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Information Series

HANS N. TUCH

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INTERVIEW

TUCH: I came to the United States from Germany, from Berlin, in 1938, as a 14-year-old school boy, and I lived with relatives in Kansas City, where I went to high school and then started in college. That was interrupted by World War II, and I served as a U.S. Army paratrooper from 1943 to '45 in Europe, in the invasion of Europe, jumped, and then also spent time in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

I accumulated enough active combat points to be able to be discharged very early, and so I got back to Kansas City and back to the university by December '45, finished in '47, and

then went on to graduate school at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, got an M.A. there, and went to work for the Chase Bank. They trained me and then sent me to Germany, but after a short time, the bank and I parted company. I left. They wouldn't let me get married. In those days, Chase Bank was a very paternalistic organization.

At any rate, I got into the Foreign Service because the State Department was taking over from military government in Germany just at that time, October 1949, and they were looking for people. They were hiring them on the spot without any clearance, and so I was hired as a director of an America House of the U.S. Cultural Center started in Wiesbaden. I brought my fiancé over, we got married in Wiesbaden, and then I was shortly thereafter transferred to Frankfurt, where I was the America House Director and Cultural Affairs Officer until 1955. In `55, we came back to Washington on assignment. This was my first Washington assignment. By that time, my career plans had been sort of regularized. I became a Foreign Service officer, no longer a temporary. I served for two years building Atoms for Peace exhibits all over the world, subsequent to President Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace speech before the United Nations General Assembly in '54. I built exhibits on Atoms for Peace. Then I was requested and was given intensive Russian language training for one year in Washington, and then finally in July 1958, I was transferred.

Well, in '57, before being transferred to Moscow, there were visa problems. The Soviets would not permit a second officer to be assigned to Moscow for cultural and press affairs, and so I was given a job as a Voice of America correspondent and editorial writer in Munich. I spent a year in Munich for the Voice of America before being transferred to Moscow in the summer of 1958.

Q: You talked about Russian training. Let me just go back. You came from where in Germany originally?

TUCH: Berlin.

Q: And your father was a professional?

TUCH: My father and my mother both originally came from the--at that time, German province of Posen, city of Posen, and moved to Berlin right after World War I. My father was a professional person who died very young of natural causes when I was 11 years old. Then my mother stayed there, and she then later joined me in Kansas City, where I was by that time living. It took her longer to get out of Germany than it did me primarily because of visas and affidavits to come to the United States.

But my interest in Russia and the Soviet Union came, really, with college. I took some Russian courses, and I really minored in Russian history in undergraduate work. Then in graduate work, I continued working with Russian a little bit, but you didn't take language courses in graduate school.

Q: The reason I asked you was you said the State Department sent you for intensive Russian. Of course, the State Department has good language programs, but I notice on your curriculum vitae, of course, you are a native German speaker, and the Russian you picked up. I assume Portuguese, Bulgarian, and French you picked up along the way. Or was it because most Europeans are multi-lingual?

TUCH: No. The only thing I had when I came to the United States, I didn't have any English, but I did have some French. I didn't have really very much English, but when you live in the Middle West as a school boy, you learn it very quickly. You conform. That's one of the things, I didn't have anybody in my family to speak a word of German except an uncle, and so I learned English that way.

Q: Sink or swim.

TUCH: Yes. That was the technique that my family used by sending me right to an American high school after two weeks, and therefore you did learn it rather quickly. But Russian and Bulgarian and Portuguese I learned as part of my Foreign Service assignments.

Q: I assume you gained a degree of fluency in these.

TUCH: Russian--I mean, other than German--is still my best foreign language. Interestingly enough, I'm a terrible, terrible translator or interpreter between German and English. Very bad. I can speak both of them, but I cannot cross over. In Russian, I'm much better than I am in German when it comes to translating and interpreting.

Q: We've gotten to the point you were assigned to the embassy in Moscow. At some point here--and this is a parenthetical thought--in dealing with USIA, you initially were appointed to the State Department as a foreign FSO temporary.

TUCH: Right.

Q: There should be clarification in these interviews as to the parallel careers of USIA and how it fits within the fabric of the Foreign Service program.

TUCH: Right. Now, I was initially appointed to the State Department, that being the only organization that existed in 1949-50. USIA was created in '53, the summer of '53, and I transferred from the State Department to USIA, because the work that I was doing and the work I was interested in doing was the type of work that was done by USIA, mainly public diplomacy, I call it, which means trying to communicate with foreign publics, whether in the area of information activities--press or media activities--or whether in the more long-term relationships such as cultural exchanges, books, libraries, and so forth.

Q: Had there been, within the Foreign Service program, an FSO who was assigned to this type of thing, or was it a post-war evolution where there was an emphasis on cultural

exchanges and media exchanges and so on? It seems to me, from what I know of the Foreign Service, it's just like the attitude of the military regarding the media and culture, etc.; there was no MOS.

TUCH: That's right. It started before World War II, namely, with the Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller, vis-a-vis mostly Latin America, but it really came into its own after World War II. There are a couple of documents, a couple of sort of brief histories of how this all came about. But it got a tremendous impetus both from our occupation of Japan and our occupation of Germany, where a lot of emphasis was put on the whole area of--they called it reorientation and reeducation. That may have failed, the reorientation or reeducation, or it may not have been as successful as the resources we put into that program would have dictated.

Q: I think Japan was better than that.

TUCH: One can take more credit or less credit. But at any rate, the whole idea of communicating in the media field and concern with the media and also concern with long-range cultural and educational exchanges got a tremendous impetus through these two occupation programs, and a lot of young Foreign Service officers got their training in Japan or in Germany through these programs. Then when the whole area of public diplomacy became regularized with the creation of USIA, many of these young people were trained and continued in this type of activity. It very slowly gained a certain amount of respectability in the Foreign Service. Whether it has achieved its full purpose, I don't think so by now, but at least a whole agency was created to do this kind of work, so it gained an amount of visibility and respectability in the United States Government.

As far as the Foreign Service officers doing this kind of work, for many, many years, it was sort of not regarded in the same area as political and economic reporting. In the military, it was also the infantry, the artillery were the most . . .

Q: The queens.

TUCH: The queens. Therefore, the intelligence service and the public affairs activities were put sort of on the sidelines. Well, this is also largely true with public affairs activities over the years. It's improved tremendously. It's come into its own in many, many respects, but I would not say 100%.

Q: A USIA officer is still a second-class citizen as far as the Foreign Service is concerned. That's my perception.

TUCH: I think primarily my perception--yes and no. If you take it into consideration as far as picking people for ambassadorial positions, then I think I would agree with you. But when it comes to exerting influence within an embassy or within an operation in a country, I would disagree, because in many, many areas, in many countries, the public affairs officer probably is the most useful and the most important and, in some cases, the

best trained person that an ambassador has on his staff. If the ambassador is good and smart, he makes use of these talents and does so.

Q: And if he's a political appointee, he doesn't.

TUCH: That, too, varies. Now, for instance, in my case, I may be an aberration. I worked for my last post, which probably was my most satisfactory experience in the Foreign Service for the last four and a half years, were with Arthur Burns, a political appointee.

Q: You made that point in your letter.

TUCH: Yes, yes. So it's not always that case.

Q: I was making a flat-out statement.

TUCH: Right. Right. [Laughter]

Q: And you'll also notice we've gone far afield from Moscow, which is a technique which you may have to use, because, again, we're on tape here, but it's a tutorial. I feel that if you're dealing in an area which calls for going off on a tangent and profitably so, I think it's important to do so, especially if a point comes up in the course of an interview that the light comes on and you feel that the interviewee has something to contribute in that area, then instead of making a note and coming back to it, I think it's profitable to hit it at that time. It may not flow well, it may not track right, but you're thinking and you're in a good rapport with the interviewer.

TUCH: What one might just mention--and therefore close off this particular part of the interview--is the fact that this is a whole entire subject which has interested me very, very much, this whole area of public diplomacy as part of our foreign policy process. As a matter of fact, I teach two courses right now, one at Georgetown University, which deals with the public diplomacy or the intercultural communications process. The other course that I teach is, actually, to junior officer trainees at USIA in the field of public diplomacy.

Q: Before we got off on a tangent, you mentioned how there were problems in getting the Soviet Government to accept you as a second officer, and you went to Voice of America in Munich.

TUCH: Right. Then the Soviets, frankly, just wouldn't give me a visa because I was a USIA officer, so the resolution of that particular problem was that I resigned from USIA, I applied and was appointed by the Department of State, and I was made a State Department officer, and I got my visa to the Soviet Union. I arrived there in July.

Now, I might just, by way of introduction, why I think this particular period, to me, at least, was a fascinating period.

Q: Let me just ask you one question beforehand. Were you USIA people not given diplomatic immunity at this time, or was it just Russia that refused to recognize?

TUCH: The Soviet Union just would not give a USIA officer--I mean a propaganda officer--a visa to join the embassy staff, so I resigned. I was appointed by the Department and was assigned as the press and cultural attaché as a second secretary of the embassy, and I was the last one. The people who came after me fared much better and stayed within USIA.

The reason that my period, my three years in the Soviet Union, were a particularly interesting period for me is two-fold, two unrelated reasons. One, it was a really roller coaster period of our relationship with the Soviet Union. It started out, when I got there, with the spirit of Camp David, and the following year, we had our first big American national exhibition with the Nixon visit to the Soviet Union, and the relationship under Khrushchev on the Soviet side, Eisenhower on the American side, seemed to take really a very, very steep upward turn.

Then came, in 1960--May 1, 1960--the U-2 affair with Gary Powers, and our relationship took, really, a nose-dive, way, way down back into, really, almost a Cold War period.

Q: Was it that they didn't know about the U-2 flights?

TUCH: I think they knew about it, but they hadn't been able to do anything about it until that particular time.

Q: So was it a manufactured nose-dive or a nose-dive that came out of, "Now we've caught you"?

TUCH: It was a double one, because our first initial reaction, if you remember correctly, we would not admit it.

Q: Yes.

TUCH: We wouldn't admit it. Actually, my one [laughter] accidental accomplishment in that whole period was an interesting little anecdote. We did not know--the Americans did not know--where the U-2 had been shot down. We knew it had been shot down somewhere in the Soviet Union, and we could not find out from the Soviets where, actually, they had shot down. That became a very important issue for us, because here was Eisenhower still claiming publicly that obviously they had shot down near the border or it was an accident, that it strayed across, and it hadn't strayed across. We were sort of aggressive in our reaction. This was May 1st when it was announced, and all though that whole day, it was just back and forth between Washington and Moscow--"Where was this plane? Where was it shot down?" We were saying it was not shot down inside the Soviet Union.

That evening, there was a press reception that the Union of Journalists were sponsoring for May 1st, and because of our improving relationship up to that time, I had been invited to that reception for the first time ever. Of course, I got to the reception, I was surrounded by very, very angry Soviet journalists, and all kinds of, "How can you do this? You are ruining the relationship and spying," etc., etc.

I said, "Well, you know, it's an unfriendly act to shoot down the plane of a nation that you are supposedly having a good relationship with, so it's an unfriendly act that you committed shooting down the plane."

One of the journalists said, "Gospadin Tuch, what can you do? What could we have done? The plane was over Sverdlovsk. We had to shoot it down."

And I said, "Where?" And he kind of backed away from me, and they all sort of dispersed.

I went back to the embassy. It was about 11:00 o'clock by that time, and I thought, "This is an item of information that I think I'm going to wake up Llewellyn Thompson," our ambassador, Tommy Thompson. I went to the residence. I did not want to take a chance of using the telephone. I went to the residence, and I didn't wake him up, but he was in his robe. I told him what I'd heard, and in his very quiet sort of laid-back way, which was, of course, Ambassador Thompson's technique, at least as long as I knew him, very quiet, soft-spoken, he looked me and said, "I think you'd better go back to the embassy and report this to Washington." And on what they called a NIACT cable in those days, which was an immediate telegram, "And be sure to wake up the communicator to send that message, because I think this is one item of information they'd like to get." So, you know, that's what I did.

But at any rate, I was talking about the roller coaster.

Q: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions before we go to the roller coaster. Number one, I would assume that maybe outside of the ambassador and the military attachés, maybe, that no one at the embassy knew about the U-2 program, which had to be at that time very, very closely held.

TUCH: I don't know.

Q: You didn't know about it?

TUCH: I certainly did not know about it. I doubt that--maybe the ambassador knew about it. I would think that he probably did, and I would think that probably our Central Intelligence Agency representatives knew about it.

Q: Good gracious! CIA?

TUCH: Yes. But I certainly don't think that probably our attachés knew about it at that time.

Q: It was a CIA program, anyway. It wasn't a military program.

TUCH: No.

Q: Okay. Number two, you mentioned Tommy Thompson, Llewellyn Thompson, professional, one of the real experts on Soviet Russia going way back to, I guess, the blitz days, when Thayer and some of the other ones were there. You might want to personalize and characterize him. What did he look like? I think he was red-haired, if I remember.

TUCH: No. [Laughter] Sandy.

Q: Sandy. Right. But I think I've heard him described as sandy-haired.

TUCH: He, of course, is one of my four, so to speak, godfathers--ideals--as far as people that I've worked for. Just to mention the other three, being Edward R. Murrow, John Crimmins, and Arthur Burns. But he was really my first boss, with whom, as a relatively junior officer, when I was 34 years old when I got to Moscow, and I was a relatively junior officer. But you had in Moscow at that time, it was an ideal, from my point of view, an ideal American embassy. You had no hierarchy, you had no protocol. It was a small embassy. I counted--we had 14 substantive officers in the embassy, other than the military. There were 14 substantive officers, there were 16 military officers, and there were about ten administrative types in the embassy, and that was it.

Q: Was Leo Du Lac there at the time?

TUCH: Yes, he was there. He was the assistant naval attaché.

Q: We've spoken about Leo.

TUCH: He was a great Marine officer, just a great Marine officer, and he did a marvelous job there. We were very good friends.

Q: And also that's the time before the agricultural attachés and all the other agencies in government.

TUCH: I count the agricultural attaché as part of the 14 substantive officers. But we had, for instance, an ambassador, we had a deputy chief of mission, minister of the embassy. We had no counselors. We had one first secretary, politico-economic, sort of almost like the British system, a chancery head. He was a chancery head. And the rest of us were second secretaries. We were all working stiffs--the political section, the economic section, agricultural section, and the publications procurement officer, one officer who bought books for the whole U.S. Government, who just did nothing but go around

Moscow buying books at bookstores. I helped him, because he helped me. His name was Harry Barnes, who's now ambassador to Chile. He and I did share the cultural and press relations work. It was too much to do for one person, so he helped me, and I helped him buy books. But at any rate, it was a very tight, very small, very collegial type of embassy in those days. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody worked for the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission, who was sort of the executive officer, by the name of "Dick" Richard Davis. Not Davies, but Davis.

It was, from my point of view, an ideal situation working for an ambassador who recognized--and here we come back to the public diplomacy angle--who recognized that in a situation in which we functioned, the cultural and press relations work was the most substantive activity that an embassy could do. Obviously, we read the papers and reported on political areas, economic developments, agriculture developments, but he saw that the only people who really got out to talk to people were the people who did public affairs work. There was, at that time, only one--myself.

He was terribly supportive about the cultural affairs work. For instance, say you had a delegation of American composers there, and you wanted to have a party. Well, you knew that the Soviet officials would not come to your apartment to be with these American composers. But they may come to the residence. The ambassador's house was open to any kind of a party or reception or get-together, where we all felt that the Soviet officials and maybe even some composers and musicians might come to the Spaso house, the ambassador's official residence, but they wouldn't come to my place. He was very, very supportive of this, and he, having been in the Soviet Union during World War II, in the 1940s, knew a lot of the--at that time, younger, creative people, ballet dancers, opera singers from the early Forties, who now were fairly old and many of them retired, but he knew them, and they would come sometimes to his place. Therefore, he provided the opening that was so important for us.

Why it was interesting for me to be in the Soviet Union during that period of time. The relationship, from its nadir, took an upward turn with the election of President Kennedy, and the release of the RB-47 pilots, who had been another sort of semi-spy plane, who had been shot down in Murmansk, in the ocean, had been shot down, something that was really not much talked about. But that's another story, because there's an interesting anecdote, too, about the release of these two pilots.

But anyway, I think Khrushchev wanted to make a gesture vis-a-vis Kennedy, and by releasing these guys, it had been a sore point in our relationship, and the relationship took an up-turn until the Bay of Pigs invasion. Then even worse, it took the real down-turn again after the meeting between Khrushchev and Kennedy in July 1961 in Vienna, where Kennedy got his real first taste of what it was like to negotiate or to relate or to be up against the Soviet Union in the form of Nikita Khrushchev. As a matter of fact, there was one interesting anecdote. I wasn't there. I was in Moscow still. But when Tommy Thompson, who had gone to Vienna to be with the President, came back, we asked him how things went, and he said, "You know, after the first day of the meetings, of the

relationship, the President turned to me and says, 'Ambassador Thompson, now I understand why you want to get out of the Soviet Union so badly.'" [Laughter] At any rate, it took a down-turn again, and that is really when I left Moscow.

The other interesting point to mention about the whole assignment, my three years in Moscow, I was the first American embassy officer to serve more than two years after World War II. There was a hard and fast rule by the Department of State that you could not serve longer than two years in Moscow, a rule that Tommy Thompson had tried to break for a number of years, because he felt that some people didn't become useful to the embassy until they'd been there for about two years. [Laughter] And so he negotiated with George Allen, who was at that time the Director of USIA, who was also, of course, a State Department officer, career Foreign Service officer, on whether he could assign me for a third year. He did that without asking me. Then when George Allen said yes, he called me in and said, "I would like to keep you for a third year." Well, I felt so flattered by being asked anything by Tommy Thompson, that I immediately said yes, and only then realized I should really talk this over with my wife first, because the assignment in Moscow, professionally, probably one of the most interesting assignments one could have, the roughness or the really bad part of the assignment was more on the wife and the children than it was on the officer, because the officer had the interesting political developments to contend with, whereas the wife only had the hardships to contend with.

Q: Which comes to a good point, because I was about to ask you, since this is your interview, the personal side--where you lived, how you existed, whether you lived on the local economy or had to bring in foodstuffs from outside the country, the day-to-day living, schooling for the children, whether or not your wife and children became fluent in Russian, etc. If you'd speak about that.

I might ask you, since you're all part of this tutorial, if there's some aspect you feel that should be emphasized during the course of the interview, either because of the nature of the interview itself or because something you know about our interviewing that you feel, either through modesty or neglect or forgetting about it, he should bring in, please jump in, although he's doing quite well.

TUCH: Well, life was pretty tough in Moscow in those days.

Q: There was no compound as there is today?

TUCH: Well, before I got there, everybody who was assigned to the embassy had lived in the embassy building, which was located on the Tchaikovsky Ring, and was a 12-story building where our offices and apartments were located. But before I came to the embassy, about two years before I came to the embassy, there was some expansion, and people were assigned apartments by the Soviet Government in other areas. Where we were assigned to was a huge compound with about 800 apartments, which had been built as a diplomatic compound for diplomatic families of all nations, East and West. At that time, for instance, a large wing was occupied by the Chinese, still, because the

relationship was still fairly decent at that time. We lived in an apartment in there, which, by Soviet standards, was, I guess, fairly good. We had three bedrooms, and it was spacious, but by American standards--well, the anecdote that I'd like to relate, we arrived on an evening, we were taken up to our apartment, and we walked in. The first thing I looked for was the front door, because I thought I'd been taken up through the back door, you know, where there was a freight elevator and so forth. [Laughter] Of course, we had been taken through the front door, which looked like that kind of an apartment. It was fairly primitive by American standards, but it had been supplied by us, by the embassy, with an American refrigerator, American stove. We had brought washing machine and dryer with us, which were put out into the hallway, because there was no other place to put it.

But at any rate, we knew it was going to be a hardship post, and the wonderful thing about this assignment in Moscow was because it was a hardship post, because everybody lived sort of under the same condition and was up against it, all but the administrative officer, who had a wonderful place in the chancery, we all held together, and the enemy was the administrative officer as much as the Soviets in this respect.

Q: He was FSO?

TUCH: No, he wasn't FSO. He rose very high and very rapidly in the Foreign Service and at one time became the Under Secretary of State for Administrative Affairs. You do know him--Idar Rimestad.

(Unidentified speaker): He was my ambassador in Geneva.

TUCH: Yes, that's where he made his claim to fame. So he kind of focused the animosity that was not directly to the Soviets on himself, deservedly so. But at any rate, we lived in this apartment.

Q: We have heroes and villains in these interviews.

TUCH: We lived in this apartment for nine months, and then a very strange thing happened. Suddenly, one noticed that the building was deteriorating much more rapidly than most new buildings in Moscow deteriorated. We were used to the fact that over the first floor of most apartment buildings, new apartment buildings in Moscow, there was a net so that falling bricks from the building would hit the net and not the pedestrian walking down the street. But that was sort of standard throughout Moscow. In the newest sections, you had nets over the sidewalks for falling bricks. Well, we had that, too, and nobody paid very much attention to that because it was standard. Then they built a canopy, a wooden canopy, over the entrance so that you wouldn't be hit by falling things as you entered the building. Suddenly, many of us noticed cracks in our walls--real cracks--in even the supporting walls. We reported this and were told, among others, by Idar Rimestad, "Don't worry, these are not supporting walls. This is just the building

settling." It was built about a year before that time. So one worried, but one didn't worry too much, because the apartment was fairly decent.

One morning, in our apartment, we were sitting at breakfast, and there was a tremendous crash. We rushed into the living room, and the window plus the frame had simply broken out and crashed outward. In other words, the building had shifted, so that the frame and the windows just disappeared. This was duly reported. Suddenly, the Soviets became apparently very concerned, because one of the gas mains had cracked, too, in the basement, and they were immediately afraid of gas explosions.

Q: What period of year was this?

TUCH: This was in the spring of '59, March of '59.

Q: Still cold.

TUCH: We were ordered--remember there were 800 apartments, roughly, 120 per block, and there were about six blocks, 800 apartments--we were ordered, every diplomatic mission was ordered to move out within three days, but no place was given to us where to move to. There were negotiations with the Soviets. Finally, the Soviets came up with a new block of apartments which had been built for the Soviets, but the Soviets hadn't moved in yet. Some had moved in and were kicked out, and these were new apartments, and we were supposed to move into them within three days. Here Mr. Rimestad came into the fray again. These were supposed to be temporary apartments, and he didn't want to move our refrigerators, our stoves, our sinks, into them, because, after all, that was going to cause a lot of commotion. There was a stove and a sink in the apartment, the Soviet one, and he wasn't going to do this for us. After all, when you come to Moscow, "You don't plan,"--these were his exact quotes--"to live in a white frame house with a picket fence around the garden." This notwithstanding that he had an apartment in the chancery which was right next to the DCM's, to the minister's apartment, and it was, you know, one of the really nice apartments.

At any rate, that's when these 30 or 40 embassy families, who were the core of our--you know, we were all very close and friends, we revolted. We asked for a meeting with the ambassador, and we said, "We're going to send our families out because the hygienic conditions are such that unless we have refrigerators and unless we have our own stoves, we just can't afford to leave our families here, and we're going to send our families to Vienna or Berlin or to Germany to live, because we just could not do this."

Well, the ambassador looked into it and ordered Idar Rimestad to move our refrigerators and stoves to these temporary apartments. I emphasize the word "temporary," because this was April '59. These apartments are now still in use by our embassy families. They were that temporary.

At any rate, one other aspect of this was peculiar. When these were advertised by our administrative officer as brand-new Soviet apartments, the best new construction available, and we took this with a grain of salt. There was one Soviet newspaper in those days, which was the Moscow evening newspaper, the MDUL/Chernya Moskva.MDNM/, which was not always only devoted to official decrees. They had a little bit of news items from time to time in that paper. It so happened, just in those days when we were to move, there was a major expose in that newspaper which one of my colleagues discovered and read out loud in translation, because Idar Rimestad didn't speak any Russian, so at the staff meeting, he translated for those who didn't speak Russian. It appears that a new housing complex had been built and had been built so badly that the citizens who lived in that housing complex started complaining to their local Communist Party headquarters about the bad conditions. For instance, when one stepped out of the balcony, the balcony crumpled and collapsed, so it couldn't even hold one person out on the balcony, the concrete was so bad. People had to hold onto the railing in order not to be catapulted to the ground. As a result of these complaints, the local engineer had turned off the hot water and told the occupants of this housing block that they could not get their hot water back until they stopped complaining to Communist Party headquarters. So they had been without hot water, plus their bad living conditions, for about two weeks. Then in the last final paragraph, the address was given of this housing block, and it was the housing block where we were moving in, the Ninski Prospect number four. [Laughter] That was our housing block.

At any rate, we moved into this place and it was fairly much of a shambles for at least the next year or two. The apartment size depended on the number of people we had, so we were given two apartments on the same floor, one two-room apartment and one three-room apartment, separated by the hallway. We had two children with us. One was a first-grader and the other one was kindergarten. We also had brought with us, because this was really the only way to handle it, we had brought with us a German au pair, who was to kind of help us with the children, because the Soviet situation with help was very unreliable, because when the Soviets would get mad or wanted to do you a dirty trick, they would just withdraw the maid and say, "Well, nobody wants to work for you American spies and you American warmongers," and you couldn't get any help. In the meantime, your wife, at that time, also was really very much preoccupied and occupied with, really, making the family be able to live. She stood in line in the stores during the day to shop, because there was no Soviet diplomatic grocery store. There was not even a dollar store where you could buy things for dollars, as now exists throughout the Soviet Union. We were completely dependent upon our own resources.

One of the things we were authorized to do before we came to the Soviet Union, we were allowed to bring with us 4,000 pounds of food or household products. In those days, it was really a very interesting phenomenon, because all of us, obviously, we went and purchased 4,000 pounds of whatever we thought was most important for us to keep around. We, for instance, brought 250 pounds of coffee with us, because we figured that would last us for two years. We were very adamant we wanted our coffee. My wife was very adamant that she was going to bring soap products and cleaning products with us, so

in her case, the 4,000 pounds, a large amount was coffee and cleaning products. The hell with the rest of it. But the fact is that when you compared notes among your embassy colleagues, everybody brought 4,000 pounds of something. In those days, whatever you brought 4,000 pounds worth cost 1,000 bucks. This was sort of standard that it was roughly $1,000 to $1,200 that you spent on those 4,000 pounds of food or household products. Anyway, we brought these 4,000 pounds of products, but you had absolutely no place to put them, because you had no storage space. So what you did is you built shelves in your hallway and in your bedrooms, and you had your products on those shelves, wooden shelves. As you walked into the apartment, you had these shelves on which all your products were located. Then, of course, you didn't have a balcony or any place, unless your dryer was working, which it very often wasn't, so you had to hang all your laundry in your apartment also. So you know, your apartment was both a place to live, but also for your utilities, your laundry to hang on.

I remember very vividly one occasion when Congressman Wayne Hayes, who was a great critic of the Department and the Foreign Service and really our whole foreign relations establishment and always considered everybody in the Foreign Service as striped pants and cookie-pushers, when he made a visit, came to visit the Soviet Union to see how gloriously we lived in the socialist capital, and so we all got together, and we invited him to have lunch in one of our apartments. It was my neighbor's apartment. We saw to it that this apartment was, you know, really in its most normal, typical fashion at that particular time. For instance, when he came in, there were wet bed sheets hanging in the front closet, and they had to be lifted up so that he could go underneath in order to get into the living room. Somebody, of course, dropped it just as he was coming under, so he got a little wet. Anyway, we had him for lunch, and we served him the food that our wives really were able to purchase on the local economy after standing in line, and those things that we were able to have brought with us in our initial shipment, which was canned corn beef and canned chicken. Those were the foods. Not Spam--I mean, we were past the period of Spam, but you were still with canned corned beef kind of thing, which the British loved and we hated. But at any rate, we served them that, and then whatever was available that we'd imported to our little commissary which we had in the embassy, where we'd brought in things from Helsinki and sometimes from Copenhagen and sometimes from Berlin--always under escort, incidentally. Anything that had to be brought in had to be brought in by diplomatic courier with an escort.

At any rate, we had him for lunch. Then, of course, after lunch, he excused himself to go to the bathroom. Well, one of the things we didn't tell him, that all toilets in the Soviet Union, when you flush them, the water spit out. So, obviously, you had learned very early in the game that before you flushed the toilet, you stepped to the side and then flushed it so you would not get hit by the spray of water. Well, we obviously did not tell him to go to the bathroom, and sure enough, when he came out, he was sort of crossing his legs and walking very carefully and this kind of thing. [Laughter] Just to make the point that we were living on the economy, which practically--not completely, because, as I said, we did import things from Berlin, mostly staples, some fresh meats, turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and some cheeses and some dairy products. We had the reputation that we

import everything. The Scandinavian embassies could never understand that we would even buy the butter of the local economy and eggs, because they imported everything from their Scandinavian home countries--milk, eggs, butter, dairy products. We did it to some extent, but really very little. Never eggs and butter, because you just depended upon what you could find locally.

Q: Is this because of your administrative officer?

TUCH: No. We were just not that organized, and we considered it a hardship post, and to go to Moscow was part of the hardship, just like when people went to Africa. They didn't get air-conditioning units for every room; if they had one, they were lucky. So this was just part of your assignment to Moscow, that you really had to live the way the Soviets lived. You didn't have to, but couldn't live otherwise.

Q: Idar Rimestad, I think, was famous throughout his career for building elaborate embassy commissaries and bars, etc.

TUCH: There is an anecdote there, too. One day, we had imported via Air France. We had sort of a contract with Air France at Christmas time and Thanksgiving time to bring in turkeys and a large food shipment by air. Air France was one of the few airlines that was flying at that time into Moscow.

Q: I assume there were food purveyors back in the country who catered?

TUCH: Ostermann Peterson was the most famous, and Peter Justesen were the two Danish firms that really were specializing in providing foodstuffs and products to diplomatic missions throughout the world, not just Eastern Europe, throughout the world. We lived off of Peter Justesen and Ostermann Peterson. But Air France had sent in this large shipment for which we paid, but they, in order to be gracious, suddenly I came down to the commissary in the morning, and there was a huge Gruyere cheese on the counter with a little mark on it, with a little flag on it, "Help yourself." And Idar Rimestad standing there saying, "Help yourself to this cheese." This had been donated by Air France to our embassy as sort of a dividend, this one big cheese. So you cut off a slice for yourself. I said, "Idar, how come you didn't take this one completely for yourself?" Which he could have; nobody would have been the wiser.

He said, "No, no, no, no. This one is for you all. I already have two." [Laughter] So Idar was completely honest in his crookedness.

Q: Did he ever serve in Germany?

TUCH: Oh, sure. Idar Rimestad was the personnel officer of HICOG when you and Schechter and I served in HICOG. I, to this day, have two letters in my personnel file RIFing me--firing me--from . . .

Q: Was he before Glen Wolf came?

TUCH: No, he was working for Glen Wolf. Glen Wolf was administrator, reddish-haired, and he was the chief personnel officer at that time. He had a reputation to uphold by this time. He was one of the very few people, I must admit, who hoodwinked Llewellyn Thompson completely. You know, he did everything. Thompson was not demanding, but he saw to it--I mean, there were always things done. Tommy Thompson's wishes were anticipated by Idar Rimestad, and therefore, he was highly regarded by the ambassador.

Q: There are people such as he throughout the world.

TUCH: Oh, yes.

Q: In every institution.

TUCH: Sure, sure.

Q: What about children, schooling and medical?

TUCH: There was an Anglo-American school in Moscow which exists to this day, which was a small school run jointly by the British and American Embassy and open to all other embassies, priority to the American and British embassies, but it had other children from other embassies, too, those that wanted to have their children have an English-speaking education. We had about two or three teachers, one British, one American, hired and brought in, and then a number of mothers who had either training or desire to be helpful, did the kindergarten bit and the teacher's aide kind of thing. That worked reasonably well for the time we were there. During my first year in Moscow, there was no opportunity--the Soviets would not permit the American Embassy children to attend a Soviet school. During our second and third year, they did open up their schools to small children whose parents wanted to send them to Soviet schools. Some parents did, with mixed success, some with a good deal of success, and the kids really did learn Russian and were able to succeed. Others, it was not a very successful experience. In some cases, it was also a negative political experience. The children, you know, came home telling their parents what their teachers told them about America, and there was a lot of problems involved. But in some cases it was successful.

At any rate, we had a first-grader and a kindergartner, and then a second- and third-grader, and then second, third, and fourth, and our Andrea, our daughter, was nursery school, kindergarten, and first grade.

Q: The wives who served to support the schooling, were they paid?

TUCH: Yes.
Q: Or were they volunteer?

TUCH: No, they were paid. They had to be qualified.

Q: We will continue on with answering the question that was asked you about the mothers who were the teachers' aides.

TUCH: I really can't remember. I can't be completely positive on whether they were paid or not, but you know, it was sort of a situation, with the exception of the professional teachers who were imported, that everybody pitched in and did something. For instance, it wasn't asked of you. It was the sort of situation where, for instance, you were expected to come to the ambassador's receptions, and the ambassador, especially during our second and third year, when the relationship developed so much, used to have three receptions per week just to accommodate all the American visitors and congressional delegations and things that came in, we divided the embassy up in platoons of a third each, so that not everybody had to go to these and work at these receptions, but the point is that the wives, obviously, tried to get to these receptions. On one occasion I came, and we had two sick children. Our au pair, our German girl, was also not well. My wife really just couldn't come, and I said something to Jane Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, who was the ambassador's wife, "I'm very sorry my wife didn't come to this reception," although this was expected of her. She said, "Don't tell me even why she couldn't come. She obviously is busy with something. Remember, I'm a mother, too, here in Moscow, and I know what wives go through. So forget it. Let her do her thing." So it was the kind of a relationship that you had there which, of course, I may have experienced in one other post--Bulgaria and Sofia, but really nowhere else where the relationship was a collegial, family type of an embassy. I mean, where the frustrations that everybody had were really shared.

Q: It's an interesting point. I've read in a number of places the problems there were vis-a-vis wives, as a matter of fact, that the FSOs were marked on fitness reports, how effective their wives were, how much they threw themselves in and did things, for which they weren't paid and for which they hadn't been hired. I think that happens with any institution or corporation or the military. Of course, in some cases, with higher officials, in the case of the military, the wives are used to wearing their husband's rank or, in the case of an ambassador, it's "Mrs. Ambassador," and the wives are all their aides and so on. I'm sure it's a real problem which exists in a highly concentrated institutional situation such as a diplomatic or military post.

TUCH: You worked in an entirely different social framework from the one that you do now--an entirely different social framework. Of course, it had its negative side. It did have ambassadors' wives who were ogres, you know, who were just really vicious or very, very bad in their relationships as their husbands, spouses, in a particular post situation. But on the other hand . . .

Q: I suppose in the case of those wives of professional career FSOs, it had been done to them, and now it's their chance.

TUCH: Yes. Right. And there were some who had a reputation. I won't name them, but everybody knows them now. I mean, most of them are dead by now, but they existed, and you knew them and you knew before you got to the post that this was going to be one of your problems. But on the other hand, you also had the situation that when you joined the Foreign Service, I think you made the commitment as a husband and wife, and it was more or less, as I said, a different era of our social history, that your wife was expected to participate and not be paid for it, but to participate in her husband's career as an adjunct. Let's face it. Now, I don't think this is necessarily good, but this was the situation, and it has changed completely since that time. The wives were rated. But, for instance, in Moscow, where the situation was tough for the wives, for the families, they participated and they were, on the other hand, given the credit, and they were appreciated by, in this case, Ambassador Thompson and Jane Thompson, who said, "We could not function here as an embassy without the wives participating fully." It was recognized and appreciated. Not much was said about it or done about it, but I am sure that in every efficiency report written in Moscow by the ambassador or by the DCM, the wives were given full credit for their participation. They knew they were being rated, and they were given full credit for it. It was a team effort. They were being harassed by the Soviets as the officers were, too.

I remember on my first long trip outside of Moscow, I went on a ten-day trip down to Central Asia. My wife was called every night four times for the first week at 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, and 5:00 o'clock in the morning. The phone rang, and there was silence. This is harassment, I mean, for a wife. Every night she was awakened, and there was just breathing and then hung up. That kind of thing. They were harassed. There was no doubt about it. So it was a different atmosphere and a different situation. It is a different atmosphere now in Moscow, an entirely different kind of situation. But in those days, well, I think it probably had even been different ten years before when the embassy--there was a mystique about serving in Moscow. Those people who served there before 1953 and those who served after 1953, the real old Moscow hands were the ones who had served there before 1953 when our embassy was located on a street called Bukavaya Street, which was right off Red Square. In the Stalin days, Stalin didn't want to have the British and American embassies that close to Red Square, and we were told to move. The Americans, in typical fashion, we moved. The British procrastinated, and to this day they still have their beautiful--the located residence right across the river from Red Square, looking onto Red Square. We moved to this other embassy building, and this is where we're still now, pending our moving to our new embassy compound. When that will be, I don't know.

At any rate, what I did want to mention, in getting back to the substantive part, I mentioned the roller coaster affair, which made it interesting for me, about our relationship. The other thing was that in 1958, in January, before I got to Moscow, we had signed our first cultural and scientific exchange agreement with the Soviet Union, and that opened up the whole area of what I would call cultural and informational relationship with the Soviet Union, whereby we published the magazine America, which was distributed in the Soviet Union. That is an entire chapter. We had our first performing arts

groups coming with the New York Philharmonic and "My Fair Lady" and Michigan University Concert Band, and we had our first exchanges of cultural personalities, composers, painters, and writers. I can name them, who they were, who participated. We had, first of all, our first major exhibition, the American National Exhibition in Moscow, and the Soviet National Exhibition in New York, which took place in '59.

You really completely occupied yourself, so much so that everybody in Washington and in Moscow--the ambassador and Mr. Allen and the State Department--agreed that one cultural affairs and press officer could not do the job. I was supposed to get an assistant. Everybody signed off on this, and it was always very complicated because housing was so tight, and if a new officer was to be added to the embassy, it was a very major bureaucratic process through which you went before this position was approved. Well, it was approved. I was to get an assistant. At the last moment, the decision was made in Washington that what we really needed in Moscow at this stage was a high-ranking cultural counselor to administer this huge new cultural affairs program. Of course, I was too low grade for that position, so a cultural counselor at a very high grade was assigned, and I became the assistant. So the moral of the story is, "Never ask for an assistant, because you may be it." I became the assistant to the cultural counselor for the next two years of my assignment.

Q: Who was this?

TUCH: Lee Brady. Lee Brady became my boss and served there for two years. His assignment started off in a very, very, very bad way. This is, of course, another chapter. When we will interview him, I will interview him personally, but he went through the first local appendectomy in the American Embassy within two months after he arrived. I was present in the operating room when it took place, and it was done without the benefits of anesthetic. That was a horrible, horrible experience, worse for me, witnessing such an operation in an operating room where there were two other operations going on simultaneously in front of you, a mangled arm and a fallopian pregnancy. The reason that took place is we had a new embassy doctor. You asked me about medical arrangements earlier. We had an embassy doctor who was normally an Air Force officer, one of the Air Force slots to supply a medical officer to the American Embassy. They were usually very good officers, very good doctors, medical doctors, and they really were part of the family. The doctor who had been there had left. We had a new doctor who was not an armed services officer, but a civilian, a marvelous doctor, but he was new. Lee Brady came up with what he identified as a ruptured appendix, and he really didn't know of any other way but to take him to the diplomatic hospital. This is where this happened. We took him over, and they performed the operation.

The next morning, I walked into the room. Lee had fainted; he had been in deep shock. He was in deep shock, and he was lying in bed, bare to his chest, and he had these big red splotches on his chest. I said, "My God, what happened to you now?"

And he says, "You wouldn't know, Tom."

I said, "What do you mean, you wouldn't know? What is it? What are these red splotches?"

He said, "Well, they just cupped me."

I said, "They did what?"

He said, "I knew you wouldn't know what this is. They cupped me."

I said, "What is cupping?"

He said, "Look at this." There were two cups on his night table, and they had put these suction cups on his chest in order to get out the impurities of this blood system.

Q: Like leeches.

TUCH: Like leeches, but they didn't use leeches. They certainly used cups on him, and this was sort of the . . .

Q: Modern Soviet medical.

TUCH: Modern Soviet medical science. The story connected with this one--and I might just go on and tell it--his incision drained for about six weeks, and finally the doctor just put him on an airplane and shipped him out to Copenhagen, and he was in Copenhagen for about three weeks to just get the incision closed off and get him back into normal state.

One of our first delegations I remember was a delegation of three American surgeons from North Carolina, young American surgeons who were interested in Soviet surgical procedures. They were taken in hand in the Soviet Union by a professor by the name of Mischnevsky, who was the famous surgeon who had invented the Soviet heart-lung machine. This is one of the things that they wanted to examine. They had been there for about two weeks, and just before they went back to the States, they came to some reception at the American Embassy, and they were holding forth on the wonders of Soviet medicine and medical treatment. I said, "Frankly, this is maybe true, but you ought to see or hear about the other side of Soviet medicine. Come on over. I want you to meet my boss, Lee Brady. Lee, tell your story." And Lee did.

One of the doctors said, "You know, Mr. Brady, frankly, I just do not believe what you've told me, on the basis of my experience."

Lee Brady said, "Suit yourself. Don't believe me."

They went back to their host, Professor Mischnevsky, the next morning and said, "We heard this crazy story at the American Embassy last night about one of the embassy officers being cupped after an operation. You don't do this kind of thing."

And Mischnevsky turned and said, "Of course we do this."

They said, "Would you do this?"

"Of course. I do it all the time. Let me demonstrate it." He showed them how he administers cupping on the legs.

The doctor came back to the embassy just before he left and apologized to Lee Brady. He said, "I have never, never in my life experienced anything like this before, where you have, on one hand, a very, very advanced medical technology science and, on the other hand, the treatment of patients at such a low grade." And that, as far as I'm concerned, throughout my experience there, persisted--namely, that when the Soviets want to concentrate on one or another development, whether it is in military technology or whether you put up a Sputnik or to develop a heart-lung machine, they are able to do this, because they can order their scientists into a certain channel, and they can pick the best ones and say, "This is what you're going to be doing, and this is what you're going to develop," and they come up with some very, very fine things. Whereas the regular, whether it's Soviet building technology or whether it's Soviet medicine or whether it's the how the infantry operates in the Soviet Union, it's at a very, very primitive level.

Q: There's a great fear, then, on the part of the embassy personnel, of getting sick or having a major illness.

TUCH: Well, after that experience, when anybody even complained of a stomach ache, the doctor would just pack you off with ice, with dry ice, [laughter] and pack you off on the next plane to wherever the plane was going West, whether it was Vienna or Copenhagen. No, at that time, you had maybe three, four times a week foreign airplanes coming in, and whatever plane it was that day, he would put you on it and out you go. He would not take another chance.

Q: You were talking about buying dairy products. The Americans bought the dairy products on the local economy, eggs and cheese and so on. We're you concerned about pasteurization and all?

TUCH: Yes. Never milk. We lived on powdered milk. The children--powdered milk was it. Eggs, we did try to find on the Soviet economy, and they were expensive, but you know, whatever you could. Again, if you had a shipment coming in from Berlin, a food shipment, if you did go to the Berlin U.S. Army commissary and somebody went out and bought for the embassy and made arrangements, say, 6,000 pounds of food to bring it in, sure, maybe we would take 100 cartons of eggs on that particular shipment, but that was iffy, because eggs don't travel very well. Sometimes, you know, you'd buy frozen food,

and you'd have to escort it as a courier from Berlin to Warsaw to Brest--it was Brest Litovsk--where the Soviet border, where the passenger train, they changed the wheels because the gauge is different. But on the baggage cars where the food was on, they actually had to transfer from one baggage car to the next. I had the singular experience of being an escort for a food shipment from Berlin, 6,000 pounds of food that I had brought from Berlin to Warsaw to Brest. The train was three hours late, and they changed the wheels on the passenger cars, but they refused to transfer the shipment from one baggage car to the other, and I was on the platform arguing with them that I wasn't going to leave without the food. He says, "Well, if you don't want to leave without the food, you're going to stay right here in Brest, because here goes your train."

I jumped on the train, and I arrived in Moscow, where we had our embassy truck backed up to the train station. I got off without my food shipment, and I never lived that down. As a matter of fact, they accused me of having done it on purpose, because about half of the 6,000 pounds of food apparently was seafood and fish, and the people knew I was allergic to seafood and fish, and they accused me of doing it on purpose, of leaving the shipment in Brest. Well, you see, what happened was--this was in October, and the shipment, in Brest it was freezing, in Moscow it was not yet freezing. Fortunately, they brought the food in 24 hours later, and it had not defrosted, so it wasn't lost. But there was this chance. But this was the kind of experience that you would constantly have in your food shipments to bring in things that you wanted to have.

Sometimes we would go out as individuals or maybe as couriers. You had courier runs to Helsinki, and if you went to Helsinki on a courier run, your first stop would be at Stockman's Department Store. Now, Stockman's is the Macy's of Helsinki, and it is a lovely, beautiful department store.

Q: You went by train?

TUCH: We went by train, yes. It was a 24-hour, 26-hour trip by train to Helsinki. Stockman's was a marvelous, marvelous store. They catered to all the diplomats in Moscow. When you arrived at Stockman's, because you didn't speak Finnish, the first thing they would do is they would assign to you an interpreter who would go throughout the store with you, take the orders, mark them down, make a list of them. You would then give them a check, your own personal check on an American bank, and you would forget about it. Stockman's would deliver the shipment to you on your plane, to your compartment or to the baggage care, and you would have it delivered. Stockman's became sort of the heaven of the American and all the embassies in Moscow. Of course, they were doing this for a good profit, but they really served us extremely well. It was very, very nice.

Q: To me, it sounds that even in '59 and '60, the period that you were there, Russia and Moscow sounds almost like a Third World country today, almost.

TUCH: Oh, in many, many, many--and in terms of amenities and living conditions and food supplies, you know, every afternoon my wife would go to her favorite bread store and wait in line for the bread to be delivered. Now, we wanted a certain bread because we lived this particular bread, but if she did not go there that afternoon and stand in line and wait for the bread shipment to arrive, she would not have gotten it. She would have gotten bread, but not her variety of bread, maybe.

Q: They did not bake it there?

TUCH: No, no. They would come to the various stores to be delivered. But she got very much used to it. I mean, this became natural. If there was a line, you joined it, and then you asked what it was. [Laughter] So this became natural, and there were a lot of jokes and a lot of stories. Maybe we should shut off this with one wonderful anecdote.

Q: Yes, please.

TUCH: My favorite Soviet joke about the rumor that got around at this particular Leningrad food store that caviar was going to be sold there one day. So of course, during the night before, the line formed, and it was two blocks long by the time the manager arrived to open the store in the morning. He looked at the line, and he got up and said, "Citizens, this line is much too long. We're never going to have enough caviar to accommodate all of you people here, so I might as well make an arbitrary decision. I'm going to decide right now that all the Jews in the line might as well go home. I'm not going to sell you any caviar." So the line got about half shorter; all the Jewish people left. And he came out two hours later, and he says, "Gee, the line is still much too long. I'm not going to have that much caviar available. So only members of the Communist Party are going to get caviar. Everybody else go home." And to make this story shorter, after a half hour he came out and says, by this time, "Comrades, I'm still not going to have enough caviar to go along, so only people who fought in the Great Patriotic War and were present at the Siege of Leningrad are going to be able to get caviar." So the line got shorter again. And he came out and says, "Only members of the Central Committee who fought in the Great Patriotic War and participated in the siege of Leningrad are going to get any caviar today." And by that time it had been reduced to five people. And he said, "Okay, you five people, you come on in." He took them into the store, and he took them into his office, and he sat them down and he says, "With you five comrades, I can be absolutely frank. We never had any caviar. We don't have any caviar today, and we will never have any caviar in the future."

Whereupon one says, "You see, the Jews won again. They could go home first." [Laughter]

Q: That's great.

End of interview