view—their ideology, their concept of the role of their country in the world. Or whether their policy decisions followed from their perception of the requirements of their formal role—you would expect a secretary of Defense to look for a military solution; or a Secretary of State to call for diplomacy and negotiated solutions and so on.

Q: What happened? How did you meld this into what you were looking at?

SCHNEIDER: I felt I needed policy expertise that would allow me to talk about some issues other than South or East Asia. Since the opportunities were really closed to me for staying in the East Asia area office, I thought about policy work at USIA or the State Department.

Coincidentally, after the year of academic training, the deputy and assistant director at USIA for East Asia (soon to become USIA Director), John Reinhardt and his deputy Hal Schneidman, asked me to go over to what was called the Information Center Service. USIA was structured around regional bureaus parallel to State, central to decision-making at USIA as well as the Agency policy office and "functional" bureaus—you might say in State Department terms—but divided by media. There was a Press and Publication Service, an Information Center Service which was a mix of cultural affairs, libraries, English teaching, international exhibits, book programs, things you would think of as culturally related; and there was the Motion Picture and Television Service. Then there was the Voice of America, separate, quasi-independent broadcasting.

1969 - 1972 Shakespeare Leadership of USIA

Q: I have a little book story. I was in Yugoslavia in Tito times. One day a local employee, working for the consular section, said "Go to the Jugoslovenska Knjiga," which means "Yugoslav book store", and look under the cultural side. So I went over there, and there under culture was Animal Farm by George Orwell (laughter). Apparently, there were a lot of potential farmers there!

SCHNEIDER: The Poles and the Czechs were especially good and clever at covering protests in humor and satire and in other ways that the Communist bureaucrats really couldn't quite touch. We always took advantage of opportunities. The Voice of America broadcasts of jazz were fundamental. We also sent out several exhibitions on themes the East couldn't avoid but that were signs of the East-West disparity. One of the best for us was dealing with theater, including of course protest theater, including small troupes of performing artists—washing a lot of American society's dirty laundry through theater. People would be amazed at the kinds of social and political criticism that would be revealed through theatrical performances. The messages were quite clear: "Democratic change is possible." And "We're free enough to even show our shortcomings to you ." Of course, it was instrumental to those in the intelligentsia in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to see how they might proceed under very stressful conditions.

Q: I remember seeing a presentation of La Mama, which was a protest group in New York, in Yugoslavia.

Reorganization of the Information Center Service

SCHNEIDER: ICS was undergoing a transition. Shakespeare's deputy was Henry Loomis, an accomplished business man and very wealthy, from a patrician family. He had been Voice of America director in the Eisenhower years and he was carried on through the Kennedy years and then came back in to be Shakespeare's deputy. He was a management person.

Shakespeare and Loomis bought into a very ambitious plan of Hal Schneidman to create integrated program support for the field that gave the posts more flexible support on the one hand and also pioneered a few special programs on issues or themes that were important to Washington. I think Hal might have drawn on approaches, then called "packaged programming" that Alan Carter, who was Near East/South Asia Area Director created.

In Hal's view the Information Center Service would become a full-service field program support organization. Schneidman came up with a methodology for supporting our field posts that melded speakers and print and audio-visual media including innovative low-cost video productions. He sought to make our Exhibits program more flexible and re-built relations with the private sector in several key areas.

Hal renewed and built longstanding cooperative relations with U.S. private sector organizations in publishing, English teaching and American Studies programs that had been created in the '50s but languished in the '60s. He strengthened ties with American higher education and communication and re-created an advisory committee of book, newspaper and magazine publishers. The American Library Association, the Association of American Publishers and Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language worked closely with ICS staff.

Hal was especially adept at dealing with the arts community. He created a relationship with the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Arts Museum) and the National Portrait Gallery. For years, USIA had been involved reluctantly or haphazardly in supporting fine arts exhibits around the world, never really funded very well. Congress was frequently critical of choices of art displayed abroad under official auspices. Some more socially conservative members of Congress were particularly critical of the art we sent overseas.

Q: It was modern art for the most part I guess, which is avant-garde. A Congressman just ain't the person that artists aimed at.

SCHNEIDER: The conservative Congress people were the upholders of conservative aesthetic and artistic traditions and social values, and some of the works we were sending

overseas were not to their liking. Here again, Schneidman very astutely found a way around. He created an independent board with Joshua Taylor, who was the head of the National Collection of Fine Arts, to vet all the art exhibits we sent overseas and, by the way, to help fund them. And he strengthened our relationship with the Smithsonian Institution to help organize, fund and legitimize traveling art exhibits of all sizes as an adjunct to their SITES Program (Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibits Service).

Thematic and Special Thematic Programming

ICS did have some policy responsibilities as well. We created two levels of field programming support. One was called special thematic programming, and one was thematic programming. Thematic programming was linked to the annual planning process emerging in the 70s as a way to relate Washington media output to issues and concerns identified by the field posts. They could order an array of media support and ask for speakers on topics relevant to bilateral or regional relations and U.S. goals.

Special thematic programming (STP) was Washington's effort to augment program support that responded to high priority concerns of the DC foreign policy community. STP would go to those field posts deemed to be importantly involved with those issues. It would be hard for posts to say "no" to a special thematic program. But they were chosen in terms of which posts were relevant to those issues and after consultation with the field and USIA regional office. Each “STP” brought high-level people, both from the USG policy community and from think tanks or academe, to the field.

Such programs were the precursors of a couple of important public diplomacy efforts in the ‘80s such as INF emplacement, but probably didn't succeed as well because of lack of truly ongoing, long-term emphasis.

Helping the Book Program Survive and Flourish

This is a remarkable story that most Americans don't know. The book programs of USIA and its predecessor, the International Information Administration, alone may have had more lasting impact on the world than almost any other activity that official Washington ever sent out or supported, except for the International Visitor program and English language teaching. Over the years USIA and cooperating entities published hundreds of titles of important books in English, accompanied by translations into dozens of languages, with print runs that could never have been justified on a commercial basis in the United States.

I don’t believe the American publishing industry thought of the international market as a market of any consequence to them, in the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s, maybe '90s - it's taken that long. By now well into the 21st century, yes, it's a global market. There's an English language capacity, you can publish on-line, you can send a book electronically and publish locally. But I would bet that maybe 90% of the market for American books is still American readers. I might be wrong but still. … There was little profit in selling books around the world for the American publishing industry, yet their leadership realized that it

was important from the standpoint of national interest to convey our knowledge and information.

Take a classic case. Samuelson's *Economics*. It was the number one basic economics text used across our nation. Samuelson was regarded as a centrist, maybe slightly left-of-center economist in his own right. The text was widely used.

Q: I used it.

SCHNEIDER: Sure. USIS India translated it into at least five or six languages in large numbers, printed in India, paid for by the use of PL-480 rupees. It was made the required text in college after college in India. Just think of the impact that had on the thinking of young Indians. It took 30 or 40 years, it wasn't until after the demise of the Soviet Union but the grounds for a mixed economy were seeded by Samuelson's Economics. And this was repeated in many ways, with texts and other materials that we could publish through the PL-480 program.

ICS had a very active relationship with the American publishing industry, and with American newspaper and magazine publishers as well, by virtue of the IMG program. This was the International Media Guarantee program. In many nations with soft currencies repatriation of sales profits was difficult. For example, in Indonesia the post helped make Time and Life and other major magazines be available locally. The USG paid the publishers for sales in U.S. dollars and the US Mission used the rupiahs derived from sale locally for "housekeeping" purposes.

Congressman Rooney, who was the lead congressman for the Appropriations Committee for the 150 accounts (State, USIA, Commerce) didn't like it because he didn't appropriate the funds. On several occasions he threatened to reduce our budget by the dollar equivalent of the amount of PL-480 rupees, rupiahs, pounds, whatever, every year and sometimes he succeeded in cutting, but not always. This funding source made it possible for a large variety of materials to be distributed in those nations involved with the PL480 program.

Renewal of American Studies Program

We re-created an American Studies program, which was, strictly speaking, not American Studies taught and organized as a separate discipline in American universities. Our field posts responded to the needs, interests and capacities of universities and colleges overseas. Whether in literature and the arts, economics, history etc. we would help colleges and universities abroad add content referring to American institutions and experiences. So we changed the title from American Studies to Studies About America -- always trying to find the interface between their experience and ours.

Q: I know when I was overseas, from the 1950s up to the '80s, American Studies—there really weren't many programs in foreign universities about the United States. It grew, but —I can see anywhere we can get a niche, get something in, was a plus.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. Long-term building of understanding, slow, quiet, cumulative. Not very sexy but really very important. That's what we did. A variety of activities intended to open doors and build trust and understanding, especially designed for younger audiences, influentials, intellectuals, university settings.

My work in ICS the first two years involved helping Hal keep abreast of the diverse programs and to contribute to innovation and reforms he designed. This was not always easy, particularly in those early years because some of the changes he wanted to make met with a good deal of resistance, both within ICS and in our relationships with the Area Offices. But the changes were made and laid the groundwork for future reforms in the mid-70s by USIA.

Commemorating the Bicentennial of the U.S. Declaration of Independence

Q: This might be a good place to stop. Where shall we pick this up, when you move after about six years in this policy?

SCHNEIDER: Maybe if it's OK I wanted to talk about the ’76 celebration of the Bicentennial of U.S. Independence. It was a watershed in our history and diplomacy and in public diplomacy as well. I was quite involved in USIA programming for the Bicentennial and think that would be interesting.

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Q: Today is the 18th of December 2015, with Mike Schneider. Mike, we had left it with, you said you were involved with the Bicentennial and go on from there? Could you explain what this is all about?

SCHNEIDER: Superficially one would say, "The Bicentennial was a nice event, meaningful for Americans and maybe for others, but so what?" The international context made it so important from my vantage. The U.S. had been swimming upstream in world opinion since the mid-'60s, with the Vietnam War clouding our status in the world and much global criticism of our policies and strategies. Along with the Vietnam War was the frustrated Civil Rights movement in the United States; the domestic American turmoil that erupted over both also troubled publics abroad.

From a public diplomacy, and I think from a policy standpoint, we worried about the direction of the United States, our strategic goals and posture toward the rest of the world and what the rest of the world would think of us.

The planning for Bicentennial events actually began in the late 60s, but nothing much happened until 1973. Hal Schneidman asked me to pull together plans for ICS for the Bicentennial. I went to meetings at the White House that included pep talks from Dick Cheney, as staff chief. They created the American Revolutionary Bicentennial

Administration to succeed an inept Bicentennial Commission and named former Senator John Warner chairman, and he gave it a new life.

So the planning got serious. From the public diplomacy standpoint we thought the Bicentennial was an ideal way of having something to celebrate internationally. The challenge was to design activities that the rest of the world could join, even lead. We didn't want this to be just an American show and a celebration of America.

I worked very closely with Richard Wooton who was the policy officer in the central policy office of USIA, IOP (Office of Policy and Plans), to create an agency-wide plan for the Bicentennial. He, by the way, was one of the two officers who interviewed me for the Foreign Service oral exams, so we were very close. It was a genuine pleasure to work with him.

ICS had a large portion of Agency responsibilities, particularly in support of the field. The Motion Picture and TV Service had significant responsibilities, as did VOA.

We went about it by thinking this shouldn't be just an American celebration, it should engage others around the world. We tried to find those areas of mutuality with other nations around the world, whether it be Morocco in terms of the Kingdom of Moroccan being the first to recognize the United States, or Germany which had such extensive ethnic and historical connections, or many other nations.

We queried the posts for ideas that reflected the history of shared binational relations. Then we developed a plan to assist celebrations of those shared relations which various other nations would co-sponsor. Obviously, the United States had its own self-concepts and celebrations, but we wanted to encourage others.

During those years leading up to and including the '76-'77 celebration the whole nation revisited essentials, back to the constitutional nature of the country, the founding visions, the original documents, the wisdom that was inherent in those documents. Then we were able to build on that, because those documents and the founding of the United States didn't occur in a vacuum. Jefferson gained many ideas from the French and Italian humanists as did Franklin. The leading figures of the time had extensive contacts with Europe. So we were going to draw that out, remind people of the history and talk about fundamentals that carry over from generation to generation.

That was the plan - and post-sponsored activities didn't have to focus only on the original founding of the United States; they could treat whatever was important in the relationship between the other nation and the U.S. Many posts put on events that weren't basically back to the Declaration or the Constitution but were events that were fundamental for the host country and the United States. They were urged to interpret the event in ways that elicited common interests and shared concerns today.

We requested and received a supplemental fund of a few million dollars from Congress, which was crucial.

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

As a centerpiece for posts around the world, we organized an exhibit called "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." This highlighted commemorative events the field posts conducted in ’76. It was probably the largest display ever built – it was what we used to say in the trade was a "paper show:" heavy duty poster paper panels about 24 x 30 inches configured so they could be put together to form very large images or stand alone. They could be used on exhibit structures our posts had in sophisticated settings or be tacked up on walls in the smallest district town in developing countries. They were produced in English and six other languages, also a blank version to allow for locally added dialects.

There were two complete versions – one that included 750 of these panels and another with 1500 panels. That's a lot of exhibitry. We obtained artifacts that were knock-offs of things from the Colonial and the Federal periods. The exhibit covered the formation of the union from early exploration through to the Federal period and concluded July 4,1826, the death of Jefferson and Adams on the same day, with that quote from Adams and his last, mistaken words, "Jefferson lives." Jefferson had in fact already passed away that day. The two old rivals had reconciled and become admiring friends

The display delved into politics, culture, and social history; it treated the influence of geography, demographics and international influences on the founding and early growth of the republic. It could be used anywhere as the centerpiece for events. Embassies could build commemorative events around the exhibit.

Conception, design and production occurred in 11 months! A marvelous design and research team made it happen --- Ethel Freid Kestler and Bill Caldwell from the Exhibits Section of ICS, Jestyn Portugill, an independent writer/consultant, Berenice Jones, Linda Hicks and Dee Seadler, all from ICS. The USIA Press and Publications Service Printing Center in Manila went all out to produce the display in the different language versions. We didn’t make this easy, since apart from the size and variety of the exhibit, we asked them to handle many panels that included gold and silver as well as the range of colors in some 1500 images that we acquired for the display.

But it all came together and we celebrated the Bicentennial with an event in Room 1100 at 1776 Pennsylvania Ave. We wanted to show the display to colleagues, since it couldn’t be shown in the U.S. We went all out—a harpsichord and player to perform early American tunes, tiny tea sandwiches served by waiters in costume and showing of an English version of the large display. Director James Keogh and Deputy Director Gene Kopp came as well as other Agency leaders and colleagues. In the Center of the Room hung the large eight-by 12-foot title panel.

Life, Liberty… was one of the few items that Congress has allowed the American public to see; when we finished, we had some excess copies especially in Spanish and made these available to the American public through the National Archives.

Ultimately we sent 400 sets to Germany alone, in German and English, and another 1,000-plus copies to posts worldwide.

Bicentennial Partnerships

We created a new initiative, "Bicentennial Partnerships" to provide small grants to the field for indigenous organizations to carry out varied activities in the name of the Bicentennial, preferably those that would take on a life of their own. For example, with USIS UK we made a grant to the Bodleian Library for an American Studies collection. Bob Gosende who was then CAO in Warsaw came in with a nifty idea to fund an American Studies collection at Warsaw University. Such initiatives weren't isolated – they usually related to initiation or improvements in ongoing activities including instruction. In Casablanca, Morocco our Bicentennial Partnership funds seeded a successful effort to restore the cultural center that the Moroccans had given us a couple of hundred years ago. We initiated or expanded American studies programs in several nations, I can't remember all of them – Brazil and India among others come to mind.

Every country had some history of relations with the United States, even those that were recent ex-colonies or nascent countries had some experience they could see that was special in their relationship with the U.S. Our purpose was to facilitate activities that would contribute to mutual understanding and would be ongoing, not just one-time occurrences. This was a major effort because we were interacting with and facilitating dozens of posts around the globe.

Q: You must have had proposals that really surprised you. Did anyone stand in mind?

SCHNEIDER: We had such a huge program in Germany because of the connections, and the classic European colonial sources of American history. I think Mexico had quite a number of programs, even with our ambivalent history.

Q: The Colossus to the North...

SCHNEIDER: Exactly

Q: If you have a chance, when you get your paper to edit, I don't mind a significant section of some of the things as you think about it... it would be interesting and worthwhile for people to look at this and understand what we did. Doesn't have to be all-inclusive of course, but some of the ones that stick in your mind.

SCHNEIDER: I'll be glad to. They were disparate as I said, depending on the perception of other countries of their relationship with the United States, because we were playing from their perceptions back to ours, not trying to force on them our perceptions of the bilateral relation.

The Age of Franklin and Jefferson

Our third major undertaking was to orchestrate a major exhibition that Charles and Ray Eames designed and carried out called "The Age of Franklin and Jefferson." Eames portrayed the intellectual and cultural debt or interaction between these two leading figures and counterparts in Europe and America's intellectual and cultural debt to Europe.

It was a difficult undertaking; Eames was a totally independent creative person and he didn't like working with the government. He and his wife were a world-famous design team – from iconic furniture designs to major exhibits at world's fairs. Eames was almost impossible to deal with. We came down to a crunch point; the fiscal year was about to end and the money that we had allocated - between a half-million and a million dollars, a lot of money in those days - was about to be lost. He refused to provide any information to anyone in the agency about what he was going to do in his exhibit.

So people were tearing their hair out, but I felt it was important to have this exhibit. So I wrote a letter of commitment from USIA to Eames, because the deadline had passed and the money was about to be returned to Congress. You have a two-week window in the new fiscal year to obligate unspent funds from the prior year. With the letter of commitment we were able to get the funds obligated, and Eames produced the show that was a huge hit in London, Paris and Warsaw. The exhibit also went to Mexico City because Bill Luers, who was ambassador there convinced the Agency to add to the tour. As I recall also, Eames brought Jack Masey and his design firm into the mix. Jack had served in USIA exhibits in earlier years and was himself a creative force. He had overseen the design and conduct of major US Pavilions at World Fairs, including Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome in Montreal and others. Jack and Eames were sympatico. The Agency backed off the usual requirements for approvals along the way and the Eames and Masey team produced a rich and complex exhibition.

Failed Attempt to Produce a New Multi-Media English Language Instructional Kit

There were a range of other activities that we were able to get funding from Congress and carry out, which really made a big difference to our field programming. And the USIA Motion Picture and Television Service orchestrated a satellite-delivered "Salute" to American independence. VOA organized special broadcasts. Our media reported on various other activities, particularly those with a binational emphasis.

The one activity Congress refused to fund was a new multi-media English language learning initiative. We sought about $1.5 million for a series of videos and print instructional materials. For years, USIA had been providing English language instruction to teachers of English around the world, inherently worthwhile and a bread and butter tool for cross-cultural communication. English was rapidly rising as a lingua franca worldwide. Our cultural centers and bi-national centers around the world were playing a leading part in helping English language become more used and useful. But our instructional materials were outdated.

Kirk Douglas offered to lead a tour of the United States as a theme for this English language series. However the House Appropriations Committee thought that we were going too far with this project and couldn't justify it under the Bicentennial.

From our vantage, the special Bicentennial programs reflected a turning point in the mid-'70s in U.S. global standing and relations with others. The Bicentennial offered other nations opportunities to reconsider their perceptions of the U.S. and find new opportunities for cooperation. That was very gratifying to me, even if only a modest contribution to changing perceptions of the U.S.

As the United States emerged from the turmoil over Vietnam -- and you remember the '76 election and Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights – I felt that the country was in a much better position in world opinion than we had been since 1965. We had endured a decade of corrosion in the standing of the United States when our capacity to command respect seemed over.

Mid-70s Reorganization of USIA; Assignment to the Office of Policy and Planning in the Bureau of Policy and Programs

In '77 Hal Schneidman moved from Assistant Director for Information Center Services to become the Associate Director of USIA for Policy and Programs. His Deputy was Alan Carter, who had creatively led the Near East/South Asia Area Office. This was part of a complex and major reorganization of USIA that involved merging the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs from State into the Agency and retitling USIA the U.S. International Communication Agency – USICA.

The reorganization also included a significant change in the Washington bureaucracy. Elements of ICS – the book program, library and cultural center support and English teaching were moved into the new Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Exhibits and thematic and special thematic programs consolidated with the Agency's Office of Policy to form a new Bureau of Policy and Programs.

John Reinhardt was named USIA Director. He was the second African-American director after Carl Rowan. John was a very esteemed person who had served in East Asia and as US Ambassador to Nigeria and Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at State. Reinhardt sought to reorganize the agency around professional communications concepts and build on our collective experience. He – and importantly leading Democrats in the Senate -- wanted a new name for USIA and to shed "telling America's story to the world." He felt it didn't fully describe the mission and emphases of the new Agency and wanted a title that would encompass the idea of two-way communication and the benefits for Americans of international engagement.

New Agency Name

With the merger of State/CU (now ECA) into USIA in 1977-78 Director Reinhardt created a working group to come up with a new agency name. I was one of half a dozen

officers on the committee which was chaired by Alan Carter. We came up with a computer-driven list of 150 ways of talking about Agency functions. My own preference was for PACE - Public Affairs Cultural Exchange agency, because that's what we did. But the title that eventually resulted was USICA, U.S. International Communication Agency. We wanted very much to get the idea of communication into the title connoting more the interaction of people and ideas, not just one-way messaging to target audiences.

The first iteration of the title was USAIC, U.S. Agency for International Communication. This made sense, but when the name change came to the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator McGovern pointed out that AIC was backwards for CIA and essentially vetoed the acronym. So that led to USICA – which became a flashpoint for those on the right. Reagan Administration leaders very quickly changed the name of USICA back to USIA. They were very proud of the idea that we were telling America's story to the world and saw nothing wrong with it. I preferred a broader title but could see why our choices were too abstract.

In those four years of the Reinhardt administration in USICA, we sought ways to take us further away from old emphases on media placement abroad and a rather stove-piped bureaucracy. But the political mainstream wasn't there. A lot of people asked sarcastically "what is international communication? Are you Bell Telephone, or Western Union?

Q: I remember I was in Korea at the time...

SCHNEIDER: We believed that the changes would make USIA a better and more effective organization. We were trying to become a more integrated institution rather than 150 separate outlets and 100 products or services. That didn't add up. The new organizational structure sought to better integrate different media and program support through an improved annual planning process that validated short-term and ongoing activities for the sake of long-term, strategic goals.

Up to the mid-'70s, USIA was like a conglomerate, a major corporate conglomerate that had ten product lines, all different, all selling their own wares. The list was long. They tended to proceed on separate paths with different time frames and expectations. All of these were valid, but not adequately related to long-term strategic goals.

We had progressed in our understanding of international cross-cultural communication to know that it's well and fine to have all these different product lines, but if they didn't reinforce each other and didn't focus on important issues, they were losing the audiences in the growing stream of communication.

We also needed more efficient ways of identifying audiences and keeping track of our contacts and relations. Along with the marked growth in world population, we realized that increasingly younger people were becoming demographically important and politically active. Also we could see the rising influence of transnational NGOs; they were becoming players within nation-states as well as in international fora.

Major transnational movements began in the 70s and challenged the U.S. to respond. There was the Environmental movement that had begun with the UN conference in Stockholm in 1972 and the first international UN conference in ’75 in Mexico City. These have led to ongoing major efforts by transnational NGOs and governments. The global women’s movement also became an important factor in both domestic and international affairs. We had a sense of change in global priorities and we needed to change with it.

I was assigned to work in the policy and planning office. It was smaller and probably less specialized than its predecessors and less concerned with providing daily guidance to USIA media. Gib Austin, who had been my PAO in Calcutta, was head; Dick Roth, a senior civil servant, was deputy. Others in the office included Paul Blackburn, who focused on global political and security issues, Jack Crocker who handled cultural affairs, Rob McClellan, who handled economic issues, and others. I focused on domestic issues and trends and their international significance. The office was mainly Foreign Service with a couple of Civil Service officers, all thoughtful, with extensive experience dealing with field concerns.

Assignment to the State Department Policy Planning Staff

In early ’78 Hal Schneidman and Gib Austin asked me to serve as Agency liaison with State S/P. I spent several months working in S/P, which was a remarkable experience for me. Tony Lake was the head of it, Sandy Berger was one deputy and a talented and energetic FSO, Paul Kreisberg, served as the other deputy. I don't know if you ran across Paul?

Q: I think I interviewed him.

SCHNEIDER: A real buddy, Paul and I stayed in touch for years after my assignment in S/P. He introduced me to “Argentine Sam Weinberg” an Argentine/Israeli/American baker who hosted Paul, senior FSO Art Rosen and me to an array of good foods. For a couple of years Sam hosted an informal restaurant in his apartment kitchen a short walk from State and then opened a bakery in upper Georgetown – Knishes, Piroshki, Schav, Borscht – all the good Eastern European foods!

There was such talent in that iteration of S/P. I recall Phil Kaplan, an FSO with a background and interests in Germany and European realpolitik. There was a CIA officer, Peter Wilson, who was very articulate, Richard Feinberg who's now teaching at UC-San Diego, and Susan Purcell who succeeded Richard as the WHA expert and became assistant secretary for WHA (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs). Also Jenonne Walker who later became Ambassador to the Czech Republic and Jeff Garten who was the econ officer in S/P and later became the dean of the Yale Business School.

Tony was deeply involved in the movements in Africa to eliminate colonialism and promote democratic development. He and Dick Moose got very much involved in

helping Rhodesia become Zimbabwe. The S/P meetings were the most intense and liveliest policy discussions I experienced in my public service. It was like being in a candy store! Tony encouraged debate over priorities and issues and his colleagues certainly engaged.

Q: They were allowed to cut loose.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, they certainly debated among themselves. It was challenging for me to keep up with all the issues because my portfolio in S/P was the public dimension of all that they were debating. So I felt an inch deep and a mile wide. Anyway, I was just there for a few months full-time, then I went back and forth - during the week I would spend half-time at State, be in S/P for the weekly meetings and give them an idea what USIA was up to and in turn bring back to USIA colleagues the policy concerns and directions of the Department – at least of S/P. It was an exhilarating experience for me.

Conferences and Book on Constitutionalism

One endeavor that began late in the Carter Administration and continued in the Reagan Presidency was our support for two international conferences co-sponsored by AEI (the American Enterprise Institute) and Chief Justice Warren Burger and held at the Court in 1981 and 1983. A scholar at AEI, Robert Goldwin, approached Charlie Bray to seek USIA support in DC and abroad for the conference and follow up on contemporary constitution writing. Bob emphasized that some 130 constitutions were written, or rewritten, since the end of World War II.

The first conference in 1983 focused on federalism and was held in one of the large meeting rooms of the Court. Chief Justice Burger opened the sessions and participated periodically. We asked the posts in half a dozen countries to help identify prominent scholars to take part in the sessions. There was coverage by USIA media and a little coverage by commercial media. Speaking tours by American experts and a book published by AEI followed.

This was a bureaucratic challenge for me, to convince leadership of a new Administration to accept an initiative from the outgoing regime. While the Reagan team took some time to settle in and sort out priorities, the topic of the proposed conference suited their priorities, and the fact that the Chief Justice was involved gave the proposed event added legitimacy. Looking back, while I think the conference and a followup conference in 1985 were worthwhile, ironically the lessons learned about constitution writing in the late 20th century were swept aside by a mix of economic and social factors. Not the least were inexperience with how democracy needs to work, distrust of government, ongoing rivalries among traditional groups or power centers.

The Advent of Ronald Reagan and Charles Z. Wick

How quickly the world changed, just in the space of four or five years in the mid-late 70s. The U.S. had celebrated the Bicentennial, the Carter Administration to some extent

gained approval for its values, even though many nations wondered about the efficacy of the administration. In the wake of the ’73 Yom Kippur War when the OPEC oil crisis began and tensions rose significantly, I recall that the U.S. had no easy answers.

By '78 and '79 two international crises once again affected U.S. strategic interests and our image abroad. We were back in crisis mode after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution and capture of U.S. Embassy hostages occurred in the late ‘70s. It felt like we had returned to “Cold War” approaches and realpolitik keyed to those two crises.

Of course, public dissatisfaction about the OPEC oil crisis and resulting inflation and apparent “international weakness” contributed to the Reagan Revolution in 1981, which was a shock to many in DC. Were you in Washington at the time, 1979-80-81?

Q: I was in Italy.

SCHNEIDER: You got some heat I'm sure when Reagan became President, people were saying "What are you Americans doing?"

Q: I remember in Italy when he came, I was consul-general in Naples, and I was saying, "Look he's the governor of a state with an economy the equivalent to Italy's, we're not talking about a Johnny-come-lately."

SCHNEIDER: People might have been worried about Reagan’s conservatism, but he had proven as governor of California that whatever his ideology, he could govern effectively. When he came to power, Washington was quivering. The establishment had been dominated by the Democratic Party for umpteen decades. Yes, Nixon was president for a while, but the continuity of Democratic governance and dominance in Washington was quite clear.

I can't forget, one day we were sitting in the policy office waiting to hear who would be named the head of USIA, all praying for a David Gergen ... but one of our colleagues, Jack Crockett, came running into the office saying, "It's Charles Z. Wick." We all said, "Who is he?"

There was no Google in those days; a lot of searching around produced the fact that he was a close confidant of Reagan's, in Reagan's kitchen cabinet. But not a well-known public leader. He had co-owned a string of nursing homes on the West Coast and been an investor in other properties and companies.. He had also been a musician and arranger for Tommy Dorsey and a piano player in Cleveland where he grew up. His most notable Hollywood film involvement was as writer and producer of “Snow White and the Three Stooges.” Put it all together and we groaned, "We need someone distinguished but got Charles Z. Wick."

Wick’s leadership didn't turn out as we had initially feared. At the time I didn’t appreciate three important facts: his family ties with the Reagans, his ambition to use that relation to build up his organization, and that, despite nominal conservative leanings, he wasn’t a

zealot. He wanted to be in the center of the action, to be a deal maker, build the organization and win praise from Ronald Reagan. The President encouraged him and people in the White House generally responded quickly if not always positively to his requests. His clout was helped by the close friendship of Nancy Reagan and Mary Jane Wick. They had met as newcomers to Hollywood, shared professional opportunities, carpooled their kids and grew up together.

Q: They always had Christmas together.

SCHNEIDER: I might have mentioned it before, but I was just joking with some friends the other day about this. I would convey my 'Christmas message' to all the people I was dealing with - at State, DOD, wherever - I would find a way to say, "Well the Wicks are hosting the Reagans this year for Christmas Eve, and the Reagans are hosting the Wicks for Christmas Day. Just the Reagans and the Wicks." Not a couple hundred "closest friends", not Sinatra and all the rest. That annual reminder sunk in but it took several years for many to accept the idea that Charlie Wick was a powerhouse. As unorthodox and corny as he might be, policy makers and politicos had to live with him. Nevertheless he opened doors that had never opened before and would be closed pretty quickly (Laughter) after he left. But he gained big money for USIA.

Q: So, many people work for USIA, many come to say, "We're a practical people, and who can get the money? He can get the money." Which meant all sorts of things.

SCHNEIDER: Indeed it did; it made a huge difference.

Q: Did you see much of a change in the way we were doing things, what we were selling, to use crass terms, between the Carter and Reagan Administrations?

SCHNEIDER: On the level of symbols and public images, 180 degrees. Not true in reality, but that's the way it appeared. During the brief Carter "era," the nation worried about restoring national unity, dignity and purpose. After the awful years of Vietnam and Nixon's political and legal problems, more principled emphasis on human rights in our foreign policy was seen at least as a partial remedy. Reagan built on Carter's emphasis on human rights, but aimed his criticism of other nations rightward, such as the USSR and left-wing dictatorships. In a way this difference actually served to consolidate and balance the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy.

Study of Social Security

My first personal contact with Mr. Wick occurred about a year after he arrived. As I mentioned, I had generally stayed away from the front office of USIA, but Pat Sieman, who was Mr. Wick's personal assistant, recommended that he ask me to prepare a study of social security he wanted to conduct.

Q: He was looking beyond his parish?

SCHNEIDER: For sure. What did Charlie Wick and USIA have to do with Social Security? I could only speculate that He and Nancy Reagan or Ed Meese or someone else in their circle of friends were talking about reform needs. At any rate, I spent a couple of weeks researching the benefits and costs of social security and came up with a very brief study that argued that social security was an important core element of economic well-being for millions of Americans. In answer to his question about funding, I referred to various proposals for slight adjustments in eligibility ages and inputs by business and workers that would help preserve social security for a couple of generations.

Shoot-down of KAL-007

So, he backed away as far as I know, and focused on finding new ways to support Reagan Admin policies and gain some attention for the agency and his leadership. The shoot-down of KAL 007 (Korean Airlines flight 007) presented a major need for U.S. PD and that led to Mr. Wick to do a video on the shoot-down and to get enough photography out of the Intel Community to have something dramatic to show world publics. I believe we obtained some useful footage; US UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick made the major presentations to the world.

Let Poland Be Poland

Then the Soviet pressure of invasion in Poland led Mr. Wick to initiate another major project called *Let Poland Be Poland*. That's a story and a half; it amounted to Mr. Wick and others in USIA trying to persuade a who's who of prominent leaders and cultural figures around the globe to participate in a video that could be shown world-wide in theaters and on television, to protest Soviet control over Poland. Sinatra, Charlton Heston, Glenda Jackson, Max Von Sydow, Kirk Douglas, Paul McCartney, Orson Welles and other Hollywood stars, Maggie Thatcher, Mitterrand and other leaders, some 25 heads of government, all participated.

Q: I'm sure he had John Wayne.

SCHNEIDER: Surprisingly no, but many others. There was no line between politics, policy and the arts – they were all elements of the international community protesting the Soviet behavior and the regime in Poland. Everyone was quite afraid it would be an embarrassment to the United States. Mr. Wick wanted, a la Bono, to encourage an outpouring of international protest against an injustice. The famous line -- he used to bark out orders -- right out of a TV drama, "Get me Marty Pasetta," a great producer of TV spectaculars. Mr. Wick knew Hollywood so he would apply Hollywood techniques to a foreign policy problem. Can you imagine how the diplomatic community would cringe at that kind of emphasis? It was not that the product was wrong, but USIA as a USG Agency was the wrong sponsor. If *Let Poland Be Poland* had been produced by a consortium of American performers, artists, human rights activists, Hollywood leaders, regardless of what you thought about it as art or as communication, it would have been more authentic. When the head of the official U.S. public affairs agency organizes it, it

takes on a different cast. He didn't get that, and I don't think anyone ever had the courage to say, "Look it's a great idea Charlie, but have someone else do it."

So he produced it and professionals smoothed out some of the rough patches, probably toned it down a little. And the production embarrassed the regime in Poland and the Soviets but didn't generate a great buzz that I can recall. That was Mr. Wick in a nutshell; he saw a problem he wanted to deal with, he would think of it in Hollywood terms, get producers, do the biggest and the best -- that's what he did.

Project Truth and Project Democracy

Early on Mr. Wick also sought ways to bolster Reagan Administration emphases on countering Soviet propaganda and active measures and in bolstering the pro-democracy thrust of the President's Westminster speech. I wasn't involved in Project Truth, except to observe that he made it into a big deal. As I recall it amounted to a series of media efforts and served as a rubric for several initiatives.

Project Truth also resulted in Director Wick creating an office to counter Soviet disinformation. The Agency hired Herb Romerstein who had been staff chief or a lead investigator for the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a very controversial committee. Herb was aided by Todd Leventhal, who had worked at the VOA.

I was acting head of the Policy Office in the Bureau of Policy and Programs when I was asked to help Herb set up shop. We located his office near the Policy Guidance office though he worked independently. He and Todd had pretty much a clean slate. They represented the Agency on an inter-agency Active Measures Working Group and developed information sources to send to the field on Soviet disinformation. They also traveled abroad and spoke to audiences or media contacts arranged by the posts.

At first I could feel the resistance in DC and indirectly from the field to Herb. His background reminded some of the days when Joe McCarthy had disrupted our field posts in Europe with Cohn and Schine visits and outrageous charges of disloyalty aimed at State and the VOA. Herb was on the other hand generally adept at getting along with Agency professionals. He had a bagful of jokes and puns, including of course those aimed at the Soviets and allies. On occasion – usually when he felt condescended to – he would get agitated to the point of nastiness. I had to help him move on.

Herb provided a service to the field and I think those overseas gradually came to recognize that he helped them deal with local Soviet manipulations. Such activities led to attacks on our libraries and cultural centers, mainly in developing nations. Herb and Todd went on speaking tours to meet posts and local media and show them how a story circulating in the press, for example the origins of HIV/AIDS, was sourced and spread by Soviet or East German agents.

Project Democracy was another rubric for varied activities to support President Reagan's emphasis on democracy. His speech to the British Parliament at Westminster in 1982 went over very well, which surprised me. I had access to the drafts and submitted text through a working group chaired by then-DAS for Europe, Mark Palmer. The speech had been much-ballyhooed in anticipation. Many people – I mean many – had a hand in the drafting. Everyone had their concept on how to promote and support a global movement for democracy, the much-anticipated subject of the speech. The President's chief speech writer Tony Dolan, Peggy Noonan, outsiders such as George Will and others were consulted and offered ideas. By draft Number five the speech was initialed "RWR" and I knew that the taffy pull was over. What I saw was a pastiche of ideas and I didn't see how it would ever hang together. His delivery, the sonority, the moment, the importance of speaking to a large international audience, were impressive.

The National Endowment for Democracy

The Bureau of Policy and Programs was the "pass-through" for NED. Carl Gershman, the President of NED and I met periodically just to schmooze and for me to catch up on NED's activities. When he was chosen to lead NED in '84 Carl received excellent advice from House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Dante Fascell, to make sure he brought Senators and Representatives from both parties and different vantages on to the NED Board. This Carl did faithfully and was able to overcome early criticism of NED and particularly the four "core group" institutes as boondoggles.

Carl also consistently and successfully distanced himself and NED from the Administration. He wanted the organization to be perceived as non-governmental, even if it relied on public funding. Once, for example, I offered to have the new Journal of Democracy printed in the USIA printing center in Manila. Using USAF transport, the costs would have been minimal for the fledgling Endowment. But he really wanted, for good reasons, to keep NED apart from government, and worked out arrangements with Johns Hopkins Press to publish the journal. And I think that NED under Carl's stewardship and together with the community of human rights and pro-democracy NGOs has made a really important contribution on behalf of civil society and democracy worldwide.

Weinberger, Wick and Soviet Military Power

Mr. Wick's penchant for being in the middle of the action fit well with Cap Weinberger's desires for more USIA involvement in support of U.S. security goals. He frequently sent little missives over to USIA, suggesting that USIA do this or that. Charlie would pick up on many of these suggestions. For example, one of the main informational initiatives of the Defense Department was to be a slick pamphlet called " Soviet Military Power." It was a glossy, roughly 50-60-page journal or magazine, describing all the Soviets' weapons systems, their strategy and techniques, and trying to show the rest of the world that the Soviet Union had built up a massive armed force to threaten and impose its will and possibly engage in war. It's analogous to Jane's Fighting Ships or some of the publications of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). It reminded me of

an enlarged version of the Defense Department's annual force posture statement. They wanted to do it big and distribute it in the United States and worldwide.

They sent us a draft and we saw that it needed a lot of help. It had errors and was too hyped and shrill. We wanted to save DoD and the USG from serious embarrassment that would have undercut public trust abroad and at home. We would distribute the report abroad; DoD would handle American domestic distribution.

Our best expert on security issues and Eastern Europe, Maria Copson-Niecko, and colleagues in the publication division went through the draft, corrected the text and strengthened the design. They provided a respectable document about Soviet military power. There subsequently were many iterations in following years.

USIA and the Inter-Agency Policy Process

Q: How did he deal with Iran; that was right after...

SCHNEIDER: I don't recall Mr. Wick spending a lot of time on Iran. He wasn't sworn in until several months after the hostage crisis concluded. His policy focus was on the USSR and Europe. It was all about INF (intermediate-range nuclear forces) and our strategic rivalry with the USSR.

USIA became very involved because the Administration needed to persuade leaders in European basing countries to agree to our buildup. European publics, to some extent influenced by a major Soviet PR and disinformation campaign, strongly opposed the INF emplacement. Europeans feared that Reagan would produce a war, escalating into a nuclear war. This was especially intense in the basing countries - the UK, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Turkey. There was a big push to support the zero-option in Europe. That came from Cap Weinberger and from his undersecretary for policy, Fred Iklé. Wick was very much interested in that.

I was the head of the policy office in USIA in 1984. The Agency needed to fill the position of Deputy Associate Director for Policy and Programs. Gifford Malone - you might have met Giff -- was the outgoing Deputy. Giff, a very thoughtful and accomplished person, had served as Jock Shirley's Deputy in the Bureau and when Jock led the Eastern European Office of USIA for a couple of years. Giff moved back to State for a while then retired. The new Associate Director for Policy and Programs at USIA, Sam Courtney, asked if I could be made his deputy - which was unusual because I was SES and usually that kind of senior job would go to a senior Foreign Service officer. But Wick liked the idea and so I was appointed deputy. From then on I had a lot of contact with him.

Q: Can you talk about some of the issues that your agency would get involved with in the NSC ?

SCHNEIDER: Mr. Wick felt that the advocacy dimension of our diplomacy was pretty important. And certainly from the standpoint of Ronald Reagan, it was very important. Reagan was all about communicating ideas and values. Wick wanted to be a player.

Wick used his connections with Reagan to create counterpart organizations to those that existed in the national security community. The interagency had not been consistently open to USIA. USIA had occasional representation in NSC working level meetings. Most of our contacts were through counterpart meetings at State. Very senior USIA officials – the Director/Deputy Director or head of policy or Area Directors maintained relations with NSC officials.Historically these contacts were related to support for policy outputs, not ongoing advice on policy options. A respected senior officer like Bill Rugh, who was Mideast Area Director in the late 80s-early 90s was asked to chair inter-agency coordination in public diplomacy, but Bill had already been an Ambassador. His example was not typical of the role of USIA in the Interagency.

Our ongoing media and public opinion research was widely circulated and I believe had some relevance and utility in the Interagency. Yet only rarely did any decisions center on our expertise. That was too bad, because this expertise, in my experience, was under-utilized until a crisis occurred, and then focused on policy support not options. Too often we were asked too late to put out public fires.

The Agency tried to become better integrated into NSC deliberations but made only slight progress in the early years of the Reagan Administration. At one point Mr. Wick asked for a memo with chapter and verse over meetings about national security issues we didn't have the chance to participate in. Wick sent me over to the NSC to meet with the Exec Sec, Bob Kimmitt. He asked me what we wanted and I replied that we wanted to be an addressee regarding coming meetings in order to have the right to to attend certain inter-agency meetings that we believed had a strong public dimension. After several go-rounds the NSC included USIA a little more frequently but not consistently.

INF Emplacement Debate in Europe

Along with "Project Truth," "Project Democracy" and *Let Poland Be Poland*, came USIA involvement in the INF debate. The Administration created a committee led by an advertising executive named Dailey who was called upon by the Reagan White House to coordinate an initiative in the public diplomacy/communications realm against Soviet medium-range missiles aimed at Western Europe and for basing U.S. medium range missiles in NATO countries as a counter .

Jock Shirley attended interagency meetings on INF, and I believe took part in the Dailey group. He asked Jake Gillespie, who focused on European security issues for P/G (Policy Guidance Office) as well as daily fast media guidance and me to draft a public diplomacy strategy for dealing with intermediate nuclear forces. We asked the field, primarily the five basing countries and other NATO members, to provide analyses of public reaction to the issue and come up with recommendations that would help them win over public

opinion regarding Soviet mid-range missiles and our proposed basing of counterpart weaponry in Western Europe.

Q: That's the SS-20.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. The field sent back extensive analyses. Strong widespread opposition to U.S. INF emplacement was quite evident. West Europeans opposed being pressured to side with the U.S. or the USSR. All the information and recommendations from our posts also identified a couple of positive feelings -- loyalty to NATO and ongoing appreciation of U.S. defense and assistance during and after World War II . The field also indicated a U.S. approach – to let the Europeans deal with the issue rather than have the U.S. try to impose its will in the debate. So we crafted a PD plan calling for field posts to work with legitimate sources of opinion and influence in the basing countries who themselves would bolster support for the INF emplacement not for the sake of the U.S., but in terms of NATO loyalty and perceived threats from the Soviets.

The analysis from the field and our public opinion analyses showed us that we would really be shooting ourselves in the foot if we tried to impose our policy on Europe. But also there was a residue of good feeling toward the U.S. because of our past support. This was particularly true among an older generation. The PD plan was so refined that our PAO in Rome actually identified a specific number such as 176 legislators who were key contacts who could make an effective case for INF emplacement .

So we turned ownership of the issue back to European officials and opinion leaders to defend INF emplacement largely in terms of NATO loyalty and the interests of the country. We stayed away from the argument of "You must side with the U.S. versus the Soviet Union." Now, keep in mind that the Soviets had mounted a very active campaign in Europe against INF emplacement.

Q: This was a real last hurrah of the Soviet Union.

SCHNEIDER: Exactly. They had their SS-20s in place. They wanted to manipulate public opinion in Europe so the leadership in Europe couldn't put our counterpart missiles in place. To the point at which they actually made an award to their ambassador in the Netherlands for his success. That became public and was not very helpful in revealing their hand. Jock used our PD recommendations very deftly to get approval for this approach which worked very well in Europe. It was gratifying to see it work out. It was based on solid professional advice from the field, on systematic analysis of public opinion and underlying public attitudes and historic forces and knowledge of what could be accomplished, and they were able to pursue it very well. This was the best textbook example of PD in a serious time of conflict with vital national policy goals and a sure deadline – the vote by the parliaments of the five basing nations. It also illustrated the role of public diplomacy advice to policy makers as well as effective PD support for policies.

Q: When the chips were down, Reagan and Charlie Wick and all went back to the professionals, which I think stands as a contrast under Bush the Second... just the reverse, he and his cohorts based going into Iraq and Afghanistan on ideologues.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. To say they were misguided is an understatement. The senior participants around Bush had reasons and they were slightly different, but the experience and views from State about what comes after a successful attack were ultimately ignored in the decision to confront Saddam militarily.

At any rate, Mr. Wick would turn to the professionals, and he would listen to us if we could explain what we wanted to do or find a valid way to get him involved. As I said before, he wasn't a deep substantive thinker, a policy wonk, and he wasn't particularly ideological. He just wanted to be in the action. So if we could find outlets and legitimate ways to channel that energy, all the better. And that's what we did. The INF emplacement was a major investment for us, and it worked very well. That was an historic moment.

Reagan's Transition on U.S. – USSR Relations

What happened in '85 in the Geneva meetings and the beginning of the Reagan-Gorbachev dialogue, that really turned history around.

I believe an interesting background to that is Reagan's own concerns and opposition to nuclear weapons. This was revealed in publication of his personal journals and was buried in what was written contemporaneously about his anti-Communism. By the time he became President, Reagan had spent years of railing against Communism, and supporting the private sector, the worth of the individual, and traditional American values.

For example in early March, 1983 he made a major speech to the Conference of Evangelicals, the large umbrella group of evangelical churches, in which he defined the Soviet bloc as the "evil empire." Re-reading that speech I've thought it was a throw-away line, coming at the end of a very strong speech.

Three weeks later, High Frontier , SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative) was announced. SDI had powerful supporters; Edward Teller was a huge supporter of SDI. It was big-ticket initiative—you're talking eight, ten billion dollars a year. The Soviets saw the two events and surely made the connection between Reagan's animus towards Communism and the announcement of High Frontier.

One conjecture about Reagan's decision to talk with Gorbachev: Bud McFarlane, with help from Nancy Reagan, sought ways to improve relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Over the Christmas holiday, 1984-85, they arranged for a meeting for the President with a Soviet specialist, Suzanne Massie. She was teaching I think at Boston University; she and her husband, also a Russian expert, talked with Reagan about Russian public fear that the U.S. would attack with nuclear weapons. That surprised Reagan and might have made him more amenable to a dialogue.

So the door was opened to talk about tamping down the rivalry, finding ways to build confidence, to reduce weapons and to reduce mutual threat, which led to the initial talks, and reinforced Gorbachev's move towards perestroika and glasnost, and to the very historic arms negotiations. Overnight world attitude flipped about the U.S., and war/peace between the U.S. and the USSR. Up to that point, Reagan was seen as the hardest of hard-line hawks.

Q: That's the thing, somebody coming from his position as Nixon going to China, these people can do it, they can drag their constituency along with them.

SCHNEIDER: Right, and that's very crucial as a lesson; I always talk to my students about this. Conservatives such as Reagan could have the legitimacy in the conservative community in the United States to negotiate fruitfully with the USSR and the PRC. Nixon could engage with the Soviets through START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) and of course initiate relations with China. Reagan's move to stabilize relations with the Soviets also drew on the reasoning of the First Lady and McFarlane, that he could negotiate from strength. We had the famous 600 ship Navy; we had bolstered our forces and rebuilt our Army; we had modern technologies and were vastly outdistancing the Soviets in miniaturization of our weaponry. Their economy was falling behind the West, even of China. Going into the electronic and digital era, they were way behind even though they had certain skills. So he could afford to listen to them. Charlie Wick's piece of the action was to take advantage of the shift and push glasnost and perestroika.

Q: Was Charlie Wick collaborating on the same things, to take advantage, was this gradual or was he an opportunist (I'm not using it as a derogatory term)?

SCHNEIDER: When that change occurred, he wanted to do his part, I'm sure, and spur efforts parallel to those of Max Kampelman who handled strategic weapons negotiations or Paul Nitze who led our negotiating team on theater weapons at the time.

Inter-Agency PD Coordination

Throughout the Reagan years, the NSC established interagency coordinating groups for public diplomacy and for advocacy, both domestic and international. They were more concerned about structure and process than in the past. NSDD 77 and NSDD 130 charted an elaborate set of coordinating mechanisms that would work USIA expertise into at least coordinated support for U.S. policies.

A small coordinating group was formed that included Ambassador Gerry Helman who was a deputy to Under Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, Walt Raymond a CIA officer stationed in the NSC providing oversight for three different organizations. These included the International Information Committee that was chaired by USIA Deputy Director, Marvin Stone. I served as ExecSec and represented the IIC in Walt's coordinating group. I suppose these committees were somewhat like the Eisenhower era

OCB (Operations Coordination Board), but from my limited knowledge the Eisenhower OCB was a larger and far more comprehensive group.

The International Political Committee was chaired by Gerry Helman and looked at the interface of policy, politics and US diplomacy with an emphasis on democracy promotion. The other coordinating committee, the International Broadcasting Committee, dealt with priorities for broadcasting in various foreign languages. An NSC officer, Carnes (Cary) Lord, who was director in the NSC for international communications and information policy, was the point of contact and author of NSDD 77 and NSDD 130 but didn't participate in the interagency coordinating groups. Surprisingly to think of it now, I didn't question the relation or why Cary wasn't involved in the day-to-day communications activities.

The three committees met periodically. I don't recall any specially important actions resulting. And I think after a couple of years they slowly faded away. This speaks to the separation of process from substance. The serious policy issues were taken up by the major, longstanding NSC coordinating mechanisms – the Principals, Deputies Committees and various issue working groups chaired at the Assistant Secretary level.

The coordinating group met bi-weekly in Walt's office in the OEOB to go over a stack of issues and actions, small and large, that had to do with public diplomacy and democracy promotion. A lot of discussion occurred about trying to restructure and reorganize coordination within the foreign affairs and national security establishment, relating to PD and democracy support. Walt, though highly dedicated and creative, was overloaded with projects ranging from the several coordinating groups to work with the Former Members of Congress organization, to specific exchange activities such as the Congress – Bundestag exchange and setting up similar relations between the Former Members of Congress and the Japanese Diet. Much of this was like the work he carried out when he had worked with Cord Meyer helping create front groups in Europe in the '50s though as far as I know the 80s initiatives were public.

The International Information Committee met periodically at USIA headquarters; the Agency HQ building changed from 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue down to 301 4th Street Southwest, across the street from the VOA. We had frequent meetings to craft international public diplomacy and communications strategies, mainly (but not entirely) built around Cold war issues. DOD brought General Richard Stilwell out of retirement to be the DOD representative on the international information committee; Fred Iklé might have come for the first meeting but I think a then-young staffer, John Lenczowski, represented DoD/ISA. Gen. Stilwell was accompanied by officers from the Jt. Chiefs staff. The International Broadcasting Committee was more narrowly focused on reviewing the number and selection of foreign languages for broadcasts. The Political Committee under Gerry Helman met periodically, but I don't recall the specific issues it dealt with. My impression has long been that all the coordinating might not have been worth the effort, except that it legitimized working level cooperation on day-to-day activities.

Mr. Wick didn't bother with these regular ongoing meetings. He called his own meetings, on occasion in the Indian Treaty Room in the Old Executive Office Building, and even in the Cabinet Room of the White House, which included Max Kampelman and other luminaries. He invited a who's who in Washington. He was relatively unconscious of the niceties of rank, if he wanted something to happen. They would all be very cordial to him; they had learned his style by then. It was both impressive and a pleasure – also a little worrisome sometimes -- to see him operate without concern for protocol. I and other USIA colleagues could play off of Wick's boldness – up to a point.

Early 1987 Study of Global Image of Reagan and Wick's Support for the President

One among other memories was the occasion when I accompanied Mr. Wick to a meeting in the White House Situation Room. Before the meeting began, he and CIA Director William Casey huddled on a sofa outside the Situation Room for a few minutes of intense whispered conversation. A day later Mr. Wick called me into his office and asked for an analysis of the president's standing in world opinion. This was early1987, some 18 months after the President's operation for colon cancer and other health issues, and around the time of the Irangate scandal. Reagan's public ratings were sliding and he was only slowly restoring his health. Opinion polls in the U.S. and media commentary expressed doubts about Reagan's capacities. The second term blues had set in.

Mr. Wick commissioned me to send an inquiry to the field and made clear he wanted a frank critique of Reagan's leadership image. It was fading; he seemed disjointed and unengaged. On and on and on. In a few days the field came back with a great deal of evidence of Reagan's slipping image worldwide.

Q: He was on good terms with Weinberger; how did Wick get along with Shultz?

SCHNEIDER: Shultz came to like him. Shultz had enough of a sense of humor to be able to be friendly to Charlie. He's a big bear of a guy; he was able to wrap his arm around Charlie and make him feel really wanted.

US-USSR Information and Cultural Talks

As the U.S. and USSR engaged over a range of security issues in the mid-late 80s, Mr. Wick moved to create a counterpart process in the realm of public diplomacy. He created the U.S.-USSR Information and Cultural Exchange talks. He wanted a parallel initiative in the realm of public diplomacy to the arms control meetings and of course to support the President's call for genuine perestroika and glasnost. Delegations from the two nations met formally four times in '88 and '90 and informally at the UN in the fall of '89.

I became involved in early ’88 to help prepare for the Moscow round of meetings scheduled for the spring of ’88 in conjunction with the Reagan Gorbachev Summit in Moscow. The Soviet delegation was led by Valentin Falin. He was the former ambassador to West Germany, who was in that grey area between politics and professional. By the time of the ’88 Summit he was head of Novosti. It’s difficult to compare Novosti to any one American media institution since it published varied materials, administered radio and TV and later social media, was “independent” yet government financed and was closely coordinated with Soviet policy and on more than one occasion was a link in the chain of Soviet disinformation. Its audiences were domestic as well as global.

Falin had standing in Soviet leadership and Russian culture. He was brilliant but sardonic. He carried a little green notebook with quotes, references and notes he had made and he was very good at stalling and deflecting; he would do it by reading some obscure quote from a Russian philosopher or historical figure or something else and speculating on the idea. In an earlier meeting in Moscow with Wick – I believe it was Wick’s first visit to Moscow in ’87 -- Falin had adopted a fairly hard line causing Wick to walk out of a meeting. This set off a small political uproar – I think more in their governing circles than in ours. In later meetings, Falin seemed to be under instruction to be on his best behavior. My impression in the Spring ‘88 Moscow Summit was that he avoided confrontation but seemed awkwardly “happy” to be leading the Soviet delegation in meetings with Wick and his entourage.

Falin led a Soviet team that included senior representatives from the Foreign Ministry and the several major Soviet entities that were parallel to the several fields represented by the U.S. delegation, radio and TV broadcasting, book publication, the press, social sciences, youth and cultural organizations and from the Central Committee.

The two lineups were parallel but very different: their delegation was totally official and quasi-official, while ours relied heavily on private sector participation.

Among the most interesting participants from their side were from the media or propaganda wing of the Party or Central Committee, such as Aleksandr (Mischa) Lebedev and Leonid Dobrokhotov. They were talented, with excellent English skills and a relatively subtle array of ways to defend their system while displaying the efforts underway for glasnost and perestroika. I believe Lebedev went on to become a diplomat and was DCM or an adviser to the Soviet Ambassador to the Czech Republic who objected to the coup against Gorbachev. Several of the team we dealt with a few years later moved away from the USSR/Russia, a couple to the U.S. Falin’s deputy in the talks and an energetic rising star, Vadim Perfiliev, joined the UN Information Bureau, becoming an international civil servant and ultimately Director of the Bureau.

We put together a who’s who of leadership from American book and newspaper publishing, including leading editorial writers and journalists, senior representatives from the Public Relations Society of America such as opinion research, educational and cultural affairs.

My responsibility was to organize the talks: working with others in USIA and State, set an agenda, recruit participants from the USG and private sector, establish a conference staff in cooperation with the Post and help our participants succeed. This was decidedly a collective effort, involving a superb team from the European Office, notably Carol Dorflein and Rick Ruth and several P Bureau staff –including Joan Bensinger, Herb Romerstein and Todd Leventhal, Gregg Guroff and Steve Grant from the Office of Research, and many others in Press and Publications, Exhibits and from ECA. Our purpose was to maximize the opportunities we had been given to support genuine reforms in the USSR, reduce their use of disinformation, improve relations, expand exchanges, and create openings for public diplomacy in the Soviet Union.

Michael Eisenstadt, the EU Area Director, Rick Ruth, who was a Russian speaking Soviet specialist and I negotiated the details for a renewed cultural exchanges agreement, mainly with Aleksandr Churlin, the Deputy Chief of Cultural Relations in the Foreign Ministry.

Our approach was partly official: We set up panel discussions to exchange views and negotiate cooperation in the many fields encompassed by the broad scope of the Talks. Our emphasis was on helping to open the USSR as widely as possible, and to improve and clarify the procedures for longstanding media and exhibits exchanges.

There were a lot of deals to be made – opportunities for our private sector to relate to their official or quasi-official counterparts through concrete steps and creation of new personal ties.. We sought opportunities for the VOA to expand its presence in the USSR and for RFE/RL(Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty) stringers to be legitimized in the Soviet Union, in order to rely less on samizdat. We hoped to markedly increase the number of libraries and cultural centers throughout the Soviet Union.

Q: Were you able, using Wick's influence, to bring movie stars into the mix? I don't know whether the Soviets had seen enough of our movies to respond.

SCHNEIDER: No stars, but Jack Valenti, head of the Motion Picture Association took part in the Moscow Talks along with one or two MPAA execs, including one former FSO. After intense negotiations, both sides agreed to exchange commercial films for theatrical showings and expand other cooperation. The Soviets agreed to seriously enforce anti-piracy rules. Of course it didn't last very long. But yes, we brought Jack Valenti.

Q: What about jazz disk jockeys, that was so popular in the Soviet Union?

SCHNEIDER: Willis Conover? He didn’t participate and might have already retired, since he passed away in the mid’90s. Dave Brubeck and his quartet performed at Spaso House. Norman Pattiz, the CEO of Westwood One – then a major chain of radio and TV stations and producer of syndicated programs -- flew into Moscow in his own private plane with his spouse and entourage – unheard of then – and in a day sold a 60-minute and a 90-minute package of American popular music to Soviet broadcasters. The next

day he announced he was leaving. We were both pleased and a little taken aback by his bravura – and also by his indifference to the Talks.

It was an incredible time. There was enormous buoyancy and excitement about change in Moscow. I think younger intellectuals and figures in popular culture were eager for change and hopeful. Small but highly symbolic incidents such as the opening of a McDonalds and a Pizza Hut brought a little bright color to an otherwise gray Moscow. A few of us went to the Pizza Hut opening. There were two lines – one for those with hard currencies and one for the rest of the public. Naturally we were able to get in without a long wait.

Q: Looking at time - where do you want to pick this up?

SCHNEIDER: I'd like to spend more time on this, do some more thinking about some of the issues we dealt with. Maybe some more anecdotal stuff on Wick in general; there are other things he did.

Q: Were you at Reykjavik?

SCHNEIDER: Unfortunately I wasn't, that would have been incredible.

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Q: Today is Christmas Eve, the 24th of December 2015, with Mike Schneider. Mike, I'm going to let you take on from there.

SCHNEIDER: Just to pick up on the US-USSR Information and Cultural Talks again, an ongoing challenge in “handling” Mr Wick might illuminate his personality and style – and by the way, no one could “handle” him. Even after two or three exposures to Mr. Wick, the Soviets were still learning how to relate to him.

They knew who he was and who he was close to, so they catered to his needs assiduously. But it was difficult for them to pick up on his style. Having learned this myself, the very first words of Russian I learned were "Это шутка" (eta shutka) - "It's a joke." He would drop these one-liners in the course of meetings and other informal discussions; partly it's his style, partly it's nervous tension. I would just whisper "Это шутка" and the Soviet officials would laugh as best they could – but not too spontaneously. It was very funny to me; I'm not sure if they found it funny because they'd seen that Falin had been dressed down for being too stiff. It was almost like, whatever Charlie wants, give him. His punning was almost compulsive. On a whirlwind tour of the Hermitage in Leningrad the Director of the Museum went above and beyond the needful to praise perestroika, to which Mr. Wick responded at one point, “I’ll take two pairs of stroika.” Few in the Soviet entourage understood the pun – just as well, "Это шутка" (eta shutka)

Completing the Details for Renewal of the Educational and Cultural Agreement

I wanted to recall for you a major change that surprised us all – American and Soviet negotiators – at the last minute. The afternoon before the signing ceremony in the Red Room of the Kremlin, CZW told Michael Eisenstadt, Rick Ruth and me that He couldn't sign the Cultural Exchange Agreement as it then stood, as long as the Soviets were able to control the ruble-dollar exchange on all official exchanges we sent to the USSR. At that point it was, I believe, set at $6 to the ruble. We didn't know where this came from; he'd been grousing a little bit about it but he never instructed us to highlight this. So we had gone along and negotiated a very far-reaching implementation agreement of the renewed cultural exchange agreement from 1958-59. Mr. Wick pulled the rug right out from under us.

We had to go back to renegotiate with Aleksandr Churlin. For a better exchange rate we found out quickly, several of the most important elements would be dropped. Creation of multiple cultural centers in major cities in Russia was out. I think we lost a VOA bureau and Soviet acceptance of stringers for RFE/RL in Moscow, which was a shame We then faced a simple problem in the late evening to re-do the agreements on treaty paper - but at two or three in the morning the Xerox machine broke, so we had to fix the Xerox machine, which is a joke. But we figured out how to do it, got the agreement all printed out and ready to sign. The next day, the formal signing meeting in the Red Room proceeded. Director Wick signed for the U.S. with the President, Secretary of State and other senior U.S. officials, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and other senior Soviets looking on.

In the coming year and into the '90s, exchange rates in general followed the reversal in the rate for official exchanges. Coincidentally the dollar-ruble exchange rate in international markets vastly changed in the next decade to be a couple thousand rubles to the dollar. By the end of the '90s Russia had to devalue its currency – always a painful process. I don't think the talks should get the credit for this reversal, but it was part of that trend.

Q: Do you know where he got his currency impetus?

SCHNEIDER: Probably one of his private sector friends in the Reagan kitchen cabinet, or maybe Cap Weinberger - somebody close to him who must have commented that the Soviets were taking us to the cleaners, and insisted he do something about it. His statement that he couldn't go back to the States without that was quite striking. This didn't come from the Department. I think most people in the official circle were quite pleased to see Charlie do such good work, but they had bigger fish to fry. So the talks were really very successful. For example just bringing out SPSS, (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) disks and turning them over to market researchers and social scientists in the Soviet Union helped them to do opinion research statistically in a valid way. Little things made a difference.

We were also able to start the ball rolling for markedly expanded high school exchanges.

The Librarian of Congress, James Billington – himself a respected historian of Russia and the USSR – had been pushing for exchange of 50,000 students a year. Senator Bill Bradley was also promoting this idea. After the Talks concluded, Greg Guroff and I drafted the precepts for an exchange of about 5,000 high school students each way. The two states couldn't meet even that level. The U.S. didn't have the Russian language training capacity for more than a few hundred students initially. Our side would need to gear up in years to come.

Overall the Moscow Talks were a very gratifying experience. The professionals were able to take advantage offered to them by a high-powered political appointee to do things that were in the national interest.

Q: Is some of the hallmark of Wick—he had a lot of power and was on the right side, wasn't riding peculiar hobby horses.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. I mentioned earlier, he wasn't a very ideological person. His comments about principle and values were generic. He was a dealmaker, that's what he wanted.

The War of Ideas

In one instance we differed, but apparently with no fallout. Mr. Wick wanted to submit a serious article to make the case for promotion of American concepts of democracy and constitutionalism as well as against Soviet secrecy and Active Measures. One of his speech writers might have provided the draft, and as he sometimes did, Mr. Wick asked me to suggest any edits. The speech title included a reference to a "War of Ideas" between the U.S. and USSR. I tried to soften this a bit, suggesting "Competition of Ideas" or "Conflict of Ideas" which I thought was more appropriate in order to support perestroika and glasnost. This back-and-forth went on for several articles or speech drafts over a few months' time period. He didn't seem to object to my suggestions and I rarely saw the finished product.

One day I spotted the headline of a James Reston column in the New York Times which focused on "The War of Ideas" between the US and the USSR. That ended my effort to touch up Mr. Wick.

Q: Did you feel during the Wick period that Wick - justified or unjustified - destroyed some people's careers?

SCHNEIDER: That's a good question. Unfortunately there were occasions when he fired or forced out various officers, some because they couldn't fulfill demands that were impossible or imprudent. He fired several political appointees in the front office or forced them out; he tried to remove a few career people for various reasons, but to my knowledge cooler heads prevailed and their careers were hurt, but not ended. Fortunately for him the people around him such as Deputy Director Marvin Stone and Wick's

personal assistant Pat Sieman could most of the time cool him down. I know a couple of career officers who came close but were rescued either by Jock or by Marvin or others.

Q: You have you might say a professional corps around him, that he allowed them at least to operate with him.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, but it wasn't easy sometimes for some to communicate with him and build enough trust to carry over the tense times. And for some, it was very difficult to meet Wick's demands, but no one could convince him otherwise.

A major friction early on that led the exchanges and cultural communities to greatly distrust Mr. Wick was over a very ill-considered attempt to deal with a Congressional budget cut by drastically reducing exchanges. Budgets were tight in the early part of his tenure, and there was a need for cuts. He offered up the exchange program in order to preserve what he thought were "hard-hitting" informational elements of the agency. This created a furor in the exchange community. On the Hill he had to back down because the exchanges constituency very effectively protested. His apparent dismissal of education and culture stuck with him for quite a while, certainly among the affected communities. He learned that he couldn't cut exchanges because they had a constituency. And he did some good things for exchanges in the long run.

A second was his attempt to extend the reach of the VOA through new, more powerful transmitters. He had a run-in with good people. A very good friend of mine, Bill Harutunian, was the deputy at VOA. He had worked his way up through the ranks at VOA, from New York City in the '50s right up through the '80s. We met in the mid-60s when he visited Dacca as head of the Near East/South Asia Division, to discuss Bangla radio programs we produced for broadcast from D.C.

Bill was Charlie's person to negotiate new transmitter sites, maybe in Egypt or in Southern Israel. Although VOA did make some arrangements for overseas transmitter modernization, Bill wasn't producing results quickly enough for Charlie. In fact, he couldn't. Charlie made Bill's life miserable and he finally retired and went to work as adviser to Eddie Fritts, CEO of the NAB (National Association of Broadcasters).

Mr Wick was as hard on his political appointees as he was on career people. He had some duds. He allowed himself to take in people the White House was sending over, and quite often they weren't competent, at least in his realm. They couldn't make the ship run, and Charlie could see that so he would get rid of them.

Charles Wick and the USIA Bureaucracy

Q: This oral history program comes up with a very strong plus for Charlie Wick, warts and all.
SCHNEIDER. Warts and all - exactly. The challenge for me was probably different from those who were political appointees with the status that came with their appointment. They either delivered for him or were out.

Mr. Wick didn't seem to care very much about titles; if you could achieve what he wanted, fine. He was not a student of organizational charts or the propriety of who should be invited to what. The political appointees in his office were staff, not independent individuals with some standing and maybe even a constituency that counted. I also think that he came to rely more on the career corps more than most of his political appointees.

Q: Did you feel the deputy who was doing most of the administration in a bureaucracy gets an awful lot of people saying "That son of a bitch" you know, it's just inevitable, because I think the great man could take care of this and this twerp between me and him, and I can't get past him. Did you find that you had an opposition movement in the agency?

SCHNEIDER: Not at all; I didn't have that problem. The people I was working for -- Sam Courtney, Charles Horner and Paula Dobriansky relied on me to administer the Bureau day-to-day. I was the go-between. There were only a couple of times when I had to subtly or not-so subtly say to the Associate Director, "This is not a wise idea for these reasons." Nor did I have to say "no" to Mr. Wick; I was saved the worst of it because I was moved up from head of the policy shop in our bureau to deputy head of the bureau after the initial interactions between Mr. Wick and the career service. And I had career status that assured me of a job somewhere in the system. Both Mr. Wick and career officers learned from the initial encounters, and over time in his eight years he seemed to me less impetuous or antagonistic to the bureaucracy.

Policy and Political Missteps

Q: When you have an administration such as Reagan, it came as a shock to the media world. Sitting way off in Naples, Italy, I had a hard time keeping a straight face for a while. But I learned to say, "This man ran a state that's got the economy of Italy." I would have thought you would have had a naturally contentious, suspicious media out there saying, "Who is this Hollywood flashy guy?"

SCHNEIDER: That was true, at least for the first year or two. And of course the "Hollywood Flash" applied to Mr. Wick and he had to learn the hard way through a series of embarrassments, "blacklisting," Illegal phone call tapping, and Kiddiegate.

"Blacklisting" a variety of private Americans – not allowing the field to recruit them as speakers or involving them in USIA programs – was the hair-brained idea of someone in the front office and possibly Scott Thompson, not Wick, all the more embarrassing because it had no clear political or policy rationale or any consistency and included highly respected Americans such as Walter Cronkite and Coretta Scott King. And it recalled prior instances in the 50s and late '60s.

After this particular scandal hit the fan, to his credit, Mr. Wick called those on the list to apologize, and actually developed a friendship with Mrs. King who asked him to chair the International Committee of the King Commission. He asked me to take this on, which

involved two meetings a year in Atlanta and helping DC USIA and field posts increase and improve their programming on civil rights concerns.

Kiddygate involved hiring the children of famous people; Cap Weinberger's son, Ben Wattenberg's son, who was assigned to Paris as an assistant IO (information officer) and others.

The taping scandal, early in his tenure, was the most inflammatory. Journalists such as Bill Safire ripped into Mr. Wick. Charlie recruited Sam Courtney who was then Director of the European Area office, to rescue him. Sam prepared an analysis -- 120 pages worth of mea culpas on everything Mr. Wick had done wrong. Charlie and Sam went up to the Hill and begged forgiveness. The Hill went through it - the honesty was there, clear self-condemnation, and they patted him on the back and said, "Charlie, you're a great American." He became something of a Washington "type."

Q: This has to be remarkable?

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, the Hill also knew his connections with the Reagans. It was a learning experience for Wick. Life started to soar for him and the Agency when Reagan and Gorbachev had their first meeting and U.S. orientation toward the USSR started to shift.

The only person who didn't get on Charlie's bandwagon was Bill Safire. He couldn't stand Wick. The columnist, former speechwriter for Nixon, coiner of clever punchlines or alliterative phrases such as "nattering nabobs of negativity" was always an inventive wordsmith and an expert on lexicon. He'd written books on the meaning of words, had well-crafted columns including that wonderful Sunday column in the New York Times I read all the time on the meaning of words. Very witty, very sharp.

Q: Could you explain in a little more detail about the taping?

SCHNEIDER: Charlie had his phone taped for all calls without informing the person on the other end of the line. That is illegal. Safire really didn't like that, I think it was personal chemistry. Safire just really didn't like Charlie and the feelings might have been reciprocal. At the '88 Moscow summit which Safire covered we tried to steer Charlie away from Safire at public gatherings At first we succeeded, but one time when we were at the main hotel restaurant Charlie spotted Safire eating at a nearby table. He went over to say "hello" and accidentally spilled a glass of water on Safire. Many apologies of course and another embarrassment.

Even to the very end, a week before Wick was scheduled to leave government, this is 1989, Safire called me and said he had heard Wick was taking his final around-the-world boondoggle. Wick had organized a trip to Japan but was also traveling around the world. Safire had one of those remarkable series of words --I really can't remember what it was -- that marvelously characterized Charlie's round the world travel plan. I told him I would get back with info. It just so happened that he called just before Rosh Hashana. I had to

wait until after Yom Kippur to respond and by that time the story was dead. (Laughter). They didn't like each other.

Rapidly Changing Communication Technologies – WORLDNET and U.S. INFONET

Q: How did you find his program which put great emphasis on using transmission of television to have contact with leaders in the United States. Worldnet TV. How did you find that?

SCHNEIDER: Worldnet TV was pioneering and attracted attention here and abroad. It was a very creative, somewhat expensive way to have leading Americans in varied fields be interviewed overseas by important audiences in the embassies through the use of satellite television. It implicitly demonstrated new communication technologies at a time when the communications science communities were on the verge of transformative innovations.

The problem with Worldnet TV was that it was one-way video and two-way audio. You could talk to each other easily but only the foreign audience could see the American leader or expert; The American couldn't see the audience. This made a conversation a little one-sided, with Americans teaching and foreign audiences learning. Worthwhile in many instances but not reciprocal. Prep time and expense were demanding. Nevertheless it served our larger posts in areas with good international satellite communications and USIA received a good deal of publicity over this innovation.

There were less expensive and far more flexible ways to achieve the same results that only started finding a market a couple of years after Mr. Wick started Worldnet, and that was two-way digital television.

Q: It made good sense, if the equivalent was up to the task.

SCHNEIDER: Yes. In the P Bureau in the mid-late 80s we created a small office to conduct two-way digital TV events, relying on technologies and equipment used by DoD. The first set of equipment was costly - $70-80,000 which only a few posts could handle and where digital communications capacity existed. Within a decade costs came down markedly so that by the late 90s it cost about $4,000 a unit. Telecoms costs also dropped and the signal improved. This was the predecessor of today's Skype or Facetime. Credit a very talented colleague, Sandy Bruckner for her work in setting up the two-way digital studio. She carried her work over to State with the merger and helped these conversations become a staple of PD communication.

In the mid-80s We tried very hard to create something called "U.S. Infonet". Sandy Bruckner and I designed a plan to reorganize the information systems of the Agency. It would have involved use of relatively inexpensive digital TV, high speed transmission technologies for the daily Wireless File, more close integration of library support, the

skills and savvy in our Print and Publications Service and elements of our speakers program.

One of the gifts of USIA was its wireless file and all the print publications. The new communication technologies were allowing us to digitally create, store, retrieve and send vastly more information at incredibly higher speeds than with prior systems. create,

We created a system that would merge the library of USIA and the resources it had with the archives of the wireless file. This was before independent government agencies had their own archives and outreach to the rest of the world. It was a very multi-tiered approach to providing information to audiences and institutions abroad. thoughMr. Wick was impressed he was engaged with WORLDNET TV, so the new approaches came about incrementally in the late ‘80s and ‘90s when the digital revolution really came into its own.

Q: CNN (Cable News Network) wasn't a factor in those days?

SCHNEIDER: CNN was just coming into existence in the early 80s as I recall. It was in the hotels but overseas they were rebroadcasting the same news, they didn't have the capacity yet to broadcast fresh news all the time. But it was the beginning of the unifying concept of global reach and global television.

We did incorporate CD-ROM discs that provided new information storage and retrieval capacities for our overseas libraries. We were able to put the annual State Department Human Rights Report, those 500 page volumes, onto CD-Rom disks and ship them to the posts.

Mel Levitsky was our angel for this project. He was the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Legal Affairs in the late ‘80s and made a grant of $800,000 to the agency to buy the disk readers for the field posts and to develop content. Then our small counter-narcotics office in Policy Guidance created a database of international narcos that would be updated by State. And we could also use the disks to read Human Rights Reports as well as other informational materials. We could make them more widely available, especially as people purchased computers around the world.

Increasingly we became aware and took advantage of the digital revolution. We gradually increased the size and scope of the Agency Wireless File, the major ‘fast’ channel for providing information and imagery to our field posts, almost instantaneously. Remember the old telegrams that had to be retyped all caps and go through a couple of gatekeepers before going to the field? The old Wireless File was a little more direct but still we were delighted when we could send 50,000 words a day. Now it’s more like 50,000 words in a nanosecond.

USIA expanded its informational capacities almost geometrically in those years. The new speeds and much reduced transmission costs allowed us to do many more translations

abroad at much-reduced cost, in real time, to be given a final edit and sent to the field in one day.

We also adopted a policy of purchasing more of our communication technologies "off the shelf" or centering on equipment and related software that DoD had centered on, assuming that their purchasing power would reduce costs for the rest of us.

Q: Absolutely. This was a period of real innovation. I always think of the Wang terminal, this was basically a computerized typewriter, but the State Department invested a lot of money in it.

SCHNEIDER: Sure did. It was also stuck with Wang terminals way too long. I don't want to jump ahead but one of the tasks I took on in the mid-'90s at State was trying to get a wide-area network set up for the G bureaus and to get a line out to the rest of the world, because we were dealing with NGOs all the time. It was really bureaucratically impossible then.

Countering Soviet Disinformation

Q: We're in world-wide competition. Were there any other countries whose reach was in conflict with ours?

SCHNEIDER: The Soviet Union of course. In the '88 Talks some of our delegation took a tour of Novosti. It was the closest to being a USIA counterpart, but was far larger and more complex. Novosti was an all-purpose, all-encompassing communications agency for the Soviets, with capacities in all media directed both internally and externally.In one large conference room was a diagram that showed the location and networks of their communications facilities – mainframe computers, radio and TV broadcast facilities, etc. It was really impressive. That dwarfed what we did officially, but then of course there was no private sector. A similar chart of U.S. private sector communication capacities would have required a vastly larger space. Nevertheless Novosti was the competition, and they were impressive.

Q: Was there an office where people were monitoring what Novosti was putting out, and we were putting out responses?

SCHNEIDER: Yes. CIA for decades funded Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS) which translated from many languages print and broadcast output from governments and the private sector around the globe. USIA field posts, especially the larger posts, daily sent to DC summaries and some texts of important articles and broadcasts by leading media. The USIA Media Reaction unit in the P Bureau then collated and summarized these reports for USIA, State and InterAgency recipients. On occasion our Office of Public Opinion Research (P/R) analyzed media output from abroad, including Novosti. Our East Europe/USSR office in the Research Office

produced many analyses of public opinion in the region as well as themes promulgated by the USSR .

Herb Romerstein and Todd Leventhal led the way in exposing Soviet, East German and others' disinformation, as I mentioned earlier. We weren't quite staffed to counter each and every Novosti assertion, but Herb and Todd capably identified broad themes and helped the field understand and deal more effectively with Soviet assertions.

New York Meeting in Fall 1989

Q: When you put the realist up against the ideologue, they don't get along too well.

SCHNEIDER: No they don't, of any stripe. Those were little sidelights. The '88 Talks were the highlight in terms of summitry and accomplishments in the international sector. There were other meetings in '89 and '90. I remember the one in New York in '89: the Soviets had to cut it short because an earthquake caused great devastation in the central Soviet Union. Gorbachev had to rush back to deal with that. But, the morning that the plane was supposed to leave, Charlie had organized a meeting with Yakovlev and a delegation of Soviets who came from the various information and cultural exchange communities. It was a pleasant surprise that they even held the meeting. It came off reasonably well.

Yakovlev was a remarkable person. Hestudied at Columbia 1958-59 a year before I was there as a graduate student. Most articles I read on his year at Columbia said his experience was mixed. He felt somewhat lonely. He also thought the American private enterprise system was too exploitative and not responsible for community well-being and he was critical of racial injustice in America. But he must've learned a lot about the dynamism of our economy and society and it stuck in his mind. Years later when he was ambassador to Canada he brought Gorbachev over twice for very significant, impactful experiences of what a free economy could do. And I think, he greatly influenced Gorbachev's thinking throughout the years.

Q: You talk about '88-'89, the late fall of '89 was when everything fell apart. Gorbachev had been making these - perestroika, glasnost, various things. Was anybody that you know of saying, "After the Soviet Union falls apart..." - in other words, could you see the deluge coming?

SCHNEIDER: I'm sorry to say we didn't see the collapse, but we did witness an intense debate among the Soviet delegation.

We had two more formal rounds of US- USSR Information and Cultural Talks, in 1990. Bruce Gelb was Director. We brought an excellent delegation of USG officials and private sector leaders. In the course of the conversation, we tried to arrange separate working group meetings with the Soviets in different meeting rooms in the building we were in, I think it was the Foreign Ministry. They were reluctant to do that. So we had an extended plenary session. And there erupted within the Soviet delegation a huge debate in

Russian between a group of younger Russian members on the delegation, and others. We were just sitting back, befuddled with what was going on.

After the meeting ended, we asked a few of the younger participants, "What was that all about?" They said, "It's all about constitutionalism." We said, "You mean Soviet constitutionalism?" They said, "No - the *Russian* constitution." So the ferment was there, it was evident to us, and was obviously politically evident to the people in the Soviet Union. The discontent with Gorbachev, because he was trying to do the impossible - manage reform and retain power -- create some kind of quasi-private sector economy that could take off and yet still have control over it.

I think in general, the periodic bilateral meetings were useful. They may not have always produced results we expected, but such occasions created a compulsion for "deliverables" and some concrete agreements to show for the efforts. This proved to be the case in the '90s with the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission and its multiple working groups that dealt with a wide range of bilateral and transnational issues.

Q: I don't want to cut this off in the Wick period, but if you've sort of covered what you want, do you want to talk about post-Wick?

High School Exchanges

SCHNEIDER: I'll just add a note on the high school exchanges with the USSR and the broader youth exchange program that USIA created. Senator Bill Bradley and Librarian of Congress James Billington both pressed for a major exchange of high school students between the USSR and USA. Coming out of the '88 talks Greg Guroff, then head of the East European Office in USIA Research in the P Bureau, and I were tasked to draft a program proposal, which started with a goal of 5,000 student participants from each side, quite a number fewer than the 50,000 proposed by Billington and Bradley. Even 5,000 from our side would have been a stretch, considering the lack of Russian language training. Nevertheless the program started – with fewer students at first, and I believe morphed into diverse programs, some funded by the feds and some with University or foundation support.

Q: We were supporting these various youth groups and it kind of blew up in our face.

SCHNEIDER: I think you're referring to the various front groups the USG created with CIA funding starting in the 50s that became public knowledge in the 60s. Walt Raymond was a young protégé of Cord Meyer in those years. In the mid-late 80s Walt joined USIA to lead an office to promote varied youth exchanges aimed at Eastern Europe.

Q: Have we talked about Cuba? This is as domestically political as one can imagine.

Countering Cuba – Radio/TV Marti

SCHNEIDER: My impression was that Mr. Wick let it happen. I think he wanted to expand VOA broadcasting but influential Cuban groups in Florida lobbied the Congress and Administration successfully for the creation of independent Radio and TV aimed at Cuban audiences. While Radio Marti found a small audience, it was easily jammed. TV Marti was a failure from the outset, not finding any approach to convey the signal effectively.

Q: I have people at USIA, State Department, who were there or made trips there, kept trying to find transmissions from the States, but they were so easily blocked.

SCHNEIDER: Cost them some energy to block the radio and TV, but still they were going to do it. Maybe Radio Marti got through a little more but not much. Later on in '91, '92, Henry Catto who had replaced Bruce Gelb, asked me to chair a study on the future of international broadcasting. He set up three or four working groups to study different elements of USIA programming. We had a good committee of professionals from TV, radio, motion pictures, from the field, and area office representatives. One of our proposals was to take the money for TV Marti and use it to produce documentaries and other informational tools on various elements of civic involvement and democracy that could be provided across the board in Latin America and a small bit into Cuba. That proposal went nowhere.

Q: Well it was an employment vehicle for Mr. Mas and his cohorts in Florida.

SCHNEIDER: Perhaps. Radio/TV Marti remains independent and has strong Congressional support, particularly of course from the Florida delegation. Charlie Wick was succeeded by Bruce Gelb. Originally I believe Ed Ney, a prominent advertising executive, was slated to follow Mr. Wick. Before the start of the fall ‘89 meeting with the Soviet information/cultural delegation in New York around the opening of the UNGA Wick met early that morning in a private room with Ed Ney. As they came out Wick said, "This is what you'll have to deal with, Ed," and he asked Ed to participate in the talks. Ney ended up as U.S. Ambassador to Canada. Bruce Gelb landed USIA. He was VP of Bristol-Myers which the Gelb family, especially his older brother Richard, built. He struggled in the position and increasingly fought with the head of the Voice of America, Richard Carlson. After the animosity became public knowledge the White House sent Dick Carlson to the Seychelles as ambassador and Bruce to Brussels as ambassador. He flourished there, partly because he had an experienced Sr staff and PAO who built trust and helped him relax in the job.

Q: How long was he there?

SCHNEIDER: A year and a half, maybe two.

Q: What were you doing?

SCHNEIDER: I was acting head of the bureau of policy and programs.

Q: Did you have much of a relationship with (him)?

SCHNEIDER: I used to brief him every morning at eight o'clock. Mike Pistor, who was the counselor of USIA, Rick Ruth who was the Executive Assistant for Bruce, and I would brief him. He attended the Secretary's meeting every morning and was constantly asking for us to provide him something to contribute to the meeting. The stuff that we had for him didn't impress and he would come up with ideas, splashy but not appropriate. We tried to advise him. He just wanted so badly to be a player, and it wasn't going to happen.

The Seville Expo

The U.S. presence at the '92 Seville Expo was a miracle of invention yet a major disappointment. In 1990 we put together a staff and a budget to build and run a pavilion at the Expo. From our vantage it promised to be a major event, symbolizing the end of the Cold War. We wanted a presence, however Congress had not appropriated any funds, and earlier had legislated that USIA not spend any money on Expos without prior Congressional approval. Ultimately Congress allowed the Agency to re-program some funds to help pay for the U.S. presence, but we were desperate for funding throughout the endeavor.

The White House appointee as Commissioner-General, Fred Bush (no relation to the first family) was an energetic marketer and was ably supported by three very creative pros, Phil Rogers, Jim Ogul and Betsy Tyson, but we still couldn't find adequate funds until Congress allowed us to re-program some funds, but for a barebones project. Jim Ogul should be credited with thinking of asking DoD, in particular the US Navy engineering and construction team based in Naples for help. DoD was crucially helpful. The base commander in Naples turned out to be my fraternity brother at the University of Rochester, Jim Doebler. His team took on construction of the U.S. Pavilion as a training exercise, which saved us a significant portion of costs for being at the Expo.

Of course there were other costs – personnel, utilities, design and fabrication of the exhibitry in the pavilion. The team re-used some display items from past shows, and somehow managed the personnel costs. I contributed the idea for the central exhibit on the Bill of Rights, and we borrowed one of the original ratified copies from the State of Connecticut to display at the Expo. Betsy arranged for several major cultural events at the U.S. Pavilion, including the Harlem Boys Choir and Ballet Hispanico.

Still for this world power, the U.S. presence in Seville was a disappointment. The site was too large for our meager resources; the buildings were workman-like but not exciting. There was a 300-foot-long water wall at the entrance which in the summer months in Seville would have added cooling moisture to the site. But the Pavilion couldn't afford grade-A water. The outlets clogged, the concrete wall was mud-streaked.

Everyone on the Pavilion team and backup in the Exhibits section worked very hard to make this an attractive American presence but it paled by comparison with other U.S.

World Fairs entries. During the run-up sometime in ’89 or ’90 I drafted a letter from Gelb to the White House stating that, in view of the absence of funding and paltry support from all concerned, we were pulling out. This letter never went anywhere, not even as an alert to the White House and plea to the Congress to help us.

In the Spring of 92, Jim Doebler arranged a plane to take several of us – Gene Kopp and me and others to look over the Pavilion before the opening. It was a major disappointment to me. As I recall it was mildly panned by the critics and attracted fewer visitors than other major pavilions.

Henry Catto

When Bruce Gelb went to Brussels, he was succeeded by Henry Catto, who had all the right experience. He'd been assistant secretary of Defense for public affairs. He was very connected to the Bush family. Texas roots, his wife was a prominent Texan. Well-to-do, dapper, smooth, intelligent, balanced.

Q: He was a graduate I think one year behind me at Williams.

SCHNEIDER: A decent and modest person, too. For example, he found some space for an exercise room to be created for people in the agency, over in the building across the street from our headquarters. One day I happened to get in the elevator and saw him there and I complimented him for this. He said something to the effect of, "Well it's about the only good thing I've done." I thought that was astounding, because he'd done a lot of good for the integrity of the agency and its personnel. Unfortunately, he wasn't around long enough -- Bush lost the election to Clinton, so Catto didn't have the opportunity to follow through on a series of studies he commissioned for the future of public diplomacy.

Q: How did you find the Bush I Administration, USIA-wise?

SCHNEIDER: The very first day he was in office, President Bush held a meeting in the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Constitution Hall for Senior Executive Service and said "I believe in public service." He was the one and only president since maybe Kennedy or LBJ who didn't run against the establishment in Washington. … tells you just how broadly that kind of optic had changed or the pendulum had swung. That was an endearing quality of Bush and probably both a strength and weakness as well; he wasn't at heart a politician, he was at heart a public servant. And also he was very upset by what he thought was the distasteful nature of the Reagan Administration; he didn't like the glitz. Just a totally different culture – more conservative old New England than Hollywood or Texas oil.

Q: Bush was president at an extremely crucial time, when the Soviet Union fell apart. The Cold War lasted many years and here was a victory, yet we went out of our way to turn this into an opportunity not to crow, but to try to make something positive.

SCHNEIDER: I think he should get great credit for that, he and Baker with the counsel of Bakers' adviser and Under Secretary Bob Zoellick. I believe he played a major role in the major speeches by Bush and Baker at the end of the Cold War. Initially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the collapse of the USSR everyone was waiting month after month, asking "Where's your vision? Bush wasn't a vision person, nor was Baker. But Zoellick's vision was reflected by U.S. initiatives in that critical time. They were not triumphalist; they were very careful to be cautious and modest in their estimation of what happened.

Q: I find that remarkable.

SCHNEIDER: No one else would have been so careful as they were. That's where experience counts and Zoellick's intellect framed their experience.

Q: As a real diplomat.

SCHNEIDER: Exactly.

USIA "End of the Cold War" Budgetary Struggles

Q: How did you approach this whole thing, what did this do at USIA?

SCHNEIDER: The end of the Cold War rapidly led many in Congress to question whether USIA should continue at the same level of funding. They perceived USIA, wrongly, as just a "Cold War Agency" -- We were starting to lose money. With Mr. Wick's departure -- even before his departure -- budgetary constraints were starting to be felt.

One of the key junctures was funding for Central and Eastern European democratic reform. USIA might have been a logical place to vest some of the responsibilities that came with new funding by the Bush Administration. We had experience in the field in supporting academic programs in higher education, though not development responsibility per se. However, the White House/OMB and State put all of these eggs in the AID basket rather than dividing them. So AID received $100 million, big money in those days, for a higher education program which USIA could have carried out, perhaps at less cost. USAID Administrator Peter McPherson announced a major initiative to support higher education abroad and I felt we had lost a significant opportunity to broaden and deepen our institution-building capacity, which ECA and the posts could have accomplished.

Q: AID is rather ponderous in delivering. It does not move fast on its feet.

SCHNEIDER: No, AID had been whipped back and forth by Congress for decades; and from my vantage had grown overly self-protective. In the mid-'90s on behalf of Tim Wirth I sat in discussions that AID held about its policy/planning role. It was the most jargon-laden conversation I'd ever been involved in. Not that they shouldn't have had a

specialized language; every institution does. They were even more in-grown than USIA had been in the mid-'70s when we went through a phase of introspection and change.

At any rate, USIA within its charter and institutional capacity, could have some of what AID was specially funded to do in the late '80s, early '90s on behalf of fostering democracy in central and eastern Europe. We certainly might have conducted more training programs in media and NGO and higher education management. There were certain areas that probably were beyond our capacity or skill, but we could have added these. We had done journalist training in the field and in the late 80s and 90s beefed up these activities. The Agency also became the funding agent for an East-Europe oriented NGO, the International Media Fund, organized by former USIA leaders, including former Director Leonard Marks. The Voice of America had conducted their own media training exercises. In the mid-'80s, we made a grant to Hearst and then the Communications Department at Boston University to train Afghan "journalists" to help them become genuine journalists - they had been crude propagandists at best.

We could have trained civic leaders and worked on the panoply of programs in this dimension of democratic development that AID was funded to do in the late '80s and early '90s. I mention this because from my vantage, this was the turning point in the history of USIA. Absent that money and with it the legitimization for *a* nation-building role, we were more and more fair game for budget cutting in the '90s.

The Cold War is Over -- USIA Response to Budget Cuts

Q: When the Soviet pact fell apart, the 'Stans and all that, there was no money; funds were put aside to establish posts there; this was supposed to come out of the European budget. What did that do to USIA?

SCHNEIDER: We were getting the squeeze. Our budgets had leveled off by then. No new money to speak of. There were programs that we were over-invested in, for decades, even after this period. Europe was very heavily funded. We were heavily invested in a number of pivotal states that would remain important after the end of the Cold War. For better or not we had seven cultural centers in the former Yugoslavia. We were highly invested in Japan, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Egypt – PL480 countries we discussed earlier and each singularly important. These were disproportionate compared to the Agency budget for field operations overall. Nevertheless this investment represented long-term U.S. interests.

The budget squeeze really affected the agency with the advent of the Democrats in '92-'93. I was acting Associate Director for Policy and Programs during the transition and initial period of the Clinton Administration and found myself waging a rearguard defense of the Bureau. Slices were being taken out of our budget; we had no domestic American constituents or particular Congressional support. Educational and Cultural affairs, even the Voice of America, had constituencies. Our only "constituency" were the field posts who relied on our support. The leaders of the field, the regional area directors of USIA,

were all too prone to try to cut us rather than take hits in the field. Well, this was understandable.

The USIA budget crunch became more severe with the new Administration feeling the pinch of Congressional constraints during the summer of '93. The Director of USIA, Joe Duffey, was iconoclastic about the informational role of USIA. He was strongly concerned about the ethics of our foreign policy and our engagements in the world, our use of power, about the Reagan years and the ideological thrust. Essentially he felt that the U.S. had no right to preach to the rest of the world unless we straightened out our own house, which he felt needed reform.

USIA faced significant budget retrenchment. It all came to a head in August of 1993. I was away on vacation and was called back to the agency for a budget discussion. I knew that there was budget cutting in the wind. All the senior leadership gathered in the Director's conference room when Joe announced the end of the Bureau of Policy and Programs and the intent to create a new, leaner bureau and in the process to save funds through consolidation and change.

I argued that such cuts and change wouldn't solve USIA's budgetary dilemma and that we needed an Agency-wide assessment of what to keep and what to end. I made the point that those cuts were a temporary fix; more cuts would be required. The classic salami slicing would not work. The whole agency needed to stand back and prioritize itself -- not just the support elements in Washington, but the field as well. They had to analyze field needs because there were going to be some posts that were more important than other posts that needed the kind of support they should get. That idea of course gained no traction in the meeting. Barely ten - 15 minutes later a couple of Area Directors came to my office seeking ways to retain favored media support that had just been cut.

Q: The interviews I've done for some time now, Joe Duffey has come across as somebody who really didn't believe in USIA and was sitting around saying, "What are we doing? Why have this?" He sort of allowed it, there wasn't a strong defense there.

SCHNEIDER: To my knowledge – and keep in mind I was over at State by late 1993 and not in the USIA loop -- there appeared to be little serious effort by USIA leadership to gain support on the Hill or in the Administration for restoration of our funding, and later, for keeping USIA independent.

Q: The idea of not preaching - we are a revolutionary force, and no matter how you look at it, what we want are good solid democracies, change from time to time and all, we feel much more comfortable with that because dictatorial powers don't really like us.

SCHNEIDER: Indeed. While I myself felt the phrase 'Telling America's story to the world' was a little corny, it was better than nothing. It's how you tell the story. First of all, it's not 'America's story,' it's 'America's stories.' There are millions of stories in the U.S. None of us professionally were thinking there was one story to tell and we would impose it on audiences abroad. We were well aware of the diversity of American opinion and

views, and very few of us felt shy in sharing that experience. It was really more sharing our experience with the rest of the world, warts and all as Ed Murrow said. Even emerging from the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era, we felt we had to be humble and listen to the rest of the world. It wasn't a question of dominating the minds of the rest of the world. First of all, we knew that wasn't possible.

Q: We were America so we weren't able to do that, that's not the way Americans work.

SCHNEIDER: No. Well, Joe veered to the opposite of the Reagan years as the Reagan years were perceived. He didn't like telling the rest of the world how to behave. By the way, that preachiness comes from the prevailing American culture. The view of our nation as exceptional, above others, was long-rooted in America's domestic self-perception.

Q: But also by the people who were hired. Nobody told me I had to sell America's story, but I felt "We've got a damn good thing here and other countries would benefit by it," and there's a certain missionary thing that anybody who gets into State Department, USIA, probably CIA - it's there.

SCHNEIDER: It's implicit, in a way. If someone candidly said to me, "What do you do? Do you sell America abroad?," I'd have to say "Well, yep, partly we do." But it's not a one-way sale; we're listening. We can better advise senior U.S. leadership on international opinion and underlying values.

Q: And there is a feeling that the message we have will benefit everyone. We're willing to admit that the financial system doesn't work terribly well but compared to other places it's better than most.

SCHNEIDER: Our mandate, the USIA mandate, has always been partly for two-way communication, for mutual understanding, for interpreting the experiences of the rest of the world that relate to America and our policies and conveying them to U.S. leaders. We were also supposed to provide opportunities for people from the rest of the world to teach us. It was never a simplistic, "You've got to be like us" cookie-cutter approach to tintypes of America. And most professionals would agree, I believe, that effective advocacy relies on good listening and carefully understanding the concerns and positions of others. In other words our mission included several mandates – to convey U.S. policies to publics abroad and to advise U.S. policymakers on international views of these policies; also to promote mutual understanding and communication and to help Americans better understand the rest of the world.

Assignment to be Senior Adviser to the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs

Q: During this time, what eventually happened during the Duffey period for you?

SCHNEIDER: Senior leaders wanted change. In one respect, it saved me the pain of having to reorganize the P bureau and to make big cuts. I was a holdover from the Reagan years; it was time to move on after nine years-plus. In fact, I had an agreement with myself - no more than 10 years in any one job, and no fewer than two. I never felt you could accomplish anything really worthwhile in less than two years, and 10 years were plenty. So it was time for me to go. Joe Duffey's Assistant Iris Burnett found me a position with Tim Wirth, the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs. Jessica Tuchman Matthews, who was Tim's senior advisor, was leaving and he needed someone to take on her portfolio.

Q: She went to Carnegie?

SCHNEIDER: Exactly. So, I was assigned to work for him as senior advisor. As a former Colorado senator, Tim had taken leading positions on energy and the environment. He might have been Secretary of Energy or Head of EPA had Clinton wanted it.

Jessica's portfolio at the time was vast like all of Tim's empire. He oversaw OES, DRL, PRM and INL. Jessica focused particularly on relations with Russia with regard to transnational issues. I picked up that portfolio and also worked with Tim on his "US--Japan Common Agenda." Additionally I served as a supporter of an initiative by the Geographer of the Department, Bill Wood, to help build public-private support for new geo-spatial applications. This resulted in the UN-Sponsored ReliefWeb. I also handled a few special projects of interest to Tim and arranged for USIA to gain Agency media coverage and program support for several initiatives such as the Cairo conference on Population and Development.

Q: I was thinking, and this probably is a good place to stop. We'll pick this up, you're now under Tim Wirth.

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Q: Today is 28th of December 2015, with Mike Schneider. You're in Tim Wirth's office.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, back in fall of '93. I went over to Tim Wirth's office about six months after he had been designated Under Secretary. Initially he and "the building" didn't get along very well. Nevertheless he stayed on as Under Secretary for six years. I think the continuity made a positive difference for the global issues portfolio Tim pursued so avidly. I was fortunate to arrive after the initial, intense back-and-forth.

There were little matters of style that weren't so little. For example, he insisted on keeping the hall corridor door to the G suite of offices open, and he also insisted on keeping the door to a private corridor that connected his office to the office of the counselor, the office of the Under Secretary for Political affairs, Deputy Secretary and Secstate suites open too. This private corridor made it possible to walk through basically from the secretary's suite to the offices of almost all the most senior officials at State. These were very august spaces, with huge, beautiful cherry paneled walls. But

Diplomatic Security and people who were more traditional didn't like the idea of an open corridor. Tim might have demonstrated openness, but from the standpoint of diplomatic security, he was opening up very privileged spaces to people who shouldn't have been wandering around, even if all were State employees. As soon as Tim left the Department, the private corridor was walled off.

Q: Get rid of the situation?

SCHNEIDER: Exactly.

Q: Could you explain other than your office who was in charge of world affairs, which does cover...

SCHNEIDER: All the global issues, transnational issues?

Q: Could you explain what some of these were?

SCHNEIDER: There were 11 broad issue areas which were grouped within each of the "functional" bureaus that reported to Tim. In OES you had oceans, environment, and science. PRM had population, refugees, and migration issues. INL dealt with international narcotics and legal issues. DRL had democracy, human rights, and labor issues. By that time the labor advisor, who for decades had been an adviser to the secretary, had been moved into DRL as a more operational policy unit rather than pure policy.

Q: That does also signify the diminution of the interest in labor affairs which used to really predominate in Latin America and Eastern Europe, was really major, and the labor unions played a major role in this. But it became very obvious at a certain point that this no longer pertained.

SCHNEIDER: Right

Q: This is genuine labor, and they were taking their money wherever they could get it. Again, no office of the State Department or the government was directing them. They were being used.

SCHNEIDER: By the '90s it was time to make the labor advisor an operational, programmatic element and not an advisor from organized labor to the secretary. This is probably the pattern that some other special interests have had over the years; they get close to the secretary of State at that level, and sooner or later the operational work has to be spun off. Now some people would say, "That's demoting the function," but from my vantage it was helping it become more operational. As long as it had a line item, it had some money to spend and staff, they could do about as much good in DRL as they could as advisor to the secretary of State. There's that image of importance, but it's also a deficit because a new secretary comes in and doesn't always attend to the special interest of his or her predecessor.

At any rate, the other issues in the basket that Tim carried around were international narcotics and legal affairs. So he had these issue areas - all the transnational issues. It was a rational way for the department to assign the functional bureaus to a senior under secretary. Things have changed over the years; the portfolios of the under secretaries have been reconfigured but in the '90s there was Tim sitting on top of these four transnational bureaus. He was more interested in the environmental complex and in descending order, the PRM and DRL complex, and didn't appear highly interested in the INL issues. Nor did he seek to highly manage the bureaus. But he held regular meetings of the Assistant Secretaries, often seeking the connections among issues and engaged actively but selectively on different policy concerns.

Q: He wasn't really coming from a managerial position. It has often shown itself, people coming out of the Senate don't usually come with much managerial experience and it takes years for them to develop if they do develop them.

SCHNEIDER: If ever, right. He was mainly interested as I saw it in building constituencies and having an impact on policy, with particular emphasis on environmental issues, particularly climate change and sustainability, to a lesser extent on all the rest. Energy and environment, but energy wasn't exactly in his bailiwick. That was his calling card. He had a very finely tuned sense of the interaction of these transnational issues. He had, of course, a set of speeches that he could give to interested constituencies around the country.

A little vignette - early on, I think just to see what I could do, he asked me to write a whole new set of speeches for him. I took him seriously. I could see that his right-hand man, David Harwood, who had been with him in the Senate, wasn't happy at this. Nor was Andy Ray, his Executive Assistant. I could see both of them flinch when Tim was asking me to write a whole new set of speeches.

I earnestly set about to draft three new speeches. I read and listened to his speeches and got the meter, the tone and his style of speaking, but I was trying to introduce some new language to what he was accustomed to saying.

The lesson from this experience -- don't try to change an experienced and very impactful speaker such as Tim Wirth. He was a practiced campaigner. He would put in a paragraph here or there, wherever he was going. I accompanied him to St. Louis once where he made a major speech which was basically his stump speech with language relevant to his visit and meetings there thrown in.

I learned a lot from working with Tim, lessons about politics, the department and building domestic constituencies.

Q: How did he get along with the secretary?

SCHNEIDER: I never saw the two together and would only say in retrospect that Tim learned to live with others on the 7th floor, and vice versa – it was a two-way street. He was accustomed to making decisions more rapidly and independently and I think was taken aback by the obstacles to decision making in the building, while so many in State didn't have his ability to build domestic policy constituencies. This is so important for effective leadership.

Q: What did you feel you brought to the operation?

SCHNEIDER: I brought the USIA experience and working ties. This included a feeling for international public opinion and how to draw on various analyses for policy advice. On a practical level, I brought the ability to draw on USIA support for Tim's agenda.

Supporting the Global Issues Agenda

Q: The environmental thing, you talked before about the cost of environmental things, and it really hit the industrial support of the president and the Republican Party. You have to talk positively about the environment, but behind that is, "How much is it going to cost to reconfigure our energy sources?" and all this. This was anathema to many Republicans.

Perhaps, but at any rate, I saw myself as an intermediary with the Agency which proved to be so helpful to Tim's and the Administration's agenda for global issues.

A series of major UN conferences occurred in the '90s that were all central to our global issues agenda. I and a number of USIA personnel were involved in support of U.S. engagement in a series of UN conferences in the '90s -- even before Tim -- for example at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in June '92.

The second major UN conference was the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. This was the conference that ratified the idea that women's rights were human rights.

There was the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in June '95. Just as for the Rio Conference, USIA set up a press center that facilitated wide international coverage of the Conference and arranged interviews with U.S. delegates. One of the very astute approaches the U.S. government took at that time was not to present American patterns and ways of dealing with sensitive issues of population growth and birth control, but to turn to leaders of women's organizations and health movements in Indonesia, Malaysia, even in Pakistan, to make the case to the Islamic world that there are ways within the faith and within the cultures to deal with these issues. That was very important and instrumental in helping many nations find ways to relate tradition to health and modernity and to actually foster the women's movement.

The 1995 Fourth Conference on Women, near Beijing drew some 30,000 attendees and further strengthened the commitments of the Vienna Conference.

Then there was a World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen which was a precursor for the UN Conferences setting sustainable development goals. There was also a conference in Istanbul on the city and urban change. All these UN-organized conferences in the '90s were benchmarks for the changing world and the rising role of transnational issues.

These conferences also reflected the increasing importance of transnational NGOs on the world stage.

Q: Well say a woman's rights and population, how stood we with India and China? These must have been real conflicts?

SCHNEIDER: I don't recall major disagreements from the vantage of the G office ... Of course there were varied security and economic bilateral concerns, but these were not in Tim's portfolio, I don't recall his doing anything special with China or India.

U.S. – Japan Common Agenda

He did create a special initiative with Japan to help broaden bilateral relations, with a focus on cooperation on global issues, creating what we called the US-Japan Common Agenda. That was a way of expressing our view that with Japan's economic ascension in the '70s and '80s, we wanted to help Japan fulfill its responsibilities as a global economic power. Tim created the "U.S. – Japan Common Agenda" working with a Japanese deputy foreign minister. The Common Agenda was a useful way for Japanese agencies to gain needed experience in conducting an activist development agenda and for Japanese representatives to gain needed skills in development support.

I had experienced this in Dacca; A Japanese firm had won the contract for building TV in East Pakistan in '65 but they lacked needed software skills -- how to relate to the program people develop program content and programming design. Their lack of English language was a serious impediment. We helped by providing the nascent Pakistan TV in Dacca a large number of USIA documentaries and varied informal help with program development.

On the global level, under the Common Agenda Japan would provide project teams, for cooperative development projects and volunteers and funding, and we were going to advise on program development. I recall that the agreement involved Peace Corps relationships with Japan's JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). There were cooperative projects also on educational reform, and a couple of other fields.

Building Domestic Constituencies for US Action on Global Affairs

I also helped Tim build an understanding in the Department of constituencies that the Department should pay greater attention to. Functional bureaus had constituencies, with significant public influence not so recognized Department-wide. Tim early on in my time

with him wanted to do something about that. So we organized a conference on the global issues; it was kind of show-and-tell, "this is what the global issues are, this is how we are approaching it in the new State Department and these are the important and diverse constituencies paying attention.

With the help of a PMF and an intern -- the captain of the Harvard football team -- we organized a conference of most all the NGOs in Tim's issue areas. We squeezed 525 people into the Loy Henderson room. That was a demonstration to the Department of clout and potential support, or opposition. I escorted Strobe Talbott from his office to welcome everyone. When I took him into the room, his jaw dropped to see the number of people who came to take part in this event. It was kind of a show of force by different NGOs that represented all of these constituencies.

Q: This is the first time they'd all been—

SCHNEIDER: All in one room, all together. That was Tim, with a flair. He also organized a major 7th floor reception, I forget what it was for, maybe it was a run-up to Cairo. President Clinton and Ted Turner and Jane Fonda were the honored speakers

Q: Ted Turner and Jane Fonda was a movie star, they were married—

SCHNEIDER: Married at that time.

Q: Baseball team— really heavy hitters.

SCHNEIDER: Absolutely, and also controversial, even then. Turner and Fonda were not shrinking violets. And the president was the lead speaker. The event was held in the 8th floor Benjamin Franklin dining room. A couple hundred people attended.

In my role as Tim's Russia account manager I had heard that Jane Fonda and Ted Turner were interested in acquiring Moscow TV channel Six and using it for good purposes. But Russia was pretty criminalized at that point. Glasnost and perestroika had been taken over -- the nomenklatura were buying up everything they could buy and Yeltsin was drinking heavily. Nevertheless in a brief conversation I put in a plug for them to complete the purchase of Moscow TV-6 -- probably not appropriate by the way -- and Jane Fonda just said, "No way," and that was that. They weren't going to go near TV-6 and one of the reasons was that one of the senior people at TV-6 had recently been murdered.

There were four other initiatives for which I became a kind of special projects officer for Tim: representing him on the Administration team's Gore Chernomyrdin Commission; helping a private company obtain USG support for an initiative to remove Cesium 137 from the water, milk and baby food, post-Chernobyl; helping generate funding from USAID and State to rescue an historic seed repository in Petersburg, and an effort to strengthen the G Bureaus' connectivity with the outside world. Each represented complex bureaucratic challenges.

Gore Chernomyrdin Commission

For Gore-Chernomyrdin I served as Tim's cheerleader to OES and EPA as we developed initiatives with Russian counterparts. I recall going for tea to the apartment of the adviser to Yeltsin for environmental affairs. At that time another major oil leak had occurred but when I asked him, he said there were a dozen just as severe. For a while with U.S. encouragement, Russia had a minister for environmental protection, but in time, the job was downgraded to head of an office and then an advisor, then very much moved out of sight.

Post-Chernobyl Initiative to Remove Cesium 137 from milk and water

A private company was referred to Tim who asked me to help him navigate the USG to demonstrate his process for removing radioactive material from milk, baby food and water. It was copyrighted as 'MagSep' but he didn't know the approval system for adopting the process and using the purified products downwind in Ukraine and Russia. I had to identify contacts in several offices of AID, State, HHS and the FDA and help him gain approvals from all those offices before he could gain assistance and support for introducing the process on an industrial scale – which ultimately he did. It took a year but was well worth the effort.

Effort to Strengthen State's Internet Connectivity

I also tried to give Tim and the G Front Office better connectivity with his four bureaus and faster outreach capacity with NGOs and constituencies concerned about climate change. I proposed to Tim (he bought it) that we create a wide-area network with the four G bureaus, that would allow him to be in more easy communication – an Intranet connectivity. He was always strong on communication and had been involved in communication policy both in the House and the Senate. I didn't spend a lot of time on this because I was doing many things, but I then proposed to the seventh floor executive support bureau - S/S-EX - that a wide-area network be set up for the four bureaus and G, and that we have a unclassified Internet/email capacity to deal with the vast array of NGOs out there in the world.

Communications grew and changed rapidly in the '90s. Up to then we were communicating with the outside world through faxes, can you believe it? It was a fax machine that we wouldn't say was cutting edge even in the '90s, let alone today. So trying to invite NGOs to come to your meetings, to set up an informal meeting (apart from using the phone), to broadcast to five or six NGOs rather than making five or six calls, to send the text of a draft of something or a letter to five or six or 10 NGOs or or others in State or to a thousand NGO activists -- almost impossible with the communications capacity of the State Department in the '90s.

State was so behind the communications curve then. In most offices on the 7th floor there was a classified system that dealt with classified systems, and there was almost no connectivity to the unclassified world. Now keep in mind that in the Defense Department,

65% of their PCs and their communication was through unclassified means. They designated the 35% to those that really needed to be classified. State was just beginning to think about two PCs in an office, with an iron pipe to shield the Internet cable, etc. Only occasionally was there one PC with two hard drives, that was just beginning.

So for us to come in and propose a wide-area network for the G bureaus and unclassified Internet connectivity to the rest of the world must have seemed threatening. And even among the four G Bureaus not everyone looked forward to the Intranet -- they were over-burdened by daily work demands – though the Exec for OES and PRM had a small team that very much wanted to engage with cutting edge telecoms.

We didn't get very far with Information Management, either for the seventh floor or the rest of the department. Finally, after going back and forth sporadically over the three years I was with G, S/S-EX arranged for a Wang PC and an AOL (America Online) account. But they had to run a copper wire about 1,000 feet down to a firewall-protected PC that OES had set up as an experimental PC for outside unclassified connectivity. The bill would have been $14,000, which was considered a lot of money. So it didn't happen while I worked for Tim. But it did happen about two or three years after I departed.

Q: The whole digital age has changed so much the way we operate. We've been going through a revolution that's social and electronic.

SCHNEIDER: And the two interact, of course.

Q: We're talking about the State Department's interaction with many American citizens. Embassy to embassy communications, you can trace back to the quill pen, and it really hasn't changed a whole lot. "We have the honor to inform you, sir, with highest appreciation, we're now at war with your country," in these terms. But we're talking about working with, probably your bureau was working more with the American public on major issues - it was created for that.

SCHNEIDER: And I think people were coming to see this. I don't think Tim's time in the State Department was wasted. I wonder if he gained as much as he hoped for. Institutional constraints and personalities get in the way. But he did accomplish a good deal. I think by the time Colin Powell came into power the need for current communication capacities was more than obvious; State was way behind. You know, the very first thing he said in his first daily Assistant Secretaries' meeting was to tell them what websites he liked the most.

Q: He probably drew blanks...

SCHNEIDER: I heard it from Colin Powell's long-time assistant, then chief of staff at State, Bill Smullen. You know – welcome to the 21st century! Then the pallets of Dell computers started to show up at the State Department, and you could see the movement forward in the department to modernize its communications capacity. But in the '90s,

coming from USIA -- by choice we were not cutting edge, but we were current, very current -- it was stunning to see how far behind was the Department's communication capacity.

Q: Of course, we've been recruiting a modern generation but they didn't have the tools. They didn't speak the same language as the senior officers did.

SCHNEIDER: Not at all. That was the awkward transition, and he led that change.

Q: During that time, on the various things, where did you feel that you were making a world-wide impact on trafficking in women and children, these various issues, where were your major impact points and the ones that really didn't go anywhere.

SCHNEIDER: Let's think about that. Traditionally the Agency and field posts devoted time and resources to support democratic development and the many related concerns, free press, independent judiciary, the culture of democracy. While each post had to deal with unique histories and conditions relevant to the host nation, overall this was one of the central themes of USIA work over the years.

With the rise of the global environmental movement, USIA increasingly invested in generating awareness of environmental concerns and of the interaction of urban growth, health, and the environment --- in support of the U.S. presence at the major international conferences I mentioned, also through support for field programs such as sending speakers abroad and acquiring or creating informational products and services on the issues. And the Voice of course was very much involved as well. For example, the Africa division produced ongoing programs on health issues in Africa. Perhaps the most enduring impacts regarding the global issues overall occurred through the many exchanges and international visitor programs we sponsored.

For a while in the 80s we weren't sure how to treat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Some were reluctant to deal with what seemed a highly technical issue or an aspect of "nation building" but the posts increasingly demanded people with expertise and information to provide leaders and informed publics in the region.

Q: Why would we be avoiding it?

SCHNEIDER: It was seen as a public health, a technical issue, and we had so many other issues to deal with. But our posts, always responsive to what's really important to important audiences, were saying, "We cannot ignore this." The disease is destabilizing governments and societies. There had always been some debate in USIA whether we're into nation-building or not. The concept had lost its glamor with U.S. very controversial support for the regime in Vietnam, and resistance against Communist extension in Southeast Asia. So for a while, USIA officially got out of "nation-building." That was the expectation, but the field was dealing with a pressing need.

Q: It's always been there.

SCHNEIDER: It always has been there, it always should be there. Other nations were of course concerned about their development - in the Cold War context we were certainly talking about alternative pathways to development and modernity -- ours, and the Communist world's. We were offering developing nations one pathway, the Soviet Union was offering another. The Third World was cherry-picking from the two rival worlds and developing its own national sense of democracy, of development and so on.

Q: In all these issues, we could absent ourselves from taking a particular stand; most countries do. But this ain't America, I mean if nothing else we're an anchor, we're a meddler, we're a pusher, for what we consider the right thing to do. If we absolve ourselves from this, then we're not true to ourselves.

SCHNEIDER: And you know, it's in our nature to teach, "This is how we do it," with pride. I guess it's sometimes a question of affect as much as it is content. In any event, the prevailing ethos in USIA had been for nation-building in the early '60s; we backed away from it in the late ‘60s and early '70s. With the advent of the Carter Administration, we were back into a form of nation-building with an emphasis on human rights and humanitarian affairs. The U.S. moved five degrees right and left throughout the time I served.

The most clear-cut and major reversal of national policies in those years was over population issues and the Mexico City language. The very first day Presidents Reagan, Clinton and Bush reversed their predecessor’s policies on birth control and abortion. That's quite striking, isn't it?

Q: It is. It's an issue that touches, sort of like gun control, gun control and birth control end up often as two of the major issues in an election. It's playing that way right now.

SCHNEIDER: Yes it is. It's the tip of the iceberg because it summarizes a whole set of concepts and ideology. Getting back to your question, what did we do, I think... No single under secretary is going to change American thinking, but Tim did contribute to the further rise of the NGO movements, and to the movement toward more environmentalism. He didn't have control over legislation, so that was not possible. He was an under secretary not the secretary so he didn't set policy in the same way that a secretary would. But he certainly did give support to the constituencies. I think that was Tim's major contribution.

Q: Something that shows a microcosm or a little area where change in attitude - when they had the Rwanda crisis, and the American and Canadian military were going in to feed refugees that had been dispersed in the jungles. Somebody said, "Have you talked to the NGOs on this? They've been dealing with this sort of thing for years?" And all of a sudden, "Well that's a good idea." One of the things that came out of it, "Don't send big bulk items of rice, this can be used to support troops." I think now NGOs are basically included in so many decisions which they weren't before, because NGOs - at least this is

my attitude - these are kind of fanatics, and they believe very strongly in their side, "It's my way or the highway." So it's a lot easier to deal with government-to-government type things. But now I think both sides have loosened up and are part of the team.

SCHNEIDER: Absolutely, the NGOs play a fundamental role in humanitarian relief around the world today; have for many years. Yes, in a real crisis like the Indonesian tsunami several years ago, our armed services were central because they had the logistics capacity, the ability to organize; the supplies, even regional health labs around the world. But NGOs in almost every instance - you want to take the Haitian earthquake relief, tsunamis here, earthquakes there - the NGOs are the cutting edge. They're the first ones there, along with our military; they work hand in glove. There's a very busy office in DoD for civil-military cooperation, and AID has long had programs for rapid response to humanitarian crises. And the money flows to NGOs, the grants from AID, emergency funds go to the NGOs to do the work. They're pretty efficient.

Q: You were there at a time this was beginning to change.

SCHNEIDER: It was crystallizing, yes.

Q: I can see the military hating the thought of letting these guys with beards and long hair get involved.

SCHNEIDER: I didn't see it personally. It would be interesting to get some folks who actually played the role, who was leading Mercy Corps, who was leading Catholic Relief or Lutheran World Service or any of the religiously-based humanitarian relief organizations. Of course there's the Red Cross and CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) and Oxfam and Save the Children, they were all engaged. So also Doctors without Borders.

There probably was a culture clash, at first but wide recognition that they need each other. In the '90s there was an effort by the military and the NGO community to reach out to each other in search of common ground. Bob Hutchings who was most recently the dean at the LBJ School and a scholar at the Wilson Center for several years and Geoff Dabelko, an environmentalist at the Wilson Center, led an informal bridge-building effort. Geoff created an organization called the Environmental Change and Security Program. It was an avowed effort to bring Defense Department people together with the environmental and transnational relief communities, to see where they had common interests. I'm not current with this effort but think it's important for all players to reach out and communicate across lines, find out who's who and who does what, and adjust organizational cultures and expectations, so there could be more cooperation – and more importantly prevention. Looking strategically at the nature of the underlying causes of crises. It was ferment in the air, it was quite interesting.

Q: I wonder if you could do me a favor. The next time we meet, could you note some of the people you mentioned who were involved in this, because I'd like to see if we can't get

somebody in it to do a little oral history. We can pay to do the transcripts and help set up things. I don't think we have any real money for this...

SCHNEIDER: They would volunteer their time. Bob is here in DC occasionally, and Geoff is.

Q: Maybe what we could do is, get a small group together and sit down and talk about doing a small oral history project. We reach out, it's a much broader part of the populace in America dealing with the world. I'd like to get...

SCHNEIDER: This would be a lot of fun, I'd be delighted to help.

Study of the Fulbright Program

Q: What happened after you left Tim?

SCHNEIDER: After three years I thought it would be time to go back to USIA, but there didn't seem to be a possibility of going back to a senior position. Coincidentally, however, Joe Duffey wanted to do a study of the Fulbright program and he asked me to organize that.

Q: Okay we can talk about that and anything beyond, including the dissolution of USIA.

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Q: Today is the 6th of January 2016, with Mike Schneider. We were talking about your time before you got put on a Fulbright investigation. Did you have any more to talk about?

SCHNEIDER: No, let's turn to the Fulbright study. The process was very interesting. First of all, we arranged for a very accomplished group of members of a blue ribbon study group. It wasn't a commission because that would have required legal standing; it was just an advisory group.

The chair was Bill Friday, who was the retired chancellor of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system. He had been president of UNC and built the system of 16 constituent colleges and universities. Bill was one of the most revered and impressive leaders I have worked with, the only person who could have beaten Jesse Helms in an election, and that's important in the results we got from our report; I'll get back to that. As popular as he was in North Carolina, Bill decided that he was not going to run for the U.S. Senate even though many in the Democratic party implored him to run. Every poll showed that he could have beaten Jesse Helms. And I believe Helms knew that and in a sense "owed" his distinguished fellow North Carolinian.

The advisory group was very balanced politically, diverse in all respects and included outstanding leaders in academe, business, and the foundation world, from the U.S., UK,

Brazil, Germany, Japan, India and South Africa. Just a serious blue-ribbon group of accomplished individuals.

I put together a very small staff - Tish King, who is now the senior vice president at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, for communications, was staff exec. We consciously located ourselves away from the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs so we would be totally independent and squeezed ourselves into small offices on the second floor of USIA.

Because we wanted to take a really broad view of the future of the Fulbright program, we organized eight seminars around the country - in Washington, Atlanta, Houston, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Boston and New York. Each was a day or half-day-long discussion of the Fulbright program, past, present, and future.

The seminars were quite revealing about the value of the Fulbright program. In Atlanta, Jimmy Carter led off and sat through the entire session. Every community had somewhat different interests. It was really quite important to see how people thought internationally in terms of the region and constituencies that they represented. Even if the American public was not so engaged in international relations, each of the regions we visited had distinct connections and very practical interests in foreign engagement. The composite would be a strong element of support for Americans continuing international involvement, as seen through the ethnic, intellectual, cultural ties that they built.

Q: This is more than Fulbright looking?

SCHNEIDER: Oh, yes. It was international looking, and it was exchange looking and Fulbright was part of that context. And it was mutual-understanding focused. That is to say, they weren't seeing the Fulbright program as just a tool of American diplomacy. They were seeing the Fulbright program as the best representation of America and of truly looking at mutual interests and shared concerns which is the basis of the Fulbright authorization.

Q: Did you have Fulbright participants?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, we had leading participants who had been Fulbrighters and people who didn't have Fulbrights. But the audience was largely people who were in the exchange community, or civic leaders and those interested in exchanges. Each was quite a remarkable gathering. Each session provided insights for change or continuity and helped build a little support for the Fulbright program. In Washington people were a little worried about the future of Fulbright, whether it would get the kind of support from Congress which it had enjoyed, because the budgets had been scaled back after Charlie Wick departed and the Reagan presidency concluded. So there was concern; this was ‘96 to '98, and there was genuine worry about the future of the agency and the Fulbright program.

Q: I want to come back to Duffey. I've had people here who served under the Duffey regime and they had the feeling Duffey really didn't care whether the organization survived or didn't.

SCHNEIDER: That's arguable. He was agnostic to say the least and maybe not even that generous as far as USIA was concerned. He didn't like the information or the advocacy function. But he did care about the Fulbright program. He did care about exchanges. Of course, he'd been Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs before the merger of CU (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Relations) at State with USIA, to become ECA. So he had that experience, and I think, I'm guessing, he might have thought that ECA would be just fine back in State.

Q: It's one of these things. You have an idea, but the reality is always bureaucracy, and when you cease to be independent, to be chauvinistic you're cutting off your balls.

SCHNEIDER: Absolutely. It was more than just the dishes in the PAO's residence and the car. That's trivial. It was being an independent agency with statutory authorities, with a separate line item, that gave the public diplomacy function a kind of independence which was very important, maybe critical. It's not just that it had those, but it also observes the reality of policy making in the national security community.

USIA had the luxury of independence -- we weren't picking and choosing between State and DOD, that wasn't our role. But we could draw on State *and* DOD and the NSC, and on some issues, Commerce or Treasury. Most of the time in DC we worked most closely with counterparts at State but ultimately we were relating to the White House and to the NSC where policy is decided. That independent position allowed people in public diplomacy to deal at a level without layers that would help us bring out the best from our vantage in terms of advice on policy choices and communication of policy, and the conduct of all the supportive activities that underpin policy, or underpin the relations of the nation-state with others. And as the transnational issues came more to the fore, we could – but only started – relate to State's functional bureaus.

Q: Also I think the supporting element developed a cadre of information officers who really were extraordinary. It's not something you can just hand out an assignment within a normal - the Foreign Service has got its own extraordinary people, but you are losing the development of really remarkable corps.

SCHNEIDER: An integrated Department is able to get a wider diversity of participants in public diplomacy and also broaden opportunities for DCM positions and ambassadorships that might not have occurred in the past. On the other hand I have the impression that the Department is assigning some political officers to PD posts without adequate experience or training. I think there should be more interchangeability throughout FSO careers but based on adequate training.

Q: What was the final result of the Fulbright exercise?

SCHNEIDER: After all was said and done, we came up with a report with a number of recommendations. One of the key elements was to increase the budget, to halt the reductions underway. That's why my story about Jesse Helms is important, because he owed Bill Friday for not running for the Senate. Even though opposite in politics, the two spoke North Carolinian, if you know what I mean.

Jesse Helms organized a tea for the Fulbright panel to present the report to a very unusual gathering of leaders from both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. We met in the formal meeting room of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which is right off the Senate chambers in the Capitol building -- an incredibly ornate and beautiful room. Richard Lugar attended even though he and Helms were fighting each other tooth and nail over everything. The chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I think it was Ben Gilman, was there. And they had two or three other senators and congressmen and staff. Helms came out in a very beautiful off-white linen suit, looking very dapper. However, I was sort of taken aback because his conversation was pretty off-color -- jokes, inappropriate treatment of the young women in the room; it was a slightly weird experience.

Ultimately there was a 3% bump up in the Fulbright markup. Helms doesn't do appropriations, but it happened. The line item for program funds for exchanges was clearly identified and protected. That's critical because that line item carries through today. When USIA was merged with State, many of the separate line items that were within the USIA authorization were conveyed over to State, which meant the Department could use the funding and authorities as it desired. The separate line item protected the program aspects of the exchange program.

It didn't protect the people in the field; they were under State personnel, so State personnel faced reductions over the last 15 years or so, including reductions in the field. They built back up somewhat after 9/11 and the exchanges budget grew greatly after 9/11. Congress for reasons I'm not quite sure of finally caught on. Rightly or wrongly U.S. legislators saw exchanges as an instrument to counter radical ideologies that they felt confronted us after 9/11. Our report was a protective and change-oriented effort that protected the Fulbright program – a slight bump up and ideas for improvements. I thought that was a good accomplishment.

Some of the professional recommendations that we made were carried out; some weren't so well. We were unhappy about the lack of follow up on exchanges, it took the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs a number of years to figure out and finally develop a system for tracking alums. There's much more done in measuring and evaluation now than there was 17 years ago. There were other improvements.

Keep in mind, the Fulbright program is a shared program, it's not ours alone. In Europe, the European nations have put in more money than we do every year. We think of the Fulbright program as a U.S. endeavor, but it's a shared endeavor in many countries. So we were able to protect that, because if we cut our program in Germany, the Germans

would cut a compensatory amount, a double cut in a sense. It would be a shame to have that happen.

Q: Did you have responsibility for seeing that the recommendations were carried out?

SCHNEIDER: No. That was my last hurrah with USIA. I retired after we submitted that report to the president a day before he was going on vacation, at the White House. I retired about a couple of weeks later, on July 31 and was hired by Syracuse on August 1, 1998.

Washington DC Program of the Maxwell School

Q: And then what?

SCHNEIDER: I've been teaching for Syracuse for the last 18 years. I was hired to run the Washington DC Program of the Maxwell School for Citizenship and Public Affairs. It's had a Washington program since 1994 or '96, initially just bringing a few undergraduates down to DC. In 1999, we started a graduate program and I gradually built that up, so the graduate program is larger than the undergraduate In DC. Syracuse has a building, the Greenberg House, on Calvert Street; for years we had our offices there and classes in the building.

I tried to shape a program for experiential learning. This meant making it possible for students, especially the undergrads, to bring the knowledge and substance of their internships into class and vice versa. We also workshopped or gamed important issues. One game we developed from a visit to the NDU Strategic Gaming Center was "Pandemic Fury." It proved to be very useful.

Q: Who were the instructors, where did they come from?

SCHNEIDER: The instructors are professionals who have at least some advanced academic training and professional credentials. We have had a longstanding security affairs professor both at the graduate and undergraduate level, Jim Keagle, who was Vice President of the National Defense University for academic affairs. Jim did his Ph.D. at Princeton and taught at the Air Force Academy. Melinda Kimble and Stephanie Kinney , both former FSOs, teach a course for us in the graduate program. Two leading experts on development and African Affairs Joyce Leader and Connie Freeman teach for us. Both had extensive service in Africa, Joyce as a pol-econ officer and Ambassador and Connie, with USAID.

We've had others - you might have known Gene Martin, who's now deceased, former DCM in the Philippines and Beijing. Wonderful person -- he taught a course on China for us in the summer for several years. Over the years several PhD economists including two senior research analysts at the Library of Congress, Richard Cronin and Ray Ahearn, a World Bank economist and a Fed, taught an undergrad economics course. Another senior

policy person from the Department of Energy, Len Coburn, taught a course on international energy policy.

The program has evolved over the years. We had an undergraduate semester program fall and spring semesters, each limited to 18 competitively selected students. This was the classic Washington semester, with an emphasis on international relations rather than domestic politics. Gradually I expanded the graduate program to include a fall program on global security and development and a summer internship and policy making program.

We added a spring "Maymester", a two week concentrated program on Africa and African development, then expanded the summer program for graduate students by adding a course on China and a course on energy policy and added a brief two-week winter program just after the Christmas/New Year holidays. We now have between 200 and 250 students a year coming down from Maxwell and also from Pitt and the Korbel School of Denver University. There are now some 20 faculty -- professionals with credentials in their field who are good teachers and really generous with their rolodexes.

Q: Were you able to get foreign teachers?

SCHNEIDER: One or two – Former Pakistan Ambassador Touqir Hussein was a regular for us for several years. He had been DCM here and Ambassador to Japan. We have a lot of foreign guest lecturers. That's one of the hallmarks of our approach – to expose the participants to many voices from various viewpoints. So we do a lot - for example, every year with my undergraduates and with my graduate public diplomacy seminar, I bring in a panel of foreign journalists to talk about their perceptions and their audiences' perceptions of the United States.

Q: Can you describe the students you were getting?

SCHNEIDER: The undergraduate level are admitted competitively. At least a 3.0 average is required. They were a mix of international relations, political science, what we call policy studies, and broadcasting - radio and TV - backgrounds. Some geography, some economics. Many of the participants head toward public service, politics or public affairs. I've kept in touch with them over the years. They have very varied careers. The graduate students are very accomplished international relations or dual degree masters of public administration/international relations majors.

The public diplomacy program that I created With Dennis Kinsey from Newhouse and Matt Bonham, the head of the IR program at Maxwell in 2009, includes students who earn an MS in public relations from the Newhouse School of Communication, and an MA in international relations from the Maxwell School.

We have seen some of our students, both graduate and undergraduate, go into the State Department, including a number of Rangel and Pickering Fellows. For many years an internship program run by State helped our students have the inside track for junior level GS jobs as the positions opened. It's changed in the last year to what is called the

Pathways program that allows only students who have already graduated to be admitted for some jobs. State has multiple intern programs, not just one, so there are still many opportunities to intern at State. So, we have former students all over the department now, FSOs, Civil Servants -- they've had great opportunities.

Q: What kind of problems did you have with running a separate institution tied to Syracuse, bureaucratic?

SCHNEIDER: I used to jokingly say to all of my friends, "I'm happy as a clam. I have no snow and no committees." I don't have to raise money or solve others' administrative problems.

Q: Out of sight, out of mind?

SCHNEIDER: Not quite, but almost. I have great independence. That's not typical, by the way.

Q: You're of the generation that was dealing with the rise of women. Did you feel, in the student body, that women were sort of an oddity in international relations. I imagine that at the time you did this, that must have changed?

SCHNEIDER: Much. When I joined the Foreign Service - this will be familiar to you - women had to resign their commission if they wanted to marry. Women had to wear gloves to go to social events. There was a litany of silly, backward traditions toward women. There were four or five women in our JOT class of 20. Only one stayed on and she transferred into USAID.

I must also add how I and others in USIA benefited and am obligated to one of the most impressive women leaders at the Agency and State, Mildred Marcy. Mildred was women's affairs adviser at USIA, beginning in the '60s and was deputy to Maureen Reagan for the U.S. delegation to the '78 International Women's Conference in Nairobi. She was a member of one of the most important "power couples" in DC in her day. Her husband Carl Marcy was Fulbright's Chief of staff for the Foreign Relations Committee.

Mildred encouraged a number of younger FS and GS officers, regularly had a luncheon group to toss around ideas at the International Lawyers Club near USIA and exercised a good deal of influence in the '60s. I wrote a couple briefing papers that we sent to the field for informational purposes, with Mildred's guidance. She was a precursor of generations of women professionals who have achieved major progress in tearing down barriers to advancement and equal opportunity. In addition to Mildred, my colleague and friend in IAF, Jodie Lewinsohn, others such as the deputy head of USIA policy, Barbara White and the Latin America area office director Dorothy Dillon were early role models.

In the late '70s, or early '80s some 1500 women joined a class action lawsuit against USIA. It originated from women in the Voice of America who had suffered blatant discrimination.

Q: I would imagine there, American mores are bad enough but foreign mores I can't imagine that Ukrainian broadcasters would look pleasingly upon women in their turf.

SCHNEIDER: In this case it was the Bangla service. But it spread throughout the Voice and other elements of USIA. Ultimately it was settled much later for $300 million. It might have been settled for much less at the time it was brought but USIA and USG attorneys fought it for years.

Times have changed since then and it's gratifying to observe that 50% or more of incoming FSO classes are women. It's not forced, it's natural. Just as in med school or law school. There's still a disparity in pay and in rank. It's about a generation since the inception of the women's movement and the actions making it clear that women must have equal opportunity.

I think the Department still has a problem hiring and retaining minorities, especially black men. When I was in a leadership position I focused somewhat on black men, because there were so few at any level of USIA and the women's movement was gaining momentum. Among the GS in USIA minority women were rising up the ranks from the admin/clerical to the professional and policy substantive jobs, but very few minority men.

One case in particular troubled me. In the early 90s when USIA was cutting personnel each bureau was pressured by the front office to avoid cutting minority women and a young African American graphics designer was about to lose his job in the P Bureau. The rule of thumb was "last in, first out" when there's a reduction in force but the squeeze was on to cut his position rather than that of a young minority woman with less time in service. His situation was being overlooked and no one was standing up for his rights at all.

Q: For a woman, you always had administrative, secretarial... I had a Ph.D. woman as a secretary at one point; she later became an officer. This is way back, you had quite a pool, but you just - black men didn't go into secretarial jobs.

SCHNEIDER: No, they didn't go into the clerical field then, so this guy was about to get the short end of the stick and he was in a non-clerical cone. I really worked hard to find him a slot in the Educational and Cultural Affairs bureau which needed someone with his talent, and I was able to convince them to bring him on board. He's still employed at the State Department, still doing good work.

Q: Speaking of minorities, your classes at Syracuse - what sort of participation did you get from minorities?

SCHNEIDER: When I ran the DC IR program from 1998 to 2009, out of a class of 18 every semester we would have anywhere from three to five African-Americans coming into the program; mainly women but some guys. At the graduate level, about 10-20%; that's high compared to enrollment, but Syracuse does a pretty good job of recruiting

African-American students. It was really very heartening to me to see this kind of diversity. There are also a large number of Asian-Americans in the international relations program that Syracuse runs. And the graduate program includes a lot of diversity from around the world.

Q: What about Hispanics?

SCHNEIDER: A few. And with fascinating, complex backgrounds. One undergrad who came to DC did her honors thesis on Afro-Latinos and has pursued these interests professionally. But we're talking about a small slice of the university community; these are exceptional students.

Q: Give a slice of how things worked. I came in in July 1955. They had just renumbered the classes, basic officer course, there had been a hiatus for some years. We were class number one...

SCHNEIDER: I was in USIA FS Class number 19.

Q: No women. One minority, Sam Lee from Hawaii, Chinese background. Such a different slice of life. But most of us were veterans, all but two or three out of a class of about 30. We were all veterans which added a very good mix.

SCHNEIDER: You've been able to keep in touch?

Q: Only a few - Dick Murphy and Herb Oken.

SCHNEIDER: I had really kept up only sporadically with one or two of our class. Others I hear about occasionally.

Q: With the digital age coming in, Facebook, email and all, you can develop an alumni group that can be sustained. In my era, it just wasn't available and we dropped out.

SCHNEIDER: Our class had no minorities; we had four women. The State Department counterpart class had the same number of women and no minorities that I can think of. We used to think of ourselves as more flexible and more diverse than the Department or other federal agencies, but I don't think it was necessarily true. That class action suit really pinpointed one of the big issues in USIA.

Q: I'm sure the VOA—you're adding millennia of prejudice of people who come from different ethnic backgrounds, and these are carried over in spades ...

SCHNEIDER: Yes. Today one of the phenomena of the contemporary Foreign Service is the hyphenated American nature of a lot of FSOs. Nowadays I'm not sure what the policy is; there used to be a policy against sending people back to countries of their family origin. I think that has changed.

Q: That's pretty well stopped. Every once in a while they do come a cropper. Not in my time but before, Korean Americans—it's changed now but there was such pressure to get visas, and the consular section which I ran really suffered from this.

SCHNEIDER: My impression is there is much greater diversity, almost like night and day, between the past and contemporary Foreign Service.

Q: Well in the United States, the pale male is no longer dominant. The demographics are such. Our foreign policy benefits from this.

SCHNEIDER: Enormously. I'm really pleased to have taken part in a small way in this change. Professionally, in a very small way. With the academic work I've been doing for the past 18 years, a little more.

Q: One of the things that strikes me as I do these oral histories, when I talk to officers who come out of serving, I'm interested in the academic side too, and how few people I talk to look at the professional publications that come out of the academic side of things. They're too busy. And also, in their perception and I think with some justification, the articles, the writing doesn't represent anything useful.

SCHNEIDER: It's a problem. You have the foreign policy journals and others, right/left and center which professionals read, at least keep up with, also various think-tank online reports and publications. But the academic journals seem increasingly abstruse in political science; maybe less so in history.

Q: I'm curious how you feel about the think tank. You have these outfits that serve as a shadow cabinet repository, do they have much impact on what goes on?

SCHNEIDER: I think they're bread and butter for a lot of policy makers in many small ways. By that I mean, they can do some of the research that the policy community may not have time for, or that some in the policy community need but they're not funded or don't have staff. Think tanks also have the independence and coming up with new ideas. CSIS and Brookings are good examples of this. They're non-partisan and have contacts on the left and the right. Their professionals are individually probably a degree or two to the left or right from the middle. Heritage is a conservative institution with staff organized around a leadership that tries to influence legislation on the Hill. AEI (American Enterprise Institute), has independent scholars doing their own work but clearly from a conservative vantage. The liberal counterparts might be the Center for American Progress or the Center for International Policy.

Q: There is the benefit of the present system - a corporation wants it, but there is a practical use for this at the end perhaps. Whereas if it were just pure speculation, "the influence of poetry on the environment" or something like that, nobody's going to support that particular study. Another question - have you noticed a difference in the students and

the questions coming up, are they more challenging, are they more serious? How do you feel about the students?

Generational Differences?

SCHNEIDER: You know, a lot of people have raised alarms about this generation of students, or the last generation…. a variety of doubts or criticisms. I'm far more upbeat. I've worked with Millennials through Gen Z and believe they are more resilient than they are credited with, and have positive values about fair play, equal opportunity and civility, to name a few. Some critics emphasize what they see as being totally in the sway of social media. Yes, young people don't seem to read as much as older generations and seem to take the quicker paths in decision making, but I think these are over-generalizations. So they're a little more uneasy, a little more anxious than students of an earlier generation. They don't like open-ended questions or issues; there may be less of an ability to write the long paper, although they do write long papers in their colleges and universities, a long paper being 20 pages or so. Maybe they want to get the answers more quickly. They famously don't read newspapers the way we read newspapers.

But they can obtain information from many sources – and have many more sources than we ever had. And with a little encouragement they sort out the wheat from the chaff. They can go into depth if depth is required. There are just as many bright, intelligent, really wonkish students who are penetrating, who seek information and analyze - they're there. They're not changed from a generation or two or three ago. The mass of students might be a little bit, but only marginally in my view, less capable to think about issues or more insistent on easy answers, more rapidly achieved. Or more susceptible to manipulation.

The social media and media in general have shortened, sensationalized, and oversimplified issues at times. And that leads to superficial solutions, or quick and seemingly easy answers that in truth don't help society solve problems. And that may have been one of the reasons why students may seem to be more cynical than they were a generation ago, because they are aware - they're not stupid, they're aware of when they're being manipulated.

Yet, I think there also is a new level of sophistication about communication, about media, that they have gained insights into through their own experience. It baffles us, it's off-putting to us; we don't like it, we don't like the noise and the speed and the color, "we" being "sophisticated" professional people who have some international experience. That's a subset of society, always was. Yes, people in the '50s might have been less accustomed, might have had a much more difficult time adjusting to the culture of the popular culture of the 21st century. But it's marginal to my way of thinking; it's not night or day, I think we've seen the change over time.

Q: Each person carries baggage with them from what was going on. As a kid, I grew up in the period of the Great Depression and Roosevelt; these are still with me. Then World War II was the greatest geographic lesson one could have; imagine, you really learned

where places were and the importance. But also there were World War II issues which now are ancient history.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, it is ancient history and sometimes I think our society overall learns geography through experiencing crises abroad. At one point I asked one of my classes, how many really knew anything about JFK. Not everyone raised their hands; that's ancient history, that's half a century ago. There are those differences. What strikes me as really the big challenge is the flood of available information; it's overwhelming and I'm not sure how anyone can keep up with it except if they focus narrowly on a field of interest or a professional field. What that does is contribute to stove-piping or compartmentalization.

Q: Some institutions that have really developed—and we're part of it—are interns. This is not an opportunity that was available in my period, probably in yours, too. We run about 15 or 20 interns through here in three cuts a year, and we've been doing this for 30 years now, so a lot of people are getting exposed to the conversations we're having. They have a chance to get really experienced about the operation of foreign affairs. And this is true of course in so many other things. Also the fact that so many of the people will be moving from one job to another; in my era, you took a job and that was it.

SCHNEIDER: Right. In the GS ranks it used to be one career, one field of expertise – the classic stovepipe – promotion through seniority and of course in most cases through expertise and experience gained and hard work.

Q: It's just different.

SCHNEIDER: It's very different these days. Movement up is gained through lateral movement. Younger professionals change offices or organizations more frequently than earlier generations. Also this is a much more diverse country, it is radically different from half a century ago, the demographics, both in terms of ethnicity, gender and age.

Q: I don't know what's happened in the Foreign Service, I'm not looking at it. It used to be that people said, "Well I'll try this for a little while." The Foreign Service was like the Venus fly-trap; you get in and "snap", you're in it for life. You don't leave unless you're forced out because it's so much fun, so fascinating. I'm not sure that's true today.

SCHNEIDER: When I talk to my students about the Foreign Service, they can't get their heads around the idea of a 25- or 30-year career. Yes, they'll try it out, five or 10 years, maybe they'll stay, maybe not. I'm not sure if that's actually the case - it may be once they're in, once they get a feel for it, they get dedicated. Also of course young people travel abroad more than in the past and may find other career possibilities with more options for the working spouse than the Foreign Service can offer. From what I hear there is more movement out of the Foreign Service than in the past, particularly as other fields offer better pay and to some extent allow the individual to have more control over his or her time.

Q: I suspect it's much more of a trap than we think. Compared to what else? It's fun!

SCHNEIDER: Oh, it's wonderful work. It's challenging and interesting. The relationships and community that one forms are so gratifying.

Q: There was a book written about the Foreign Service in slightly derogatory terms, as its title implies, it caught something, it says A Pretty Good Club, and in a way, when you're in this you find yourself with not necessarily completely like-minded, but lively, intellectually somewhat-gifted people. I'm having a hell of a good time interviewing people like you, and I don't think I would be doing that with practically any other profession.

SCHNEIDER: There are fields that would be considered far more technical and specialized; even with the growing influence of technology on world affairs, the challenge for any Administration, and especially at State is to deal with all the technicalities through the lens of the national interest and then to help the Congress and public understand where American interests lie and how diplomacy can help us build support overseas.

Q: There have been times but either by assassination or by election the people change and they usually change for the worse.

SCHNEIDER: In that respect I see a number of roles for public diplomacy. We need to anticipate the future, change our approaches with the times if need be, and be able to explain to policy makers and to some extent the American public how a changing world affects us at home and our interests abroad. And then help the USG and American society engage fruitfully with the world.

What concerns me about the future of public diplomacy is the degree that this point of view—the focus on the public dimension of our involvements abroad—can be factored into policy. The policy community doesn't necessarily want any more players. Fully incorporating those responsible for the public dimension might be a stretch. But AI and other new communications technologies have made clear the need for more attention in all phases of our foreign policy—in choosing options, in communicating the choices, in analysis of how other societies and the American public are reacting.

Washington really circles around itself. One of the real challenges for the Foreign Service is to understand that. In USIA field officers worried that Washington would "get it right." I always thought "true enough," and you know Tip O'Neill's quote "All politics is local" might be slightly adjusted and applied to foreign policy – there's a heavy quotient of domestic politics and world view in foreign policy decision making.

Q: I guess this is probably a good place to stop. You will get the transcript. Do send me the list of people you suggest... You mention diplomatic scholars. It might be interesting to interview some of them, and to make them aware of our program.

SCHNEIDER: It's important. I think most diplomatic scholars will turn to the archives to look up people and issues, just as they do a document search. Many thanks for this opportunity to remember my career.

End of interview